

**FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)**

**TRUSTEES' REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

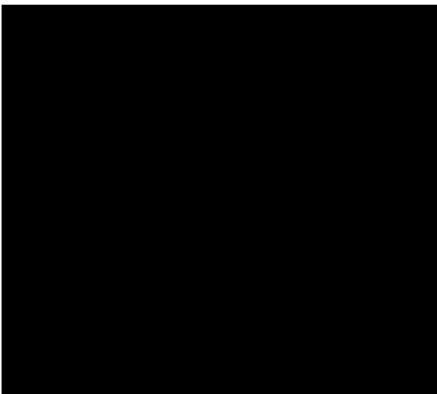
**Scottish Charity No. : SC031541**

FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

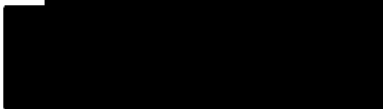
CHARITY INFORMATION

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Trustees



General Manager



Charity number

SC031541

Independent Examiner



Principal office address

Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre  
Winehouse Yett  
Dundonald  
South Ayrshire  
KA2 9HD

Bankers

Virgin Money  
30 The Foregate  
Kilmarnock  
KA1 1JH

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

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# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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The trustees present their report and independently examined financial statements for the year ended 31 December, 2024. The comparative figures have been restated as these were previously prepared on a cash basis and have now been prepared on an accruals basis, in line with the 2024 financial statements.

### Legal and Administrative Information

Friends of Dundonald Castle was established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2014. It is recognised as a charity by HM Revenue and Customs and is registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

#### **Board of Trustees**

The following trustees served during the financial year unless otherwise noted:



Chair  
Vice-Chair  
Treasurer  
Secretary (from 15 September 2024)  
(resigned 15 September 2024)

There have been no changes in Trustees since the year-end date.

#### **Independent Examiner**

 B.Acc, C.A. of JRD LLP was appointed as Independent Examiner after the year-end date.

### Structure, Governance and Management

#### **Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees**

Trustees are identified and appointed according to the Constitution.

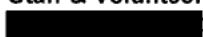
#### **Organisational Structure**

The strategic management and financial governance of the Charity is the legal responsibility of the Trustees per The Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, with full day-to-day operational management delegated to the General Manager. The General Manager reports to Trustees at monthly meetings.


#### **FoDC Membership**

As of 31 December 2024, FoDC has 181 paid active annual members. This is a 57 % increase on membership numbers in 2023 and an 88% increase on 2022.

#### **Staff & Volunteers**

 continues to be employed as General Manager with overall responsibility for the management of daily operations at Dundonald Castle & Visitor Centre/Community Hub. She is responsible for ensuring that the international, national and regional importance of Dundonald Castle is recognised, acknowledged and promoted and that excellence is achieved in both the visitor and the community experience.



The General Manager leads on FoDC's external relations with all stakeholders, partners and outside bodies. Representing FoDC in 2024, she sits on the Troon Locality Planning Partnership; Voluntary Action South Ayrshire's Employability and Social Enterprise Forum; Health and Wellbeing Forum (VASA); and South Ayrshire Third Sector Chief Officers' Monthly Meetings.

 is responsible for service delivery across all areas and ensures that the KPI of the charity are met. She works with the Trustee Executive on fundraising Grant Applications and oversees all on site fundraising activities.

The General Manager is responsible for the management of all staff and volunteers. She oversees FoDC's Management Team (6 part-time employees).

The MT lead on delivery of service in: Café; Education; Events; Finance; Retail; Weddings & Marketing.

 continues as Weddings & Marketing Manager and as FoDC's Archaeology Officer.  is Branch Leader of the Ayrshire Young Archaeology Club, based at Dundonald Castle, sits on the YAC Steering Group for the Council for British Archaeology and is an Archaeology Ambassador for Archaeology Scotland.

FoDC's Bookkeeper  supports the accounting, reporting and financial control activities within the charity.  supports the Treasurer and General Manager in all areas of a financial matter.

 continues as Café Manager with management oversight on placement provision and promotes the development of new community groups within our Community Hub.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

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FoDC's Education & Youth Officer [REDACTED] oversees delivery of our Education Programme and serves as Safeguarding Officer, with additional responsibility for museum development.

[REDACTED] continues as Retail Coordinator, with a remit to showcase local artists, artisans and crafters.

Events Coordinator [REDACTED] is responsible for the delivery of our annual Events Programme.

FoDC remains a key employer in the village of Dundonald, with staffing increasing to 17 during the year. Our Castle & Visitor Centre employees work as hours and business needs dictate.

In 2024 we secured and supported three funded Thriving Communities placements on the EVOLVE programme, designed to assist parents return to work. Additional funding was secured to provide additional 6 month placements via the Thriving Communities Employment Recruitment Incentive.

At the end of these programmes two of the placements accepted permanent contracts with FoDC and are now key team members, whilst the third used the skills and experience gained to secure further employment. The staffing secured helped our charity to remain open seven days a week throughout the winter season.

Our placement collaboration with Thriving Communities further continued with the Work Out Programme, through which we provide a nurturing and supportive environment for young individuals as they enter the workforce.

Our volunteers remain absolutely integral to all operations within the charity. Alongside our eleven volunteer trustees, who are responsible for the good governance of FoDC, our volunteers support all areas of service delivery: tour guiding; community hub clubs, groups and befriending; outreach; hospitality; education; events, and weddings, as well as future planning and fundraising.

During the year we were very grateful to introduce a new volunteer group to our provision: ground and building maintenance.

In 2024 we were delighted to welcome new team members, witnessing a sharp rise in our total volunteer numbers from 39 to 61. This increase, due largely to word of mouth recommendation via existing volunteers, impacted all areas and was especially notable in our tour guiding, community hub and café volunteer pools.

Our volunteer catchment area has also increased and is now drawn from across South Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and East Ayrshire, as well as Glasgow.

Ongoing consultation demonstrates how much our volunteers appreciate having such a wide range of opportunities to learn new skills and contribute to the work of our charity in a welcoming, safe and respectful environment.

### **Related Parties**

There were no transactions during the year between the charity and a related party of any Trustee. This is with the exception of the disclosure at note 5 to the financial statements.

### **Objectives and Activities**

#### **Mission Statement**

Friends of Dundonald Castle SCIO (FoDC) aim to protect the future of Royal Dundonald Castle by promoting the understanding, enjoyment and education of the public as to the historical significance of the castle and the surrounding area. In acting as a community hub, we aim to involve the community, in its widest sense, in protecting their heritage.

Our Strategic Aims have been identified as follows:

**Aim 1:** To contribute to the preservation, understanding and appreciation of the castle, and surrounding archaeology, landscape and natural heritage

**Aim 2:** To sustain and continue to develop an active and innovative education service

**Aim 3:** To develop and sustain widespread community engagement by all ages to use the facilities, embracing individual needs

**Aim 4:** To develop the visitor centre business to ensure sustainability and ability to support the work of the charity

**Aim 5:** To inspire people by developing a museum and exhibition that interprets and celebrates the international importance of Dundonald Castle

### **Achievements and Performance**

#### **Employer Excellence**

In 2024, the General Manager was invited to sit on Voluntary Action South Ayrshire's Employability and Social Enterprise Forum. This ensures that national and regional developments within the third sector are discussed, shared and implemented by FoDC in good time and that best practice continues to be a cornerstone of the charity's operations.

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We are proud to continue to evidence an extremely high employee retention and do all we can to support our team in all areas. We work hard to support our staff's personal circumstances and provide employment which works with their other responsibilities. Flexible working hours are offered to assist with additional employee commitments: secondary employment; caring roles; parental responsibilities, and to best support the health and wellbeing of all team members, alongside the business needs of the charity.

Eligible staff are automatically enrolled into our pension programme.

The delivery of identified, relevant and timely training for all staff and volunteers to support individuals in their roles across all areas of operation remains a priority in 2024.

We remain grateful for support received from ACAS and Quest to support our drive to maintain best employment practice throughout the charity.

### **Volunteer Excellence**

FoDC are holders of Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) Volunteer Friendly Awards. This Award recognises best practice in how we support, value and include our volunteers in the work of the charity. VASA membership also enables us to advertise for volunteers and to access training courses for our team.

