



Guille-Allès  
Public Library

# ANNUAL REPORT

2024



# A WORD FROM CORNELIA JAMES, CHIEF LIBRARIAN

2024 has been a successful year for the Library. As I reflect on all that's been achieved, I'm filled with pride for the service, our team, and the community we endeavour to serve.

It's been a year filled with highlights, from another hugely popular **Summer Reading Challenge** to the launch of our **new public computers**; from playing our part in a bigger than ever **Guernsey Literary Festival** to the relaunch of our **Little Readers** initiative, which provides free books for all children under 4. It's also been wonderful to see our events programme continue to grow, with everything from boxing and table tennis to our very first **Murder Mystery**.

In recent years we've been delighted to see a significant **rise in usage** of the Library, and I'm very pleased to report that this trend continued in 2024. **Membership** climbed to a record high, with 20,405 Islanders now the proud owners of library cards. And it seems they're big readers – in 2024 **book loans** rose 5% to more than 132,000. **Footfall** was a fraction down on 2023's record figure, but still at historically high levels, with the final total of 160,201 more than 5% higher than 2022, and 7% above the pre-pandemic average. Per head of population, these numbers are all substantially higher than the average for libraries in the UK.

I'm so proud of my incredible team, who work so hard and with such passion and dedication to drive our Library to be the heartbeat of the community. On a recent staff survey, it was no surprise to see every single member of staff say that they believe in the Library's mission and values, and that they think the service has a positive impact on society. You don't have to spend much time in this building to understand why – the evidence is all around, from the children spellbound by stories

in the Children's Library, to the students revising for their exams, to the people of all ages learning to use the 3D printer in the Fab Lab. There's no doubt about it: **libraries change lives.**

Of course, these services do require significant investment, and that's why I've been particularly delighted this year to welcome so much support from the community through sponsorship, partnerships, grant funding, and donations. The Summer Reading Challenge, Book Week, Little Readers, and several development projects in the building were all made possible by sponsorship or grant funding this year. This will remain a key priority in 2025 as we work to ensure that there continues to be a sustainable funding model for the Library.

The end of the year is always a moment to reflect and take stock, and I'm extremely proud of everything that's been accomplished in 2024. This report relates some of the stories we've been most proud of this year – but the most exciting thing is that I believe 2025 will be even bigger and better. We have a number of important projects about to come to fruition, with work underway to relocate and expand the **Fab Lab**, upgrade the **study space** in the Hayward Room, open an exhibition for **Liberation 80**, and launch a new **Library App**.

Considerable efforts have been made on these projects already, and I look forward to sharing them with the community next year.

*Cornelia James*







# 2024 IN NUMBERS

160,201

visits



132,324

loans



1,761

new members



98,178

website visits



968

Fab Lab bookings



1,859

Summer Reading  
Challenge participants



*“I couldn’t love our Library more - it really is a fantastic, inclusive environment and the staff are friendly, kind and knowledgeable.”*





