

Registered Charity Number 297488

# Regional Furniture Society

Annual Report and Accounts  
for the year ending  
31st December 2025

## **TRUSTEES REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025**

The Trustees present their Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st December 2025.

If you wish to obtain further information about any aspect of this Report or the Society in general, please write to the acting Honorary Secretary:

Liz Hancock, Craigmuir Farm, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire ML10 6PT

### **SOCIETY OBJECTS**

The Regional Furniture Society has recorded its aims and objectives in the ‘Objects’ section of its Constitution. They require the Society to:

- advance the study of the history, design, production, distribution and use of regional furniture in the British Isles and areas under British influence, and of Continental and other overseas influences on British regional furniture; and to further public knowledge and appreciation of it.

To achieve this, the Society seeks to:

- encourage the conservation and preservation of examples of all such furniture and related archives both in museums and in other collections, and their current use as sources for study.
- encourage research in all aspects of regional furniture and promote the development of interest in regional furniture in relation to social and economic life and history and in the relationship between regional furniture design and architecture and other arts and crafts.
- publish material selected by its Editorial Board, organise exhibitions and meetings alone or in conjunction with other bodies, and record and store information in appropriate institutions.
- raise funds and invite and receive contributions from any person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation or otherwise, provided that the Society shall not undertake any permanent trading activities in raising funds for its charitable objects.

### **TRUSTEES**

The trustees who served from 1 January 2025 were:

Chair	Liz Hancock
Secretary	David Fletcher
Treasurer	Andrew Noel
Membership Secretary	Sally MacLennan
Events Organiser	Jeremy Bate
Journal Editor	Stephen Jackson

Newsletter Editor	Linda Hall
Bursary Secretary	Nick Humphrey
Website Editor	Julian Parker
Book Sales	Gerry Coughlan
American Secretary	Jeffrey S. Evans

Council Officers	Louis Platman
	Catherine Grigg
	Rosalyn Sklar
	Robert Williams
	Simon Feingold
	Rachel Sycamore

## **OVERVIEW OF MAIN ACTIVITIES**

The Society was founded in 1984. Its membership of over 400 includes museum curators, furniture historians, furniture collectors, furniture makers, restorers, antique dealers, auctioneers and students.

The Society has a programme of events which have often been fully subscribed. These events provide the opportunity to visit properties and collections that are not open to the general public; residential events allow members to see a very wide range of furniture in one area, which would otherwise be difficult. Occasionally overseas visits are arranged.

The main event for 2025, the Annual Conference, was held in Aberdeenshire with numbers similar to the previous year. While interest in the annual conference remains high, it is apparent that costs of holding conferences (both in terms of travel and accommodation) is escalating. The financial arrangements for the Society have traditionally used the surplus on events to add to subscription income in funding the Society's well-regarded publications. Escalating costs may not allow this to happen in future to the same extent as in the past.

The Society's grants and bursaries are funded from investment income. Unfortunately, recent events have reduced investment returns so funding of awards at their current level may eat into reserves a little. This means that for the next year or more both annual cash income and investment returns will need to be monitored carefully to make sure reserves do not decline too rapidly. An increase in subscriptions would be needed to maintain the value of subscription income, but this has to be balanced with the desire to retain membership levels.

A similar number of events were arranged as last year:

15-16 May - Cumbria and Lancashire, starting at Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, with a study visit of the furniture. The second day featured a tour of Turton Tower, near Blackburn, followed by a visit to Smithills Hall, Bolton.

3-6 July – Annual Conference, based at the University of Aberdeen and focussing on a study tour in the city and in the county of Aberdeenshire. David Jones gave the introductory lecture, introducing the rich heritage of this part of the North East of Scotland. Visits included King's College Chapel, Crathes Castle, Tilquhillie Castle, Kingcausie House, the Trinity Hall Trades Hospital and Drum Castle.

Although the Society has had some success in attracting younger members, the average age of event attendees is increasing and can be expected to continue doing so. However, ways of sponsoring attendance has been extended to other relevant Conferences on regional furniture topics.

The Society's publications, website and social media channels are used increasingly and appear to be the main focus of interest and hence benefit of membership for younger members. A review of the Society's media strategy has resulted in the decision to create a new post for a Social Media Editor, given its growing importance. There has been increased interest in the Society's material on YouTube, particularly the lectures on Windsor chairs.

## **MANAGEMENT OF THE SOCIETY BY THE COUNCIL IN 2025**

### **Grants & Bursaries**

Wycombe Museum's project to improve the condition and storage of the collection of regional chairs, for which a grant of £5,000 was approved, is progressing. A proportion of the grant has been paid.