As with our staffing, we are absolutely delighted to maintain a very high volunteer retention rate, especially at a time when many third sector organisations are finding the recruitment and retention of volunteers to be particularly challenging.

All our volunteers, ranging in age from 8 to 95, play key roles not only in the delivery of our services to our castle visitors and community hub regulars, but are integral to our consultations, decision making and future development plans for the charity.

In 2024 many of our volunteers were nominated and received South Ayrshire Voluntary Action Awards (SAVA) at a glittering Awards Ceremony on 6 June. These awards recognise and reward volunteers for their invaluable work within South Ayrshire communities. Awards are presented to volunteers commensurate with their length of volunteering service: Bronze (1-5 years volunteering); Silver (5-10 years); Gold (10-15 years) and Lifetime (15-30 years). FoDC were honoured to have volunteers recognised in all categories, testimony to the incredible hard work, dedication and support our volunteers deliver daily for FoDC.

### **Health & Wellbeing**

Supporting the health and wellbeing of all our team remains a priority for FoDC and our General Manager was delighted throughout 2024 to be invited to represent our charity and sit on South Ayrshire's Health and Wellbeing Forum (VASA). This forum is invaluable for information and resource sharing within the third sector to help charities best support the health and wellbeing of their teams. FoDC were also pleased to be represented at the very well-attended South Ayrshire Wellbeing Pledge Showcase in 2024.

Our team are consulted on all major developments and new operational procedures. Regular support for all staff and volunteers, team meetings and debriefs, and one-on-one check ins continue in all operational areas, with additional wellbeing support offered through the completion of individual Wellness Action Plans.

New training needs, identified by the team are acted upon to support team members and to enhance the experience of and our engagement with our castle visitors and local community. Dementia Awareness training was delivered by Alzheimer's Scotland, with whom we partnered to set up a new weekly Back in Time Dementia Café. Neurodivergence Awareness training was delivered to the team by Nest to benefit and support the team and our operations.

In addition, new monthly Team Wellbeing Walks, open and free to all and led by a volunteer trustee, were piloted on our grounds.

### **External Partnerships**

The General Manager continues to work closely with all external partners including Historic Environment Scotland (HES), South Ayrshire Council (SAC), Visit Scotland (VS), Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) as well as local businesses and numerous third sector, heritage and community organisations.

#### Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Our unique and successful model of operations at Dundonald Castle & Visitor Centre/Community Hub is consistently held by our colleagues at HES as an exemplary partnership site. We are acknowledged as delivering a first-class visitor experience, excellence via our Community Heritage and Education Programme and exceptional community engagement throughout the year within a visitor operations setting.

Meeting all key criteria in HES's national Responsible Tourism Framework and being recognised for our level of vibrant community engagement, FoDC were chosen in 2024 to pilot the HES Community Engagement and Climate Change Project. Two community focus groups of invited guests were convened with cross demographic representation of our community, local organisations and FoDC membership. These focus groups facilitated community input into HES resources to inform and plan for the impact of climate change on the Castle and Property in Care, the first in the country to trial this approach. It is intended that this project will be rolled out by HES across Scotland

The FoDC-HES partnership goes from strength to strength and all at FoDC are very grateful for the continued support and expertise of our colleagues at HES throughout the year.

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### Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS)

2024 saw a growth in stakeholder engagement with MGS and a resultant increase in support for our charity, specifically via MGS Marketing. Constructive discussions also commenced with MGS Learning and Engagement and with the Museum Accreditation team as initial first steps were taken on the journey to accreditation of our community museum.

### South Ayrshire Council (SAC)

Mutually beneficial relations with South Ayrshire Council were significantly expanded in 2024 with new relations forged with elected representatives, local councillors, the corporate leadership team and council officers, many of whom regularly visit us onsite. Throughout 2024, we worked closely with a number of SAC portfolio holders in key areas (Economic Regeneration; Tourism, Culture and Rural Affairs) and increased service collaboration with officers (Thriving Communities, Community Wealth Building, Destination South Ayrshire, Ayrshire Roads Alliance and the Criminal Justice Team).

A key objective has been raising awareness of the importance of Dundonald Castle as a major tourist attraction in South Ayrshire and the impact of our work on both the visitor economy and local community services.

FoDC were honoured to be selected as a South Ayrshire Council Case Study to showcase Community Wealth Building best practice. Our onsite interview was filmed and presented at The Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy launched in June. The strategy will see the three Councils working with local partners to deliver meaningful and ongoing economic regeneration throughout the region.

We were delighted to secure funding to support Thriving Communities families to provide tailored outreach and bespoke events including education days, guided outdoor walks, theatre events, Mason's Marks Survey engagement, movie nights at the castle and a women's walking group.

For the first time FoDC liaised with Paths for All and the Active Tourism Forum to discuss the need for a new community bridge. This initiative to link an improved path on SAC land with a recently reinstated FoDC path in the Property in Care was driven by community demand. All were delighted when an accessible bridge was built in the autumn, partnered and gifted by Story Contracting and South Ayrshire Council ARA. A very well attended opening ceremony was held in December to unveil the McQuiston Bridge; named after our Vice Chair [REDACTED] the instigator of the proposal. This was a very special event for our charity, being attended by six FoDC [REDACTED] volunteers and spanning 4 generations of the family (Appendix 1).

The McQuiston Bridge has proven hugely popular with castle visitors, locals, walkers and dog walkers who enjoy improved access to our low level, more accessible reinstated path, alongside increased walking options. Providing access to wildlife and opening up views of the castle, village and SSSI woodlands from new vantage points is much appreciated. It has also allowed us to informally create shorter, more easily accessed walks for those with limited mobility. A sincere thank you to our partners and stakeholders for bringing this proposal to fruition.

### Visit Scotland (VS)

Our professionally supportive relationship with Visit Scotland continues as we strive to meet best practise in both our visitor experience and our digital engagement portfolio. As a key stakeholder, relations with Visit Scotland were enhanced and a number of areas identified for support and development, notably travel-trade, overseas markets and marketing.

In 2024 we took part in the final round of Visit Scotland's Quality Assurance Scheme and were pleased to retain our 4\* retention as a visitor attraction.

In 2024 FoDC were delighted to be nominated by external stakeholders and partners for the prestigious Scottish Thistle Awards, the national tourism, events and hospitality awards hosted by Visit Scotland. Following the submission of rigorous supporting evidence and a robust Assessment Panel Interview by industry leaders, FoDC was shortlisted and invited to attend the Regional Finals (West) covering 10 council areas. Against very strong competition, we were delighted to win the Celebrating Thriving Communities Award (West Region), at the Scottish Thistle Awards Ceremony on 19 September.

On 21 November, a cross section of the FoDC team attended the Scottish Thistle Awards National Finals in Glasgow. We were absolutely thrilled to be announced as the 2024 National Scottish Thistle Award Winners: Celebrating Thriving Communities. Against an incredibly strong field of very worthy, larger organisations we were overwhelmed to win this prestigious national award, voted for by industry leaders. This success is testimony to the dedication and hard work of our full team and the quality of our service delivery, visitor experience and community provision (Appendix 2). We are indebted to every member of the FoDC team for their continued support, commitment and enthusiasm.

### Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce

Improving relations with the business community is a key objective for the charity and our membership of Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce is proving extremely beneficial in facilitating relations with the local Ayrshire business community. In August we hosted the Chamber's monthly Connect networking event at the Castle and Visitor Centre/Community Hub, welcoming almost 50 members of the business community; one of the Chambers' best attended monthly Connect networking meetings of 2024.

We were also pleased to take a stall for the first time at the Ayrshire B2B Annual Business Week Exhibition, an excellent marketing opportunity.

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MT members also benefitted from training opportunities delivered throughout the year by the Chamber, including a SALUS Occupational Health & Safety Training Session and an NHS Stress Awareness Session; health and wellbeing support which was then shared with our wider team.

### Third Sector, Heritage and Community Organisations

As noted, our engagement with the third sector interface and local, regional and national third sector organisations increased significantly during the year. In particular work with VASA increased through representation on the VASA Employability & Social Enterprise Forum; Health & Wellbeing Forum, taking part in the South Ayrshire Mental Health Strategy Development Forum, and Third Sector Chief Officers' Monthly Meetings. We also fully support and in all ways seek to implement the Health & Social Care/VASA/SAC 'Ageing Well Strategy' and have provided representation at Third Sector Showcase events throughout the year.