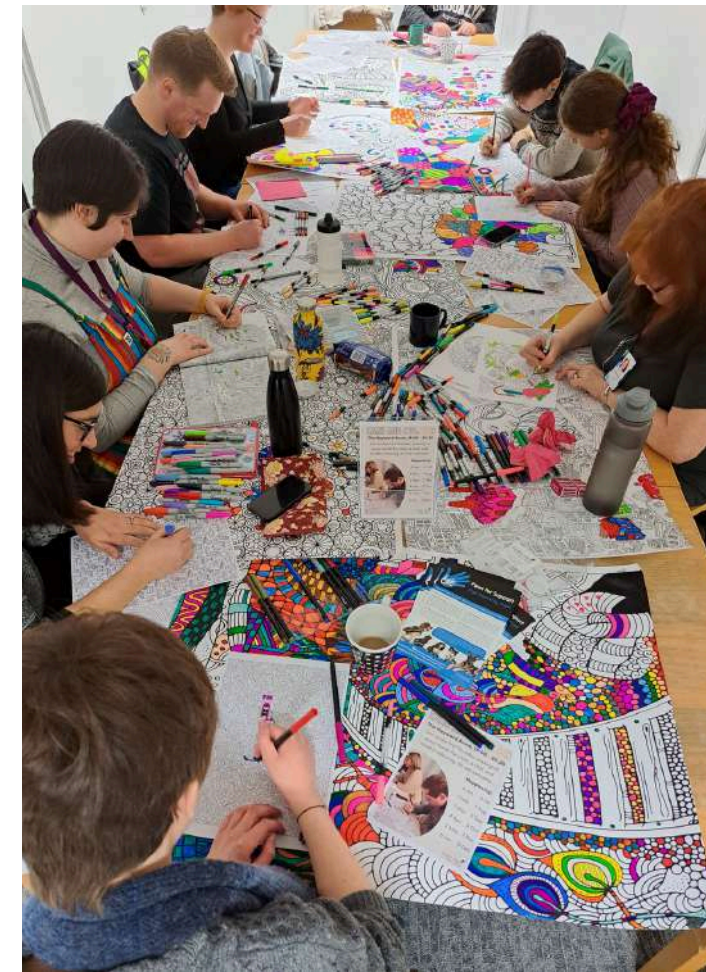


## RICHARD HAMILTON, MANAGING DIRECTOR

As we reflect on 2024, on behalf of the Board of Management I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the entire Library team. Their passion and professionalism are at the heart of everything the Library achieves, ensuring that this vital institution continues to provide an outstanding service to our community.

One of our guiding principles is that the Library should be for everyone, and in recent years considerable efforts have been made to extend our reach across the community. From students accessing resources and quiet space to support their studies, to young children discovering the magic of reading in the Children's Library, to adults engaging in workshops, events, and lifelong learning opportunities, we are passionate about developing and expanding our service to improve the lives of all Islanders. This will remain a key priority in 2025 and beyond. In particular, the upgrade of the Fab Lab is set to significantly enrich our service, making cutting-edge technology and creative learning accessible to all.

At the same time, we recognise the challenges ahead. Like all organisations, in recent years we have had to grapple with inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, and an ongoing focus for the Board is how to balance the continued growth of our service with increasing costs. Behind the scenes we are working hard to maintain and enhance the Library's vital role in the community, while at the same time ensuring financial sustainability.



To that end, I am committed to working closely with Education and the wider States of Guernsey to explore ways in which the essential services we provide can remain sustainable and viable in the future. We understand the financial pressures that exist, but we are determined to approach these challenges pragmatically to ensure that the Library Service continues to thrive.

2024 has been a remarkable year. It's wonderful to see that usage continues to rise, with membership and book loans at historic highs, and more people than ever now using and depending on the Library. As Managing Director, it's my responsibility to make sure that we are doing everything required to keep delivering the kind of service that our community expects and deserves. I have no doubt that 2025 will bring further innovation. With the continued support of our team, our partners, and the community, we look forward to another busy and successful year.





# 1. HIGHLIGHTS

One notable highlight this year was the arrival of **six new public computers**, made possible by an award of £10,000 from Dougie's Grant. The new machines are much faster and more user-friendly than the old ones, which had reached end of life. They are already making a significant difference to the many hundreds of Islanders who rely on the Library to access IT and the internet, and would otherwise be digitally excluded.

Another high point came in June when our librarian Jackie Burgess achieved national recognition for her work supporting blind and visually impaired people in Guernsey. Jackie was named first runner up in the Vision & Print Impaired People's category at the **Libraries Connected Awards** – otherwise known as the 'Library Oscars'. She was recognised for setting up our Stories on USB service, which supplies blind and visually impaired people with free audiobooks. That service is a lifeline for its dozens of users, enabling them to continue their love of reading even as they come to terms with sight loss.

Jackie's success follows the Boundless Curiosity exhibition team's win in the Culture & Creativity category at the Awards last year. Alongside a second consecutive feature in the annual Libraries Focus edition of publishing magazine The Bookseller – this time for our LGBTQ+ book group – these accomplishments have put us in the national spotlight, with the Guille-Allès widely seen as delivering an unusually impactful and innovative library service.

Most popular book: **And Away** – Bob Mortimer

Most popular children's book: **Oi Frog!** – Kes Gray

*“Thank you for fostering a warm, lovely, safe space, where all are made to feel welcome.”*





## 2. ADULT SERVICES

### GUERNSEY LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Library once again played a key role in the Guernsey Literary Festival, which this year was bigger and better than ever. The Hayward Room was the venue for a record total of 16 events, including with high-profile novelists **John Boyne** (*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*) and Claire Kilroy, whose book *Soldier Sailor* was shortlisted for this year's Women's Prize for Fiction. Other speakers included Guernsey-born author **Jacquie Bloese**, memoirist **Clover Stroud**, and local writers Andrew Doyle and Simon Hamon.