As mentioned above, the prime source of funds for grants is the investment income, i.e. the invested bequests received by the Society. The Council had already decided that grants may exceed investment returns for outstanding applications thereby reducing investment capital, but previous levels of returns are not now expected, increasing the risk of depleting reserves. If markets remain disappointing, further bequests would provide the way to allow the Society to sustain its grant giving. The Society is therefore encouraging legacy giving and with an ageing membership, it hopes for more bequests. However, with the escalating costs of events and recently depressed investment returns creating financial uncertainty, the Council will not add to that financial uncertainty by assuming further legacies will be forthcoming.

### **Investment Management**

The Investment Committee has three members of whom two have business/accounting experience and one has significant investment experience. A simpler target rate of investment was set last year and remains in place. Attention continues to be given to investment returns, the anticipated cost inflation and the likelihood of bequests. No restrictions on grants or publication costs have been necessary in this financial year. 2026 may bring greater difficulties.

### **Archive Management**

A detailed Archive Retention plan was agreed in 2021; some paper records have now been transferred to the Museum of the Home and others are being reviewed for archiving there. It is intended that later documentation typically from 2017 will be transferred electronically. A formal agreement with the Museum of the Home was agreed during 2022 and work under the recently appointed RFS archivist initially on physical records is progressing.

## **Succession Management**

As in previous years, new Council members have been identified to take the place of those retiring.

In 2025 the term of office of the Events Organiser and three Council Officers was completed; in addition, the Secretary resigned at the AGM in July. At the meeting, the Treasurer and two Council members, previously co-opted, were formally elected. A new Events Organiser and a Social Media Editor, the latter a new post created following a change to the Constitution, were co-opted at the October Council meeting and will be confirmed by election at the 2026 AGM. A new post of Minutes Secretary, not a Trustee post, was created and filled.

Work is ongoing to recruit a new Secretary.

## **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM was held in person only at the Annual Conference; internet problems prevented additional members joining on Zoom, which had been intended. Time was allowed for general discussion after clearing formal business.

## **Council Meetings**

Both the April and October Council meetings were held in person and by Zoom.

## **COMMUNICATIONS WITH SOCIETY MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC**

In a specialist society of this type a number of levels of communication are necessary:

Firstly, publication of the results of major or minor pieces of research in the regional furniture field is essential.

Secondly it is important to keep members abreast of Society events and developments and general Society news.

Thirdly it is important to share information about regional furniture and the Society with the wider public.

The Society uses three media to achieve this:

The annual Journal, *Regional Furniture*, publishes major research and is distributed to members. The Journal articles are also made available to the general public on the Society's website with a three-year time lag.

The bi-annual Newsletter publishes visit reports, short notes by members and regional museum curators on items of regional furniture and book reviews. It also provides the membership with Society news. Visit reports have an important role in allowing those unable to attend an event to share in the information and insights gained during visits. A decision was taken in 2022 to make past articles of the Newsletter available on the Society's website with the same three-year delay that applies to the Journal. Certain potentially confidential information will not be included.

The Website provides information to members and the wider public on the Society's activities and importantly provides an introductory guide to regional furniture for the general

public. Webinars, available on YouTube, a series of chairs of the month, useful links to other websites, and the Society's Twitter and Instagram accounts are all popular. These media channels now form an excellent starting point for anyone interested in exploring the world of regional furniture and are particularly attractive to younger members.

In terms of involvement of the membership in decision making, the AGM allows the Council's plans, policies and reports to be discussed and voted on by the membership and for Council members to be elected democratically.

## **CONSTITUTION AS GOVERNING DOCUMENT**

The Society is governed by its Constitution which was approved by the Charity Commission at its inception and has been revised periodically – significantly in 2017 and most recently in 2022 and 2025 with some minor administrative changes. This latest version was approved by the Charity Commission and is available on the Society website. In addition, the Society follows Charity Commission guidance on appointment, clearance and briefing of trustees, reporting of serious events, risk management including governance matters, and also on data protection, all of which are discussed by Trustees, with appropriate policies and procedures adopted at Council meetings.

The Society is an unincorporated association governed by its Council which consists of officers and members who are trustees. The Honorary President and Vice-Presidents may attend Council meetings but are not trustees. Potential new trustees are identified by Council members, who may consult or receive proposals from members. Where there is a vacancy during the year, the Council may co-opt the new Council member/Trustee to fill the vacancy, and this would then have to be confirmed by election at the AGM. Alternatively, the Council (or Society members) can nominate a member for election at the AGM. All trustees are subject to annual election at the AGM with limits on how long they can serve.

## **REVIEW OF CHARITABLE PURPOSE AND PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The prime aim of the Regional Furniture Society, as indicated above, is to promote the preservation and conservation of regional furniture, to promote research on regional furniture and to publish information relating to these subjects and arrange for important information to be archived. As an educational charity, pursuing those objects is the Society's main way of providing public benefit.