In 2024 FoDC joined the South Ayrshire Social Enterprise Network (SASEN), a networking, advocacy and signposting organisation. We hosted a SASEN regional group visit onsite and are benefitting from new relations with other social enterprises in the region and beyond.

FoDC continues to work closely to collaborate, support and assist individual local, third sector heritage and community organisations. In 2024 we met and shared learning with: Craufurdland Estates; Friends of Crookston Castle; Dynamic Dunure; the Gaiety Theatre (Ayr); Friends of the Broadway Prestwick, and Prestwick Aviation Tours, amongst others.

Membership was taken out for the Scottish Community Heritage Alliance in 2024 and we participated in the Grassroots Heritage in Scotland Roadshow, Glentworth Hive, in October. At this event we welcomed the opportunity to share our experiences with other community heritage organisations and to participate in collaborative discussions, to be fed in to national heritage reporting (HES/National Heritage Lottery funded).

Relations have continued to strengthen with Dundonald Community Council (DCC) and FoDC have, once again, made representation at every DCC public meeting in 2024.

We continue to partner closely with Dundonald Primary School throughout the year, hosting joint fundraising events and supporting the work of the Parent Council, as well as with a large number of local groups and organisations in the village and beyond.

### Archaeology Scotland and the Council for British Archaeology

FoDC's Memorandum of Agreement with Archaeology Scotland continues to mutually benefit both parties and we remain a repository for two bespoke handling boxes created for us by Archaeology Scotland. These support our Education Programme, our Events Programme and our community groups and heritage outreach initiatives.

Our Agreement with the Council for British Archaeology continues to recognise FoDC as leading the Ayrshire Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) as an Affiliate Member of the CBA YAC Network. Ayrshire YAC remains the only YAC in south-west Scotland.

### National and Further Education Institutions

For the first time in 2024 we joined the Inclusive Recruiter Programme of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF). Through this we aim to support individuals looking to enter the employment market pledging to: understand and be able to compare qualifications taken in Scotland and elsewhere; ensure we are recruiting at the right level by benchmarking our job roles to the SCQF; use SCQF levels when recruiting, rather than specific qualifications (where possible), and be open to skills and experience instead of, or as well as, qualifications at the required level. This initiative will help us to navigate Scotland's evolving qualifications landscape and widens the pool of applicants by encouraging the use of SCQF levels in job adverts.

As a result of this participation, FoDC were featured as a case study in a SCQF promotional video (Appendix 3).

Our previous collaboration with Ayrshire College continued and increased during the year. In 2024, FoDC established a new educational collaboration with Level 6 students from Ayrshire College, strengthening our role as a community learning resource. This partnership was designed to support the students in developing their Practical Abilities unit, a course that encourages learners to work collaboratively on a project, apply and refine practical skills, and reflect on their development throughout the process.

This collaboration has not only helped students gain hands-on experience and connect with their local heritage, but has also allowed FoDC to engage directly with the next generation of learners, offering them insight into heritage interpretation, tourism, and community engagement in a practical and inspiring way. It is hoped that the resources created during the project will be showcased on our website.

In 2024 FoDC also served as case study for Ayrshire College to highlight how the College's courses can open doors to meaningful opportunities. Dundonald Castle was identified as an ideal example of community-based learning in action and the case study allowed us to showcase FoDC's ongoing collaboration with Ayrshire College while providing insight into how former students contribute to local heritage, education, and tourism sectors.



# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

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### The Castle

The 2024 annual HES castle inspection delivered extremely complementary feedback on the well maintained upkeep of the castle by our team. A Stonework Inspection of the castle and a Rockface Survey completed on Castle Hill identified no anomalies.

Universally positive feedback has been received throughout the year on the work of the grounds maintenance contractors employed by HES, with ground work carried out to a very high standard adding to the reputation of Dundonald Castle as an extremely well-cared for site.

HES-FoDC with AOC Archaeology, again partnered to deliver community excavations onsite from 21-28 September. The excavations this year were advertised both by Dig It! And Historic Environment Scotland, resulting in a large uptake in new dig volunteers. The digs were fully subscribed and incredibly well supported by both the local community and visitors from across the central belt.

In total we welcomed 131 volunteers onsite, 79 dig volunteers and 52 school pupil participants. Across the week 843 total volunteer hours were recorded, with exceptional post excavation feedback received.

A Medieval ring unearthed by a mole and found by a previous volunteer on Castle Hill in 2019, went through Treasure Trove and we are delighted that the ring is now in the safekeeping of National Museums Scotland. In collaboration with HES colleagues and NMS, a press release was issued in 2024 and picked up by media nationally and internationally.

As in previous years, our Annual FoDC-HES Partnership Meeting was extremely positive and agreement reached across all areas of discussion.

### The Visitor Centre & Community Hub Café

#### Community Hub

Our community hub continues to deliver and expand our provision and support for our local community and castle visitors alike. During 2024 our centre was firmly embedded as the community hub for Dundonald and surrounding area and recognised as such by our community and regulars, as well as our external stakeholders, partners and funders.

The hub is registered and published in the South Ayrshire Directory (SAC/VASA) as the 'Cosy Space' for the village of Dundonald and surrounding area. It is also a registered member of the Chatty Café Scheme, the UK's leading non-profit organisation tackling loneliness.

Throughout 2024 our hub continues to provide free and accessible public conveniences for the village of Dundonald and surrounding area. We provide free period products through South Ayrshire Councils' The Wee White Bag initiative for our community and visitors. During the year we implemented simple but impactful upgrades to our toilet facilities, including dementia-friendly colour changes and curtain coverings for mirrors.

In 2024 FoDC supported a number of national initiatives to improve our services, joining the Scottish Refill Scheme providing free water refills for all requiring this service. We continue as registered members of Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland. Both the Castle and Visitor Centre/Community Hub remain as dog-friendly venues, attracting new visitors to the site who appreciate our 'three barks and you're out policy!'.

During 2024 our hub welcomed a wide cross section of our society including older people, veterans, single parents, families, young people, people living with disabilities and people experiencing mental health issues. The number of hub users increased significantly during the year from 22,756 in 2023 to an all-time high of 29,010 individuals in 2024.

Regular feedback and user surveys highlight how essential it is that our community hub remains open 7-days a week throughout the year (Appendix 4). Open and accessible to all, we provide a safe, friendly and heated space, and warm welcome for all, including anyone who may be lonely, vulnerable or experiencing social isolation in our rural area, with limited public transport.

By offering individual and group activities we hope to support the mental wellbeing of our users whilst increasing social inclusion across all of our local community. We welcome individuals and groups to make use of our hub, allowing participants to form new friendships, expand their social circle, learn new skills and participate in hobbies.

We continue to welcome our regular weekly, fortnightly and monthly clubs, all of which have seen an increase in attendees this year. All of our clubs and groups are free to attend, with opportunity available for anyone who wishes to make a small donation. This ensures that there is no financial barrier to attendance.

Our community groups include: Knit 'n Natter; Scrabble Club; Ladies Walking Group; Write Here at Dundonald Castle Poetry Group with our Poet in Residence; Castle Cronies; our Junior Castle Committee – the Crazy Castle Kids - and the Ayrshire Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC). Our YAC hosts monthly sessions for young people aged 8-16 who have an interest in archaeology and through 2024 again enjoys a full membership.

Dundonald Historical & Archive Society continue to hold their monthly meetings in the hub during the year, delivering a popular annual programme of talks on local and national history to attendees.

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In addition, in 2024 two new groups were piloted by FoDC in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland and NHS Ayrshire & Arran: our Back in Time Café for those living with early memory loss and dementia, and their families and carers; and two Staying Ahead of the Curve gentle movement exercise classes.

Collaboration with Dementia Friendly Troon and Villages (DFTV) and Alzheimer Scotland enabled all team members to complete training in dementia awareness and sensitivity. This preparation laid the foundation for our Back in Time group and ensures that participants value the welcoming and secure environment offered. Every week participants enjoy a range of activities delivered by our team. To date we have explored heraldry, apothecary, archaeology with handling boxes, clay pot making and old newspapers, each offering tactile and engaging experiences that are accessible and enjoyable for everyone. These sessions bring people together and create opportunities for relaxed conversation, whether about the activity at hand or memories sparked from years gone by.