Author **Tracy King** – who credits libraries with “saving her life” during her childhood, and is leading a campaign against library closures in Birmingham – enjoyed a tour of the building before her event. She described our Children's Library as “probably the best library space I have ever been in.”

In addition to the events we hosted, we also organised the Festival's **community programme**, which saw authors visit care homes to speak at Tea & Tales sessions. These included a visit to Rosaire Court by **Terry Waite**.

### HOME DELIVERY SERVICE

In December we were delighted to establish a new partnership with **Guernsey Post** to ensure that our Home Delivery Service can continue into 2025 and beyond.

Originally set up through grant funding in 2018, the service has become a lifeline for a significant number of older Islanders who can't visit the Library in person. But with the grant funding no longer available, its future was uncertain – until Guernsey Post stepped in to help. Their support ensures that books and audiobooks can continue to be delivered free of charge to the homes of all 40 service users.



*“The Guille-Allès Library is outstanding in its range of materials, helpful staff, innovative events, and engagement with children. It’s an essential part of the community and the island should be very proud of it.”*

### EVENTS PROGRAMME

The Library's events programme has continued to grow throughout 2024. Alongside established favourites like Cake & Colour, Lit with Liberate, and the Reading Group, we had fun introducing lots of new events this year. Among the most popular were **Silent Book Club** – billed as being ‘for introverts who love books’ – and our two **Great Get Together** events in January and July. These were part of a national initiative designed to unite communities, inspired by the Jo Cox Foundation. Our team organised a varied programme of activities including crafts, meditation, and a pétanque taster session, plus choir performances and a visit from the Paws for Support therapy dogs.

### AUTISM ACCEPTANCE WEEK

To mark Autism Acceptance Week, in April we welcomed Martine Ellis from Autism Guernsey for a talk called **But You Don't Look Autistic**. Martine shared her story of being diagnosed with autism at the age of 43, challenging stereotypes and explaining the day-to-day exhaustion caused by ‘masking’ the condition. The event proved so popular that we added a second date, with both selling out quickly.

### DIGIFEST

In October we hosted a week-long festival of IT and technology events, giving people the chance to learn new skills, get expert advice, and find out how to make the most of their time online. We partnered with Guernsey Police and the Office of the Data Protection Authority to offer events including online safety workshops for parents and grandparents, plus talks on data protection and computer programming. It proved to be an effective vehicle to advance our goal of **tackling digital exclusion** and to promote our own digital offerings.



## PRISON LIBRARY

2024 was a busy year for the Prison Library. Guille-Allès staff have provided support for the new librarian, including working to update the collection in the Visits Halls for families to read together during visiting hours.

We've also supported the launch of a new series of educational talks in the library, and recorded numerous dads reading stories for their children as part of the **Storybook Dads** project.

## MURDER MYSTERY

In November we hosted our first Murder Mystery in the Library. 15 guests were called upon to **solve a murder**, touring the building and hearing from four suspects (played by actors from a local drama group) before voting on 'whodunnit'. The story was based on a script written for libraries by crime writer Ann Cleeves.

The event sold out quickly, and feedback was excellent – many people asked for more murder mysteries in future, including ones set in the Library itself. We are now working on a script for an Agatha Christie-style locked room mystery set in the Library during Guille and Allès' heyday.

*“May I just say a huge thank you to all your staff - the services they provide, the knowledge and kind attention they provide to members of the public, and for continuing to give the Island such a varied range of facilities, free of charge, to all.”*

## SAFER SPACES

This year we partnered with the charity Safer to support their efforts to tackle domestic abuse in Guernsey. They provided us with a mobile phone for victims of domestic abuse to use to make discreet phone calls from the safety of the Library.

Anyone can ask for the **'purple phone'** at the Help Point in the Assembly Room, then go somewhere private to call Safer, the Police, or another organisation that can offer support.





# 3. CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

## SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Our biggest children's reading initiative of the year, the Summer Reading Challenge is a hugely important and proven way to encourage young people to read for pleasure during their time away from school. The challenge is to read six books, with rewards on offer after each one and a medal for finishers. This year's theme was **'Marvellous Makers'**, inspiring children to express themselves in creative ways and tap into a world of imagination through stories.

1,850 children took part, with 821 of those going on to finish, and there were 17,522 children's book loans during the summer. Although these numbers did not quite match last year's record-breaking Challenge, they are still significantly higher than 2022 and prior years. They also compare very favourably against the national statistics, including the other Crown Dependencies.