### **Research**

The Society encourages research by:

- a) offering bursaries to those carrying out research on specific areas of regional furniture, directed particularly to younger researchers;
- b) providing members who carry out their own research with a forum for encouraging and discussing results among peers, through its events and publications;
- c) holding a Research in Progress day in most years where the latest developments in regional furniture research nationally or internationally are presented and debated.

d) running a programme of events which allow members to become familiar with collections of furniture and their regional differences, including some which are not open to the general public;

e) Offering grants of up to £5,000 to facilitate more major projects, including archiving important regional furniture research, carrying out more major investigations than would be possible through bursaries, and supporting publication of significant books covering aspects of regional furniture.

## **Publications**

These are a major activity for the Society. As mentioned above, the Journal is published once a year and allows major pieces of research to be presented. Many articles cover recent developments or discoveries. By publishing the Journal to members and then putting Journal articles on the website with a three-year delay, members retain a significant benefit of membership but the wider public also has access to the Society's research. Articles are by members, non-members and by curators of particular collections. This is particularly useful as it can draw attention to important items of furniture that may not be well-known or well-researched and also to problems or issues with them and their conservation. It helps set an agenda for the Society.

The Newsletter has shorter articles and visit reports, both important for those who are less expert in the field of regional furniture and are trying to increase their expertise. It is hoped that the Newsletter may encourage them to do more to support the Society's objects, particularly research. The less formal style encourages wider debate about topics that are less well understood. It was expanded and reformatted in late 2019. As from 2022 it has been decided to make the Newsletter available in the same way as the Journal and with the same time delay.

The Society's website helps to raise public awareness of the complexity and regionality of vernacular furniture, thus helping the Society to achieve its objects. Website activity has continued to increase. The Society is developing an increasing presence on social media – Instagram and Twitter – which has allowed various examples of different regional furniture types to be shown and described. The Society runs a service, via its website, responding to queries from members of the public about regional furniture, which has the same aims of encouraging wider interest in regional furniture. Hypertext indexing of all Journal and Newsletter articles available on the website is well advanced and will enable members of the Society and the public to explore particular research interests far more easily. With new items like Chair of the Month and a wide range of links to other furniture organisation and museum websites, the website is a natural 'route in' for any-one wishing to study regional furniture.

## **REGIONAL FURNITURE SOCIETY TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

The accounts for 2025 show a deficit on the General Fund of £11,518, excluding the deposits paid for the 2026 Conference and prior to the revaluation of investments (2024: a deficit of £866). This reflects the disproportionate level of expenditure on the publication of Newsletters and Journals.

A programme of RFS events, including visits and the Aberdeen Conference, were held in 2025 producing a surplus of £1,841 which is added to the money used to fund the Society's charitable activities.

Grant and bursary spending totalled £1,539 which was payment of a proportion of the £5,000 grant to the Wycombe Museum from general funds which was approved in early 2024.

The Society's other charitable activities include publication of the Journal and Newsletter and the maintenance and updating of the website and presence on social media. Throughout the year cash on deposit and at the bank remained at a level sufficient to meet normal expenditure for a period of not less than three months.

The Reserve Funds, including those on deposit, continued to be managed by CCLA Investment Management Limited with their performance being monitored by the Society's Investment Committee which reports annually to the trustees. In 2025 the value of the Society's holdings declined by 3.5%. The RFS invests for the long term and the funding of its charitable activities is based on an annualised total return of 4.5% over a five year period.

At 31 December 2025 the net worth of the Society, including reserves and unrealised gains on investments was £141,317 (2024: £150,533).

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF  
THE REGIONAL FURNITURE SOCIETY  
IN RESPECT OF THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025**

This report on the accounts of the Regional Furniture Society (Registered Charity Number 297488) for the year ended 31 December 2025 which comprise the Trustees' Report, Treasurer's Report, the Statement of Financial Activities, and the Balance Sheet, is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with section 43 of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act).

**Respective responsibilities of the trustees and the examiner.**

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 43(2) of the Act) and that an independent examination is required.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts (under section 43(2) of the Act), follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 43(7)9b of the Act), and state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the trust and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosure in the accounts and seeking 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 accounts.