Partnering with NHS Ayrshire and Arran Occupational Therapy, we successfully support two weekly Staying Ahead of the Curve classes over a 12-week period. Although the initial intention was to deliver one class, popular demand resulted in a second series being delivered in the hub. These sessions offer gentle movement and wellbeing advice, aligning with South Ayrshire Council's Health & Wellbeing initiatives.

For those unable to physically visit us onsite, our team also resumed delivering presentations on the history of the site and our current activities to external groups offsite.

FoDC do everything possible to support both our local community and local suppliers and producers in our hub. We actively seek opportunities to work with local business, supporting the circular economy, through our procurement and supply chain across all areas of service delivery.

Our commitment to supporting local was recognised in 2024 when we were featured as a Case Study in Scotland Towns Partnership's national Scotland Loves Local Campaign, prioritising as we do the support, use and promotion of local suppliers in all areas of service delivery (Appendix 5).

We now support 25+ local crafters, artists, artisans, authors; and producers of jams/chutneys/honey, giving them the opportunity to sell their produce to visitors and our community; the only place to offer this service for many in the village.

As members of South Ayrshire Council's Scotland Loves Local Gift Card, a means tested benefit, we again discreetly support anyone using this service in the café, retail area and for our events and community activities.

Our pay-it-forward Kindness Tree whereby those who are financially more secure can forward pay for hot drinks and lunches for those within our community who are experiencing hardship, continues to be very well supported and utilised.

At regular intervals throughout the year we provide free afternoon teas with accompanying live musical entertainment and games for all our clubs, groups and regulars during the winter months when many in our community have told us they most struggle with their mental health. The get togethers have been hugely popular, much appreciated and feedback has been uniformly positive.

The importance of these services to families and individuals within our community cannot be underestimated.

In 2024, in response to local demand we piloted new pop up advice and information services sessions, partnering with a wide range of external services and support organisations. Ayrshire Independent Living Network hosted regular, flexible drop-in sessions to share information about creating opportunities for self-employment and peer support throughout South Ayrshire. South Ayrshire Information and Advice Hub provided drop in sessions to provide welfare, benefits, budgeting tips and debt support. NHS Ayrshire & Arran Quit Your Way staffed drop in smoking cessation advice sessions. All appreciated fostering links between the vital services and the community in a safe and welcoming environment.

FoDC also supported the Beat The Streets active health initiative, commissioned by Ayrshire Roads Alliance on behalf of SAC, funded by Paths for All's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Programme and delivered by Intelligent Health. Space in our hub was used by Thriving Communities to deliver Emergency First Aid at Work to their employees. Our collaboration with the Night Before Christmas Campaign as a drop off and distribution site continues into its seventh year, with community members additionally making gifts for the boxes.

A range of other local community organisations also use the hub to facilitate their activities as required including a session of the Dundonald Community Council, the Dundonald Highland Games AGM and a Dundonald Christmas Lights fundraising event. Our MP also began to host his drop in 'Pup Up Surgeries' for his constituents at the hub towards the end of the year.

### Café

It has been a busy year for the Café with increased community collaboration and forward-thinking improvements. Key developments included the installation of new equipment, enhancing efficiency for both team and visitors and ensuring optimal hygiene standards within our operations. Our café continues to prioritise the purchase of Scottish produce from local suppliers whenever possible.

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Our team work incredibly hard to cost our café offerings as competitively as possible to make our refreshments and food affordable. The menu, providing gluten free, dairy free, vegetarian and vegan options, remains popular with both visitors to the castle and with locals as a hospitality destination in its own right throughout the year. In all areas we are led by the desire to ensure the delivery of excellent customer service and foster a welcoming environment for all our community and visitors to enjoy.

### **The Museum**

Our community museum continues to function as an integral component of the heritage experience at Dundonald Castle, attracting both domestic and international visitors and locals. Interpretation boards, archive exhibitions and a small display of local artefacts enhance the experience of both visitors and participants of our Education and Community Heritage Programme.

The year began with a display on Dundonald Castle and the Wars of Independence. In June, the team worked with the Dundonald Historical & Archives Society to curate an archive exhibition to celebrate the visit of the Clan Cochrane from the USA. The following month an exhibition was curated celebrating Robert the Bruce as part of a national celebration of Robert the Bruce's 750<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Work began on creating museum policies and procedures in preparation for entry in to the museum accreditation process. This includes not only amendments to the constitution which were approved at our AGM, but also the recording and provenance tracing for our collections, and the creation of collection care, disposal and acquisition policies.

Ongoing discussions have taken place with an award-winning 3D reconstruction artist to discuss options for creation of 3D models of both the current castle and Old Auchans House, both of which will greatly enhance the visitor experience. We were unsuccessful in our application to the Castle Studies Trust for funding to support but have since have identified other potential funding sources to advance this important project.

### **Retail**

Retail has continued to gain momentum in the last year, with increased sales on 2023.

We currently stock 25+ local crafters, showcasing a wide variety of products from locally inspired books to handmade items, local honey and candles, all of which are well received by our customers. Our crafters are promoted and highlighted online through our website and social media channels, driving sales.

Additionally we use a wide range of wholesale suppliers to source a range of items, many personalised to Dundonald Castle.

### **Weddings**

In 2024, FoDC hosted six wedding ceremonies at the Castle, along with a wedding photo shoot for a couple who were married at another location but who wanted to incorporate Dundonald Castle into their special day. These occasions not only showcase the unique beauty and historic charm of the site but also contribute to raising the Castle's profile as a memorable venue for special events.

To support and promote this growing aspect of our activities, we developed a new online weddings brochure, providing prospective couples with comprehensive information on booking options, packages and the distinctive appeal of an intimate Castle wedding (Appendix 6). We also refreshed the content on our main weddings page and updated our presence on relevant online directories, helping to broaden our reach and attract new enquiries for the year ahead.

### **Community Heritage & Education Programme**

#### Education Programme

Throughout 2024, our education programme continued to thrive with the team delivering onsite, bespoke, 4-hour sessions tied directly to the Curriculum for Excellence.

Our 2024 attendee numbers increased slightly with 2369 attendees across 77 total sessions (against 88 sessions with 2211 recorded attendees in 2023). This was despite some external challenges throughout the year.

External outreach sessions also increased in 2024 and the team carried out nine outreach visits including to Dundonald House, Woodlands Primary Career's Day, and talks to various community groups and guilds in the area. A total of 283 participants were reached, compared with 6 outreach sessions and 135 participants in 2023.

One of the main challenges we became aware of in 2024 was the impact of budget constraints within the education sector. This was primarily evidenced through a drop in our annual bookings. Several returning schools who were unable to rebook with us cited new financial constraints, mostly in regards to transport costs. This was despite partial funding through the Scottish Travel Grant Subsidy. In response we offered tailored visits where possible for multiple classes to visit together.

We also welcomed a number of local groups and organisations including Scouts, Beavers, and Thriving Families (SAC).

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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Participating groups and schools visited from nine Council areas:

- South Ayrshire
- East Ayrshire
- North Ayrshire
- East Dunbartonshire
- Renfrewshire
- East Renfrewshire
- North Lanarkshire
- South Lanarkshire
- Glasgow

Teacher and leader evaluations for the programme continued to score 10/10 in all areas, including links to curriculum, activities delivered and the booking process.

In 2024, our relationship with Dundonald Primary remained strong and we supported a Gaelic visit from the P4-5's, a special Egyptian/Archaeology themed session for the P3s, as well as visits from all of the pupils at the school to facilitate bespoke storytelling sessions on world Book Day. Working alongside the Scottish Stonemasons Marks Project, we welcomed Dundonald PS P5s and P7s to the castle for a masons' mark hunt in May, whilst P6/P7 classes joined us for our community archaeological digs in September.

Public donations and financial investment prioritised the care and maintenance of existing resources for the education programme throughout the year. This helped us to purchase new costumes for both the education team and programme participants to accommodate for the warmer weather.

### Events Programme

Many of our events are either free or pegged at pocket money prices to make them as accessible to all as possible. These are hugely popular and range from movies at the castle and free family fun days to launch Highland Games Week to Scavenger Hunts and Easter Egg painting and egg rolling, to music events.