We were extremely grateful to **Rawlinson & Hunter** for sponsoring the Summer Reading Challenge, and we're delighted that they've agreed to repeat this sponsorship in 2025.

## HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

The Children's Library was a hive of activity during school holidays in 2024. There were activities for all ages, with highlights including **Bad Art Night** for teenagers, some craft mornings run in partnership with **Art for Guernsey**, and a **Spooky Story Time** on Halloween.



## REGULAR ACTIVITIES

This year the Children's Team welcomed 2,037 children to more than 200 sessions of our regular term-time activities including **Tots** and **Baby Bounce**.

We also read to 359 children during 18 **preschool visits**, and welcomed a further 836 children to 63 rhyme time sessions at community settings, including **Bright Beginnings** and the **Kindred Family Centre**.

## LITTLE READERS

In November we launched our new Little Readers book bags. This initiative sees the Library provide the States Health Visitors with **free books** to give children at each of their preschool health checks, ensuring that every child under 4 has some books to call their own.

The scheme has been running for many years, but new support from the **Trustees of St Martin's Community Centre** has ensured it can continue into 2025 and beyond. Their sponsorship has funded the purchase of new, more durable and more sustainable book bags, as well as enough books to fill them for the foreseeable future.

The relaunch of Little Readers generated substantial coverage in the local media and lots of interest on the Library's communication channels, with the post on our Facebook page being seen by more than 30,000 people.





*“As a new mum, the Library is a little safe haven for me. If my baby needs feeding or we both just need a quiet few moments away from the busy bustle of Town, I know that we are always welcome and have a quiet space to cuddle up with a book and reset. It really has been a lifeline on some occasions.”*

## LANGUAGE FOR LITERACY

Throughout the year our staff worked hard to support the **States Early Years Team** on the delivery of their Language for Literacy programme, which trains the Island’s Early Years practitioners to communicate the importance of reading and rhyming to parents. As part of this programme, our Early Years Lead has visited schools and preschools to read stories and reinforce these messages.

In 2024, libraries across the UK have been the focus of a new campaign to help get children ‘school ready’, after a new poll of primary school teachers highlighted the crucial role that libraries play in helping young children settle in and succeed at school. 97% of teachers said they would advise a parent with a child about to start school to enrol them with their local library.



## SPORT IN THE LIBRARY

In November we partnered with the **Guernsey Sports Commission** to host our second annual Sport in the Library event. On a wet and windy Saturday, families descended on the second floor to have a go at a wide range of sports they might not have tried before, including boxing, fencing, table tennis, archery, and pickleball. The aim was to support our Health & Wellbeing Offer and to tackle some of the barriers around sport – to show that sport can be played by anyone, anywhere, anytime.

The event was extremely popular, with more than 850 people coming through the doors on the day – one of our busiest Saturdays of the year. It also received considerable attention in the media, including a lengthy piece on ITV Channel TV and a double-page feature in the Guernsey Press.



# 4. SCHOOLS

## BOOK WEEK

In the spring term the Schools Team hosted visits from three **popular children's authors** for our annual Book Week, which this year was made possible by a grant from the **Social Investment Fund**. Acclaimed writer and illustrator **Petr Horacek** spoke to students in Key Stage 1. He had them in fits of laughter as he shared advice on creating characters and drawing different emotions. He also ran a highly successful workshop at the Library on the Thursday after school – 30 children came along to contribute to an animal-themed mural.

Meanwhile **Karen McCombie**, author of more than 100 books for children, visited students in Key Stage 2. Karen used her sessions to debunk some myths about being an author, and to share some top tips for children to improve their own creative writing.

Finally, author **Christopher Edge** visited students in Key Stage 3, talking about writing and challenging them to solve puzzles inspired by his book *Escape Room*. A significant highlight was that, after bad weather had stopped authors going to Alderney for the last two years, Christopher was able to make the trip to the northern isle.

Together, our three Book Week authors engaged more than 5,100 children. Their visits triggered substantial publicity in the local media, with the Guernsey Press covering Karen's session at Vale School, and ITV running an extended piece on Petr's visit to Vauvert and his mural workshop at the Library, concluding with a live reveal of the finished piece.







## YOTO CARNEGIE BOOK AWARD EVENTS

In June the Schools Team ran two events at the Library for students who'd taken part in YOTO Carnegie Book Award **shadowing sessions**. These events are an annual gathering for children to discuss the shortlisted books with their peers from other schools, and vote for their Guernsey winner. This year's events saw a record number of attendees, with 110 students taking part.