**Independent examiner's report**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- 1 Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - (a) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act
  - (b) to prepare accounts which accord with those accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act.

have not been met

- 2 To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

David Kingsmill FCA  
Hidcote Boyce Gloucestershire GL55 6LX

## Regional Furniture Society

### Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds			Total	Total
		General	Designated	Restricted	2025	2024
		Fund	Funds	Funds	£	£
		£	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>						
Incoming resources from charitable activities						
Subscriptions		13,444			13,444	10,699
Publications	1	50			50	30
Visits	2	960			960	70
Lectures and conferences	2	14,664			14,664	13,485
Incoming resources from generated funds						
Donations, legacies and grants	3	1,000		13,000	14,000	4,500
Investment income and interest	4	3,348	467	605	4,420	4,013
Total incoming resources		<u>33,466</u>	<u>467</u>	<u>13,605</u>	<u>47,538</u>	<u>32,797</u>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>						
Direct charitable expenditure						
Donations and grants	5	1,539			1,539	2,627
Bursaries	6	0	306		306	0
Publication of the Journal	7	13,903			13,903	3,112
Publication of the Newsletter	7	14,596			14,596	7,308
Visits	2	897			897	81
Lectures and conferences 2025	2	12,886			12,886	12,790
Conference 2026	2	7,164			7,164	0
Governance	8	767			767	1,300
Other resources expended	9	397			397	1,041
Total resources expended		<u>52,148</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>52,454</u>	<u>28,259</u>
Net incoming / (outgoing) resources before other recognised gains and losses		(18,682)	161	13,605	(4,916)	4,538
Other recognised gains and losses						
Gains (losses) on investments						
Realised						
Unrealised	4	(3,742)	(558)		(4,300)	3,353
Net movement in funds		<u>(22,424)</u>	<u>(397)</u>	<u>13,605</u>	<u>(9,216)</u>	<u>7,891</u>
Fund balances brought forward at 1 January 2024		120,275	16,092	14,166	150,533	142,642
Fund balances carried forward at 31 December 2024		<u>97,851</u>	<u>15,695</u>	<u>27,771</u>	<u>141,317</u>	<u>150,533</u>

**Regional Furniture Society**  
**Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 December 2025**

**NOTES**

1 Income from sales of the Journal, Newsletter and other RFS publications 50

2 Income and expenditure table for Visits, Lectures and Conferences

	Income	Expenditure	Surplus
Aberdeen conference	14,664	12,886	1,778
Events	960	897	63
Totals	<u>15,624</u>	<u>13,783</u>	<u>1,841</u>

Deposit paid for Weald and Downland conference in 2026 7,164

3 Donations received for the online publication of the Cotton furniture makers index by BIFMO ("BIFMO project"):

Furniture History Society	5,000
Museum of the Home	<u>8,000</u>
	13,000
Donation in connection with the RFS USA visit	<u>1,000</u>
	<u>14,000</u>

4 Investment income 3,591

CCLA deposit account interest 812

Lloyds current account interest 17

4,420

Investment income, interest and gains or losses on investments are split between funds in proportion to the 1 January 2025 holdings

5 Wycombe Museum grant 1,539

6 Bursaries granted during the year 0

7 Cost of designing, printing and mailing the Newsletter, Numbers 82, 83 and 84. (2024: Part cost of Newsletter Number 80 and cost of Newsletter Number 81)

14,596

Cost of designing, printing and mailing the 2024 and 2025 Journals. (2024: Part cost of 2023 Journal)

13,903

28,499

8 The Society's governance costs are for travel and subsistence for meetings of the Council. 767

9 Public Liability Insurance 77

Website hosting, social media, other technology spending 320

397

**Regional Furniture Society**  
**Balance sheet as at 31 December 2025**

	2025	2024
	£	£
Assets		
CCLA investments and deposits	97,851	120,274
CCLA investments designated by the Trustees: Dewdney Bequest	14,395	14,785
CCLA investments designated by the Trustees: Michael Legg Fund	1,301	1,308
Restricted Fund: Christopher Pickvance	9,911	9,505
Restricted Fund: Robert Parrott	4,860	4,661
Restricted Fund: BISMO project	13,000	0
	<u>141,317</u>	<u>150,533</u>
Less creditors		
Sundry creditors	0	0
	<u>141,317</u>	<u>150,533</u>
Reserves		
General reserves at 31 December 2024	120,275	118,213
Designated reserves at 31 December 2024	16,092	15,253
Restricted funds at 31 December 2024	14,166	9,176
Net movement in funds	(9,216)	7,891
General reserves at 31 December 2025	97,851	120,275
Designated reserves at 31 December 2025	15,695	16,092
Restricted funds at 31 December 2025	27,771	14,166
	<u>141,317</u>	<u>150,533</u>

**Balance sheet notes**

	2,025	2,024
	£	£
Cash and investment balances at 31 December 2025		
Knightsbridge current account	20,464	6,032
Christchurch subscription account	639	652
PayPal account	888	1,035
CCLA COIF Charities Deposit Fund	19,802	18,991
CCLA COIF Charities Investment Fund Inc	64,345	88,302
CCLA COIF Charities Short Duration Bond Fund Inc	21,178	20,705
CCLA COIF Global Equity Fund Inc	14,000	14,816
	<u>141,317</u>	<u>150,533</u>