### **January**

Music Events with the Gaiety Theatre: A Celebration of Robert Burns  
Evening Talk in the Visitor Centre

### **February**

Beat the Street with South Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire Roads Alliance

### **March**

2-day Easter Event featuring treasure trail, egg painting and a visit with the Easter Bunny  
Earth Hour Litter Pick

### **April**

Easter Sunrise Service with Dundonald Parish Church

### **May**

Fundraiser Physic Night with [REDACTED] (hosted at Dundonald Bowling Club)

### **June**

Game On! Event  
Pottery workshop with local business Coorie-in

### **July**

Outdoor Theatre Performance with Quantum Theatre Group: Jemima Puddleduck  
Family Fun Day: Launch for Dundonald Highland Games Week

### **August**

Yoga and Brunch  
Evening Talk in the Visitor Centre

### **September**

Music event with the Gaiety Theatre: The Rhythm Kings Dixieland Jazz

### **October**

Halloween Event: Dastardly Deeds at Dundonald  
Spooky Tours at the Castle

### **December**

Christmas Capers Event  
Night before Christmas

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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For the seventh year running, FoDC supported local charity the Night Before Christmas Campaign, hosting a very well supported public gift collection during November and December 2024. We also hosted a community wrapping afternoon for donations.

On 26 December, we opened the hub to again support [REDACTED] Fitness' Boxing Day Boomerang. This event, fully subscribed with 150 runners plus additional volunteers, marshals, family and friends, raised money for a local charity and brought a new audience to the Castle and Visitor Centre.

Additionally, throughout the year, we offered seasonal afternoon teas in the Visitor Centre, supported by Voluntary Action South Ayrshire. These events provided a warm, welcoming environment for our local community groups and residents to come together and enjoy the Castle in a relaxed setting.

Despite the overall success of our event programme, we did observe a decline in ticket sales for certain events, particularly our movie nights and the outdoor summer theatre. We believe this may reflect broader economic pressures and the continuing impact of the cost-of-living crisis. We are actively reviewing this trend and will take it into account when planning our 2025 calendar.

Collectively, these efforts underline our deep-rooted commitment to community engagement and ensuring that Dundonald Castle remains a vibrant and welcoming hub for both local residents and visitors alike.

### Youth Initiatives

#### Junior Castle Committee

FoDC's Junior Castle Committee - The 'Crazy Castle Kids' (CCK) – retains a membership of 13 and comprises young volunteers aged 8-11 years.

Throughout 2024 our CCK helped to develop many of our community initiatives, providing assistance with our intergenerational community groups and at our family and community heritage events.

Proud ambassadors of FoDC, the CCK represented our charity externally during the year. This included the Junior Committee's first annual trip to the Glasgow Science Centre and via fundraising initiatives at Dundonald Primary School's Christmas Fayre.

#### Saltire Awards/Duke of Edinburgh Awards

FoDC are long-term supporters of both the Saltire Awards Programme and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Programme (DoE). In 2024 we were delighted to provide volunteering opportunities and support for four Saltire Award volunteers (aged 14-23) and three DoE volunteers (aged 14-15) to secure their Bronze and Silver Awards.

Our Saltire and DoE volunteers are offered a wide range of volunteering opportunities across the charity in order to develop their chosen skillset and achieve goals defined at the start of the placements.

These young volunteers continue to provide invaluable and wide-ranging support as Young Leaders of our Junior Committee, castle tour guides, event and wedding assistance, supporting the work of our community hub through befriending and helping with our daily community groups and heritage outreach.

### Marketing

FoDC continue to utilise digital media to keep in contact with our community and wider visitors. Extensive use of social media continues to promote all areas of FoDC with over 6,000 followers on Facebook and over 1,000 each on Twitter and Instagram.

Facebook continues to be our strongest platform and has proven to be an excellent free tool to share news with the general public, specifically information on upcoming events. Our engagement on these social channels continues to increase year on year.

Total Audience Reach:

Facebook: 466,341 total reach from Jan-Dec 2024 (337,649 in 2023)

Twitter: cannot track on new 'X' platform

Instagram: 4,120 total reach from Jan-Dec 2024 (4,823 in 2023)

We also set up a new mailing list to enable individuals to sign up to receive our regular e-newsletter. This newsletter is used to promote events, clubs and other activities delivered by FoDC. This is in addition to our monthly members' e-newsletter update.

We advertised throughout 2024 on a wide range of national, regional and local platforms to promote our services, including SAC's Destination South Ayrshire. Press releases post our Thistle Awards win has directly contributed to an increase in footfall to the site.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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### Awards

In 2024, FODC received, or retained, the following nationally recognised awards:

- Scottish Thistle Award Regional (West) Winners 2024: Celebrating Thriving Communities
- Scottish Thistle Award National Winners 2024: Celebrating Thriving Communities
- Trip Advisor Traveller's Choice Award Winners 2024: top 10% of the best things to do worldwide based on visitor reviews
- Visit Scotland 4-Star Visitor Attraction Award
- Green Tourism Bronze Award
- Voluntary Action South Ayrshire Volunteer Friendly Award
- Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland

### Financial Review

#### Reserves policy

The Reserves Policy provides protection against uncertainty over future income or the risk of unexpected expenditure. Funds held in reserve can be used to cover: -

- Unforeseen emergencies or other unexpected needs, for example an unexpected repair bill or funding for an urgent project,
- Unforeseen day to day operational costs, such as cover for long-term sick absence,
- Grant income not being renewed,
- Planned commitments which may need higher levels of reserves,

The need to fund short-term deficits in a cash budget, for example money may need to be spent before funding is received.

It is widely recommended that charities should have at least 3 months' expenditure held in reserves. Regarding the figure above, this means that FoDC should ideally hold £38,379 in reserve within our main account for general purposes. However, as we are currently recovering from a substantial period of closure, existing total unrestricted funds are only slightly above this amount.

In recognition of the current financial situation, the level of reserves will be set at £25,000, with a view to resetting reserve funds to the recommended 3 months' expenditure figure as and when finances allow.

During the year the Trustees established a designated reserves fund of £10,000. This is held in a separate bank account.

#### Risk Assessment

In common with many third sector organisations, the trustees consider the key risk to the charity to be the uncertainty of guaranteed funding beyond a relatively short period. Although normally open all-year, our main trading months are April – October, when we can expect many visitors to enjoy castle tours and attend various events. This makes our winter operating months somewhat of a financial challenge, with reduced income but fixed or, in some cases, higher running costs (eg. heating). Coupled with uncertainty over whether visitor numbers will return to pre-pandemic levels, it is essential for FoDC to hold a particular level of reserves. In addition, this may help donors and funders to see where funding gaps are and how they can help meet our funding requirements.

In terms of day-to-day activities, the organisation understands that the protection of staff and volunteers is also a potential risk. Health and safety policies, insurance cover are implemented to reduce the risks. The Board continues to review the charity's key risks with a view to ensuring that robust procedures are in place to manage these risks in so far as is reasonably practicable. A formal risk register is being developed by the Board.

#### Review of Financial Period

The overall result for the period was an excess of expenditure over income of £3,645 (2023: surplus £58,133), after the depreciation on fixed assets of £2,150 (2023: £1,960). Total funds carried forward at 31 December 2024 were £124,423 (2023: £128,068) including £41,280 (2023: £39,735) net book value of fixed assets which has been designated into a separate capital fund.

#### Core Funding

##### Service Level Agreements

A number of Service Level Agreements (SLA) have been negotiated with external stakeholders and partners.

A Collaboration Agreement with our partners Historic Environment Scotland (HES) provides support towards the delivery of onsite visitor operations.

Membership of South Ayrshire Council's Comfort Scheme helps to support our provision of public toilet access for the village of Dundonald and surrounding area.

In 2024, agreement for financial support has been reached with South Ayrshire Council's Thriving Communities to deliver a wide range of activities and events for Thriving Community clients throughout the year.

Arrangements have been made with Thriving Communities to support three paid placements through the EVOLVE and ERI employment programmes.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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Negotiation with a local secondary school to support the annual provision of three paid placements over a 38 week period has been finalised at the end of 2024.