## NEW READING INITIATIVE

In the autumn term the Schools Team joined a working party at St Martin's School to develop a new initiative designed to **boost reading for pleasure**. Each half term the school will set students a challenge to read a book based on a particular theme (e.g. 'Around the World'), encouraging them to read more widely and explore the huge range of topics and genres available in their school library.

The Schools Team are introducing each new theme with an assembly, helping to develop the collection in the school library to ensure adequate coverage for each theme, and creating stretch challenges for students who finish early. If shown to be impactful, we plan to replicate this initiative at other schools next year.



*"I adore the Library, it's a magical building and atmosphere. I am so grateful for all the hard work you put into making the service a pillar of our community and a safe space."*





## 5. FAB LAB

### UPGRADE

Over the summer we were delighted to be awarded a grant from the Guernsey Community Foundation to **relocate and expand the Fab Lab**. A project is currently underway to move the facilities down to the first floor, in the 'Multimedia Room' that previously housed DVDs. The result will be to significantly enlarge the Fab Lab, increase its visibility, and further embed it into the day-to-day service.

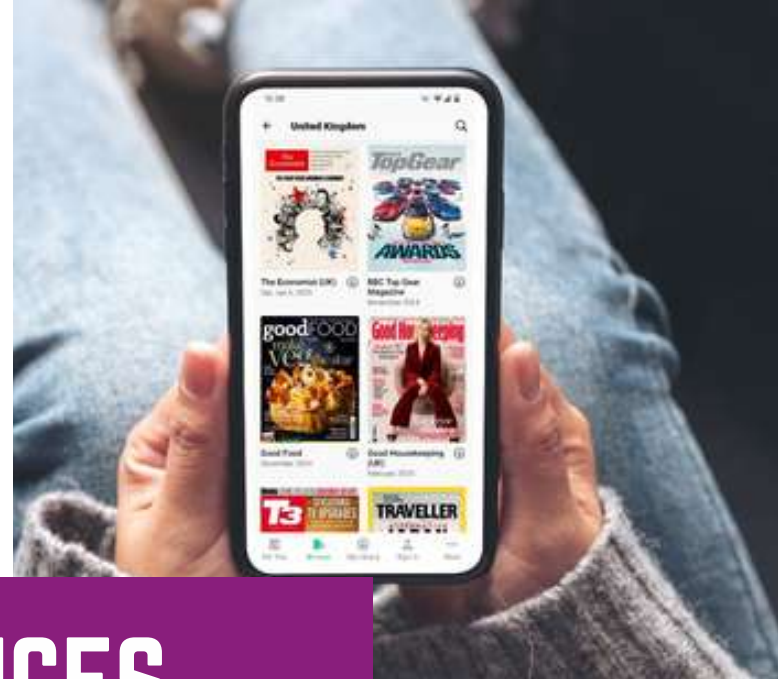
The upgrade will create opportunities to develop and expand the Fab Lab's **events programme**, which has grown considerably over the past year. There were workshops on everything from making trick or treat bags to creating birthday cards with the new Cricut machine, plus a very popular series of craft workshops for teenagers, frequent visits from the Art for Guernsey holiday club, and regular sessions with Autism Guernsey, the U3A, and many other groups.

In total there were 968 bookings in the Fab Lab over the course of the year. We expect this figure to rise significantly in 2025 once our new space is open.

*"The Fab Lab and all of its wonderful staff are total stars. My son loves every visit and he learns so much from the knowledgeable and patient staff. We are so grateful the Fab Lab exists."*







## 6. DIGITAL SERVICES

### EBOOKS

This year we streamlined our eBook and audiobook collections onto a single platform: **BorrowBox**. Previously, publishers tended to license their books exclusively to one eBook app, meaning we had to subscribe to several to provide a comprehensive collection. However, recently publishers have started licensing to multiple platforms, which has allowed us to consolidate everything onto BorrowBox.

The migration proceeded smoothly, with no issues arising and no negative feedback from customers. The publicity around the move helped to drive an increase in usage, with eBook and audiobook loans up 27% on last year.

In 2024 we have also placed considerable emphasis on promoting **Sora**, our reading app for schoolchildren. Most schools in Guernsey subscribe to Sora through the Library, giving their students access to thousands of children's eBooks. The Schools Team have worked hard to promote the app through special assemblies as well as newsletters sent home to parents, and we've been pleased to see a 51% rise in usage as a result, with more than 15,000 downloads in total.