### Grants

ARIA – Community Asset Maintenance - £1,836

ARIA – Main Fund - £8,029

Fife Creamery Community Fund - £1,500

South Ayrshire Council Community Empowerment Fund - £4,950

South Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership - £3,000

Troon Decides - £1,380

### **Finance**

This year with the agreement with the Board of Trustees there have been several positive changes implemented to our financial management of the Charity. It was decided that we move to a more local accountancy firm. The Treasurer and General Manager carried out due diligence on several companies and with the Board agreement we moved to JRD Partnership Kilmarnock.

FoDC also employed this company to facilitate payroll. It was pointed out that it was a more prudent use of Charity money to pay monthly as opposed to weekly. A consultation exercise involving all staff took place seeking their agreement for this change to take place. Staff agreed as did the trustees and this change took place; by doing so our costs have been reduced.

Given our cash receipts of over £250,000 we were advised that the accrual system of accounting would have to be implemented to meet all financial legalities.

The acquisition of grants remains a high priority to meet our operating costs. We have been successful in obtaining grant funding covering partial staffing costs and maintenance of the Community Hub. Funding activities alongside careful review of internal and external costs such as insurance, security and maintenance contracts ensure prudent and economic financial management of all monies available to the Charity. The installation and operation of the Square System has been of great assistance in tracking payroll and collation of data which allows careful financial reporting and planning.

During the financial year we have been successful in negotiating a number of new SLAs which have contributed to financial security. We have also had a building condition survey carried out, leading to a fully costed maintenance register schedule. During this financial year we have carried out a full and comprehensive review of our HR and Compliance systems to meet all legal requirements.

FoDC have used our 2024 feasibility study and business plan to inform the need our proposed building extension and have sought the best and most realistic costs for the project. The extension will provide opportunities for the Charity to increase our revenue generation, support our capacity building and enhance our offer to our community and visitors alike but it can only progress if we work to secure substantial grant funding.

### **Future Plans**

#### **Building Extension**

In October 2023 Community Enterprise (CE) were commissioned by FoDC to carry out a Feasibility Study and produce a new updated Business Plan for our charity. Following extensive consultation with the Board of Trustees, the Management Team, staff, volunteers, visitors and the local community as well as a number of key external stakeholders and partners, CE completed their reporting in March 2024.

Two documents were produced: Research Report on the Redevelopment of Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre; and a Business Plan: Expansion of Dundonald Castle Visitor Centre and Community Hub.

A key recommendation in both is that as our current space is at capacity, our services will benefit from an expansion to the current building. The current building is delivering an excellent level of service across a wide range of areas but it cannot work any harder for the charity and our users.

Throughout the year FoDC also sought feedback on areas for improvement through consultation and regular surveys of the team, users, visitors and community. The only suggestion for improvement consistently received is the need for significantly more space to enable us to continue to deliver and expand our current operations.

Discussions began with South Ayrshire Council to agree the Heads of Term for the sale of a small area of land adjacent to the current Visitor Centre & Community Hub on which a much needed extension may be built.

Meetings have also taken place towards the end of 2024 with a number of builders to identify potential building options for consideration by the Board of Trustees.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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### Travel Trade

In 2024, Dundonald Castle made significant strides in developing its travel trade offering, successfully positioning itself as a desirable heritage destination for international visitors and travel industry partners.

One of the year's most notable milestones was the bespoke pilot visit hosted for the Cochrane Clan on 15 June. The event welcomed 25 clan members alongside the Provost, Depute Provost, a council officer, and professional tour guide [REDACTED]. Feedback from attendees was uniformly positive, with many describing the visit as the "highlight of their trip to Scotland." [REDACTED] followed up with a heartfelt message of thanks, noting, "None have managed to incorporate the local community into their heritage as effectively as you have done. It was wonderful to see so much pride and enthusiasm in their history."

Earlier in the month, on 3 June, we also hosted a small group of American visitors arranged by a New York-based travel company. This personalised visit included a tour of the Castle and a light lunch in the Visitor Centre. The group rated the experience as "exceptionally good" and we anticipate this positive reception may result in future referrals or endorsements.

Further raising our profile within the travel trade industry, FoDC participated in an online product presentation to approximately 45–50 Destination Management Companies (DMCs), VisitScotland directors, and senior management on 10 July.

Building on this momentum, we actively developed our travel trade strategy, creating new marketing materials specifically tailored to the needs of the sector. These materials are featured in a newly dedicated Trade section on our website and distributed in collaboration with VisitScotland.

Our engagement with VisitScotland has been especially productive in this regard; in December 2024, we were invited to host a table at their annual DMC trade event in Edinburgh. This provided FoDC valuable face-to-face time with numerous DMCs, allowing us to showcase our unique offerings and further establish connections within the industry.

Following this success, VisitScotland extended an invitation for FoDC to host a Familiarisation (FAM) trip as part of their VS Connect Event, scheduled for spring 2025. This visit will provide DMC representatives with an in-person experience of the Castle and its visitor experience, and we look forward to demonstrating firsthand what makes Dundonald such a special destination.

These initiatives mark the beginning of a more strategic approach to travel trade, with the Cochrane Clan visit serving as our first foray into this new revenue-generating stream. Looking ahead, we aim to target the small group travel market, particularly during quieter months, to maximise visitor engagement and site sustainability year-round.

Our ongoing work with VisitScotland and international trade partners is laying a strong foundation for continued growth, with Dundonald Castle now firmly on the map as a compelling and community-driven heritage experience.



# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

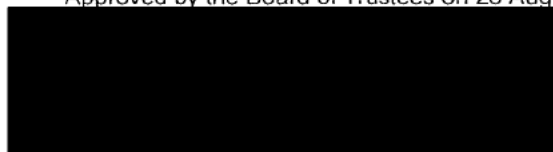
The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in Scotland requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the provisions of the charity's constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 26 August, 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Chair/Trustee

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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### APPENDICES

#### Appendix 1: McQuiston Bridge

<https://dundonaldcastle.org.uk/new-footbridge-at-dundonald-castle-opens-thanks-to-story-contracting-and-ayrshire-roads-alliance/>

#### Appendix 2: Thistle Award Win Announcement

<https://dundonaldcastle.org.uk/friends-of-dundonald-castle-scio-triumphs-at-national-scottish-thistle-awards/>

#### Appendix 3: Ayrshire College Promotional Video

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=742592278069684>

#### Appendix 4: USER SURVEY OCTOBER 2024

In October 2024, we conducted a new user consultation asking for feedback on how participating in our community hub/free group impacted our users; what services, activities or support they found most valuable, and what improvements or additional support they would like to see in the hub. Individuals were encouraged to anonymously provide feedback on post-its. We were overwhelmed at the response and feedback. A few examples are:

'What a great welcome every time we come! Lovely cakes and good company. Staff are second to none!'  
'Enjoy coming for the company and the fun we have. I look forward to it!'  
'Meeting friends, hearing about village life. Would love the centre to be bigger, love the staff, very friendly'  
'Lovely friendly atmosphere. Coffee always lovely and the people very welcoming. I come for the company and to sit and read, while enjoying the company. Could do with more space'.  
'This hub/group is very community minded and that is very welcome. Our scrabble group have been coming here for about 7-8 years and are always made to feel very welcome. I don't think the hub could be improved in any way.'  
'As a member of the Scrabble Group for the past 7 years I have found invaluable friendship in all aspects of the visitor centre. This is an amazing hub for all ages of the community. Always friendly and welcoming, a delight to visit.'  
'Making and meeting friends. The staff are first class. All the knitting ladies are wonderful. I don't know what I would do if the centre wasn't here.'  
'A reason to go out. Learning from group. Making and meeting friends. Nice friendly staff'  
'Attending the Knit n Natter has been a lifeline for me socialising with such lovely ladies at Dundonald Castle. I have learnt so much and improved my skills. It gives me confidence to go out. The staff are so friendly and supportive'.  
'It has made me socialise since Covid. The staff are so nice and friendly and make you feel welcome'  
'Dundonald Castle and Visitor Centre gives members of the community a chance to socialise with one another when they might not otherwise have met'  
'My mother and I both have mobility issues and the café is a perfectly central location in the village'  
'I don't think you can improve on perfection!'  
'The VC and its wonderful staff have saved my sanity whilst dealing with a baby with health difficulties and being unwell myself. The friendly atmosphere has created a sanctuary and community hub for so many people like me, especially when I don't drive'  
'It is a great place to meet and talk to people and I love all the opportunities I get to try new things'

Our team commented:

'I love my job and working for FODC. Staff are friendly and helpful, sense of teamwork. Love contributing to and witnessing the amazing and ongoing work delivered to the local community. I feel my work is valued and appreciated. Love the part time aspect and flexibility as it suits my family circumstances (unpaid carer). And it's local!'  
'I love working in a happy environment and enjoy fantastic conversations with new and regular customers'  
'The supportive nature of FoDC make coming to work feel like spending the day with friends and family'  
'I love how everyone is so nice to me. I am learning a lot'  
'After my personal circumstances changed I came back to work at the Castle because it's a friendly atmosphere, welcoming and every day is different'  
'I love volunteering at the Castle because of the sense of community I find there. There is a very real sense of 'family' amongst the staff and the volunteers and as a newcomer to the village I have made so many friends and it has helped me feel I 'belong'. I always feel better after I have visited or worked at the Castle. It gives me hope.'

#### Appendix 5: Scotland Loves Local Media Campaign Link

<https://lovelocal.scot/historic-attraction-makes-commitment-to-boosting-economy-by-choosing-local/>

#### Appendix 6: Online Wedding Brochure

<https://dundonaldcastle.org.uk/ceremonybrochure/>

#### Appendix 7: LIST OF ONLINE LINKS FOR WEBSITE PAGES & SOCIAL MEDIA

Dundonald Castle Website: [www.dundonaldcastle.org.uk](http://www.dundonaldcastle.org.uk)

YouTube Channel: [www.youtube.com/@DundonaldCastle](https://www.youtube.com/@DundonaldCastle)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/dundonaldcastle](https://www.facebook.com/dundonaldcastle)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/dundonaldcastle](https://www.twitter.com/dundonaldcastle)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/dundonald\\_castle](https://www.instagram.com/dundonald_castle)

TikTok: [www.tiktok.com/@dundonaldcastle](https://www.tiktok.com/@dundonaldcastle)

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

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I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 2 to 9.

### Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (a) to (c) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.


### Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

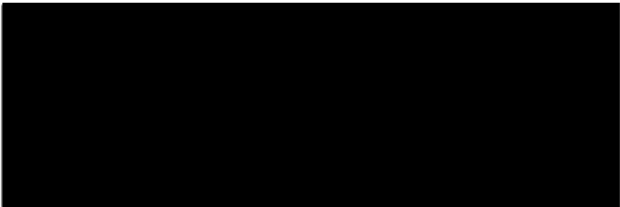
### Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- 1 which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations;have not been met; or
- 2 to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Chartered Accountant (ICAS)



26 August, 2025

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted General Funds	Unrestricted Designated Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023 (as restated)
	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
Donations, legacies and other	44,566	55,034	-	99,600	118,256
Charitable activities	-	128,598	-	128,598	99,549
Investments	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>44,566</b>	<b>183,632</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>228,198</b>	<b>217,805</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Costs of raising funds	-	1,009	-	1,009	1,950
Charitable activities	77,961	150,723	2,150	230,834	157,722
Other	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>77,961</b>	<b>151,732</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>231,843</b>	<b>159,672</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>	<b>(33,395)</b>	<b>31,900</b>	<b>(2,150)</b>	<b>(3,645)</b>	<b>58,133</b>
Capital expenditure	(1,800)	(1,895)	3,695	-	-
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(10,000)</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>(35,195)</b>	<b>20,005</b>	<b>11,545</b>	<b>(3,645)</b>	<b>58,133</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>					
Total funds brought forward	56,198	32,135	39,735	128,068	69,935
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>21,003</b>	<b>52,140</b>	<b>51,280</b>	<b>124,423</b>	<b>128,068</b>

An analysis of Income and Expenditure is included at Note 11 to the financial statements.

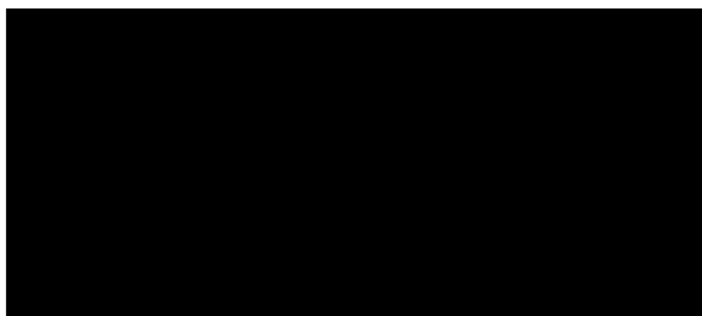
Expenditure is allocated to the above cost categories on the basis of the accounting policy disclosed at Note 1 (d) to the financial statements.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	2024		2023 (as restated)	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible assets	5		41,280		39,735
			<u>41,280</u>		<u>39,735</u>
<b>Current assets</b>					
Debtors	6	1,160		1,296	
Cash at bank and in hand	7	88,301		91,998	
		<u>89,461</u>		<u>93,294</u>	
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	8	(6,318)		(4,961)	
Net current assets			<u>83,143</u>		<u>88,333</u>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>			<u><b>124,423</b></u>		<u><b>128,068</b></u>
<b>Funds</b>					
Restricted income funds	9/10		21,003		56,198
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds	9/10	52,140		32,135	
Designated funds	9/10	<u>51,280</u>		<u>39,735</u>	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>103,420</u>		<u>71,870</u>
<b>Total Charity Funds</b>			<u><b>124,423</b></u>		<u><b>128,068</b></u>

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 26 August, 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

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**1 Accounting policies**

The principal accounting policies are summarised below. The accounting policies have been applied consistently throughout the period and in the preceding year.

**(a) Basis of accounting**

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, and in accordance with the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities issued in March 2005. The comparative figures have been restated from cash accounting to accruals accounting.

**(b) Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the charity.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

Restricted funds are subjected to restrictions on their expenditure imposed by the donor or grantor.

Transfers between funds are made at the discretion of the trustees taking into consideration any restrictions imposed on funds.

**(c) Income**

All income is included in the statement of financial activities when the charity is entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

Donations and legacies are received by way of grants, donations and gifts and is included in full in the Statement of Financial Activities when receivable. Grants, where entitlement is not conditional on the delivery of a special performance by the charity, are recognised when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the grant.

Donated services and facilities are included at the value to the charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by volunteers has not been included in these accounts.

Investment income is included when receivable.

Income from grants, where related to performance and specific deliverables, is accounted for as the charity earns the right to consideration by its performance.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

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**1 Accounting policies (continued)**

**(d) Expenditure**

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred.

Costs of raising funds comprise the costs associated with attracting voluntary income and grants.

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs includes those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the Independent Examiner's fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity which are voluntary other than directors' travelling expenses reimbursed.

All costs are allocated between the expenditure categories of the SoFA on a basis designed to reflect the use of the resource. Costs relating to a particular activity are allocated directly, others are apportioned on an appropriate basis such as staff time pro-rata.

**(e) Fixed assets**

Fixed assets (excluding investments) are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. Minor additions costing below £250 are not capitalised. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over its expected useful life as follows:

Computer equipment- straight line over 5 years

Fixtures and fittings - straight line over 10 years

The Visitor Centre is currently not depreciated, pending a planned extension project. An appropriate depreciation policy will be established when this project is finalised.

**2 Taxation**

The organisation is a registered Scottish charity and no corporation tax liability arises. The charity is VAT registered and VAT is deducted from the relevant category of income and expenditure.

**3 Trustee Remuneration and Related Party Transactions**

Trustees are reimbursed for expenses incurred. No expenses were paid during the year to any Trustee.

No Trustee or other person related to the charity had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the charity during the period. This is with the exception of purchases totalling £140.02 from [REDACTED] director, which were at arm's length.

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

### 4 Staff costs and numbers

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and wages	149,945	101,039
Social security costs	673	367
Pension costs	1,743	1,391
	<b>152,361</b>	<b>102,797</b>

### 5 Tangible fixed assets

	Visitor Centre £	Computer Equipment £	Fixtures & Fittings £	Total £
<b>Cost</b>				
At 1 January 2024	29,087	5,990	7,623	42,700
Additions	1,800	-	1,895	3,695
At 31 December 2024	<b>30,887</b>	<b>5,990</b>	<b>9,518</b>	<b>46,395</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>				
At 1 January 2024	-	925	2,040	2,965
Charge for the period	-	1,198	952	2,150
At 31 December 2024	<b>-</b>	<b>2,123</b>	<b>2,992</b>	<b>5,115</b>
<b>Net book value</b>				
At 31 December 2024	<b>30,887</b>	<b>3,867</b>	<b>6,526</b>	<b>41,280</b>
<b>Net book value</b>				
At 31 December 2023	<b>29,087</b>	<b>5,065</b>	<b>5,583</b>	<b>39,735</b>

### 6 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade Debtors	575	1,296
Accrued Income	585	-
	<b>1,160</b>	<b>1,296</b>



# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

### 7 Bank balances

	2024 £	2023 £
Main account	57,271	68,962
Restricted funds account	21,003	22,983
Reserve account	10,000	-
Cash balances	27	53
	<b>88,301</b>	<b>91,998</b>

### 8 Creditors : amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade Creditors	1,051	267
Payroll Creditors	570	441
Accrued Charges	1,350	1,000
Deferred Income	708	408
VAT Creditor	2,639	2,845
	<b>6,318</b>	<b>4,961</b>

### 9 Analysis of Net Assets Between Funds

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted General Funds £	Unrestricted Designated Funds £	Total Funds £
Fixed Assets	-	-	41,280	41,280
Current Assets	21,003	58,458	10,000	89,461
Current Liabilities	-	(6,318)	-	(6,318)
Net Assets	<b>21,003</b>	<b>52,140</b>	<b>51,280</b>	<b>124,423</b>

Details of Significant Funds:-

#### Unrestricted Designated Capital Fund

This represents the net book value of tangible and intangible fixed assets (note 5).

#### Unrestricted General Funds

This is effectively the charity's reserve which can spent at the discretion of the Trustees.

#### Restricted Funds

Restricted funds may be used for specific purpose. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for specific purposes, as follows:-

McDonalds Foundation : Funding for youth, community and family events

Troon Decides: Funding for friendship and companion groups

VASA and SAC Thriving Communities ERI: Funding for job creation for 16-24 year olds.

## 10 Analysis of Statement of Financial Activities

	RESTRICTED FUNDS										UNRESTRICTED FUNDS				DESIGNATED FUNDS				TOTAL FUNDS	
	McDonald	Troon		SAC Thriving	SAC		Foundation				Total	Total	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Unrestricted	Total	Total
	Foundation	Decides	VASA	Communities	Community	SAC ARIA	Scotland	SEGAR	SAC	Donations / Events	Restricted Funds 31.12.24	Restricted Funds 31.12.23 (as restated)	General Funds 31.12.24	General Funds 31.12.23 (as restated)	Designated Reserve Fund	Designated Capital Fund	Designated Funds 31.12.24	Designated Funds 31.12.23 (as restated)	Funds 31.12.24	Funds 31.12.23 (as restated)
<b>Income</b>	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<i>Grants and contributions</i>																				
Donations & Subscriptions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,762	1,762	525	5,728	5,212	-	-	-	-	7,490	5,737
Troon Decides	-	4,380	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,380	1,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,380	1,000
McDonalds	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000
Foundation Scotland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,000
Voluntary Action South Ayrshire	-	-	12,649	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,649	33,215	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,649	33,215
South Ayrshire Council	-	-	-	9,960	-	9,865	-	-	5,950	-	25,775	22,515	1,200	1,200	-	-	-	-	26,975	23,715
Historic Environment Scotland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48,106	44,589	-	-	-	-	48,106	44,589
	-	4,380	12,649	9,960	-	9,865	-	-	5,950	1,762	44,566	67,255	55,034	51,001	-	-	-	-	99,600	118,256
<i>Charitable activities</i>																				
Retail, Admissions, Catering & Events	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	109,704	75,914	-	-	-	-	109,704	75,914
Education Visits	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,629	9,499	-	-	-	-	5,629	9,499
Online Admissions & Events	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,973	7,691	-	-	-	-	6,973	7,691
Weddings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6,292	5,333	-	-	-	-	6,292	5,333
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,112	-	-	-	-	-	1,112
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	128,598	99,549	-	-	-	-	128,598	99,549
<i>Investments</i>																				
Bank Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Income</b>	-	4,380	12,649	9,960	-	9,865	-	-	5,950	1,762	44,566	67,255	183,632	150,550	-	-	-	-	228,198	217,805
<b>Expenditure</b>																				
<i>Cost of raising funds</i>																				
Charitable activities:																				
Charitable expenditure	2,911	420	40,790	9,960	-	6,660	5,000	6,385	4,437	1,398	77,961	18,052	149,373	136,210	-	-	-	-	227,334	154,262
Support costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,150	2,150	1,960	2,150	1,960
Governance costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,350	1,500	-	-	-	-	1,350	1,500
	2,911	420	40,790	9,960	-	6,660	5,000	6,385	4,437	1,398	77,961	18,052	150,723	137,710	-	2,150	2,150	1,960	230,834	157,722
<i>Other</i>																				
Total Expenditure	2,911	420	40,790	9,960	-	6,660	5,000	6,385	4,437	1,398	77,961	18,052	151,732	139,660	-	2,150	2,150	1,960	231,843	159,672
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure)</b>	(2,911)	3,960	(28,141)	-	-	3,205	(5,000)	(6,385)	1,513	364	(33,395)	49,203	31,900	10,890	-	(2,150)	(2,150)	(1,960)	(3,645)	58,133
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>	-	-	-	-	-	(1,800)	-	-	-	-	(1,800)	-	(1,895)	(7,773)	-	3,695	3,695	7,773	-	-
<b>Transfers between funds</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(10,000)	-	10,000	-	10,000	-	-	-
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	(2,911)	3,960	(28,141)	-	-	1,405	(5,000)	(6,385)	1,513	364	(35,195)	49,203	20,005	3,117	10,000	1,545	11,545	5,813	(3,645)	58,133
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>																				
Total funds brought forward	7,351	300	33,215	-	927	2,495	5,000	6,385	-	525	56,198	6,995	32,135	29,018	-	39,735	39,735	33,922	128,068	69,935
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	4,440	4,260	5,074	-	927	3,900	-	-	1,513	889	21,003	56,198	52,140	32,135	10,000	41,280	51,280	39,735	124,423	128,068

# FRIENDS OF DUNDONALD CASTLE (SCIO)

## NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

### 11 Income and Expenditure Account

		2024		2023	
	Notes			(as restated)	
		£	£	£	£
<b>Income</b>					
Donations & Subscriptions		7,490		5,737	
Troon Decides		4,380		1,000	
McDonalds		-		5,000	
Voluntary Action South Ayrshire		12,649		33,215	
Foundation Scotland		-		5,000	
South Ayrshire Council		26,975		23,715	
Historic Environment Scotland		48,106		44,589	
Retail, Admissions, Catering & Events		109,704		75,914	
Education Visits		5,629		9,499	
Online Admissions & Events		6,973		7,691	
Weddings		6,292		5,333	
Miscellaneous		-		1,112	
			228,198		217,805
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Goods for resale		40,660		30,304	
Wages & Pensions	4	152,361		103,238	
Advertising, Postage & Telephone		2,929		2,576	
IT Expenses		148		292	
Security Costs		753		1,450	
Utilities		8,263		2,952	
Repairs, Renewals & Equipment		608		342	
Subscriptions & Licences		1,949		2,377	
Bank Charges		1,936		1,576	
General		494		1,380	
Event & Weddings		6,617		2,580	
Education & Training		1,302		2,411	
Insurance		1,368		1,692	
Motor & Travelling		275		73	
Cleaning & PPE		1,746		2,082	
Independent Examiner/Accountancy Fees		1,350		1,000	
Payroll Bureau		1,404		887	
Other Professional Fees		5,530		500	
Depreciation Charge	5	2,150		1,960	
			231,843		159,672
<b>Result for Year</b>			<b>(3,645)</b>		<b>58,133</b>