### DIGITAL MAGAZINES

After the success of the BorrowBox switch, over the summer we did much the same thing with our digital magazine service, consolidating everything onto **PressReader**.

This has been received positively by users, and, as with eBooks, has resulted in an increase in usage. The number of downloads increased more than 30% this year to 115,000.



*"I've always enjoyed reading, but since having a stroke a couple of years ago I sometimes struggle with concentration. However, discovering the audiobook collections means I have another means of enjoying books - many thanks to the Library for providing this service."*





# 7. MARKETING & COMMS

## SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE

Throughout the year the Marketing team worked hard to develop the Library’s social media presence and drive traffic to our website. There was a 6% increase in website visitors this year, with more than 98,000 sessions in total.

Our most popular social media post came right at the end of the year, when a video parodying the ‘say it’s carol singers’ scene in Love Actually – **‘Libraries Actually’** – was seen by more than 35,000 people across Facebook and Instagram, receiving more than 1,000 likes.

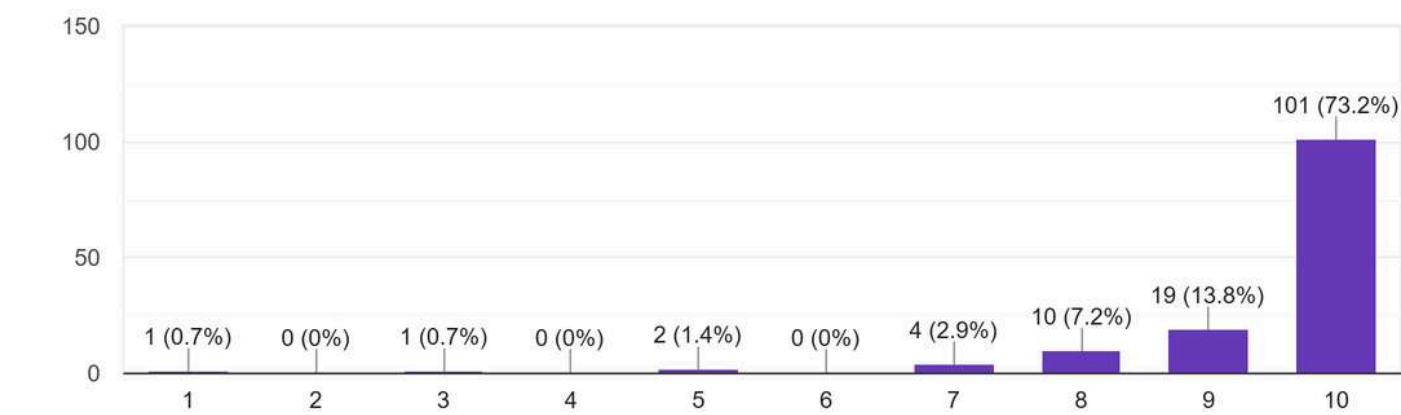
## CUSTOMER SURVEY

In March we ran a customer survey, inviting people to tell us what they think of their Library. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with our **Net Promoter Score** returning at 84.2. Net Promoter Scores are a trusted way of measuring customer loyalty and satisfaction – experts say a score above 0 is good, above 20 is favourable, above 50 is excellent, and above 80 is world class.

Meanwhile, in response to the question, ‘How important is the Library to the community?’, 88% of people gave a score of 10 out of 10, with a further 7% scoring 9 out of 10.

There were also some constructive suggestions for improvements. These included making the **layout of the Fiction shelves** in the Assembly Room more user-friendly; installing a **‘toddler-proof’ gate** between the two rooms of the Children’s Library to give parents peace of mind; and introducing **new types of events**, including knitting and creative writing groups. The ‘toddler-proof’ gate has now been added; the other suggestions will form part of our improvement plans in 2025.

13. Based on your experiences, how likely are you to recommend the Library to family or friends?  
138 responses



## BBC RADIO GUERNSEY BROADCAST

In September we welcomed BBC Radio Guernsey for a **special live broadcast** from the Library. Presenter Steph Watkins and producer Danny Parkinson were on air for three hours as they explored all areas of the building including the Children’s Library, the Fab Lab, and the rare book collection in the Board Room. They enjoyed a historical tour, discovering the story of Guille & Allès, before hearing in depth about how the Library is evolving and thriving today.







## 8. OPERATIONS

### BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

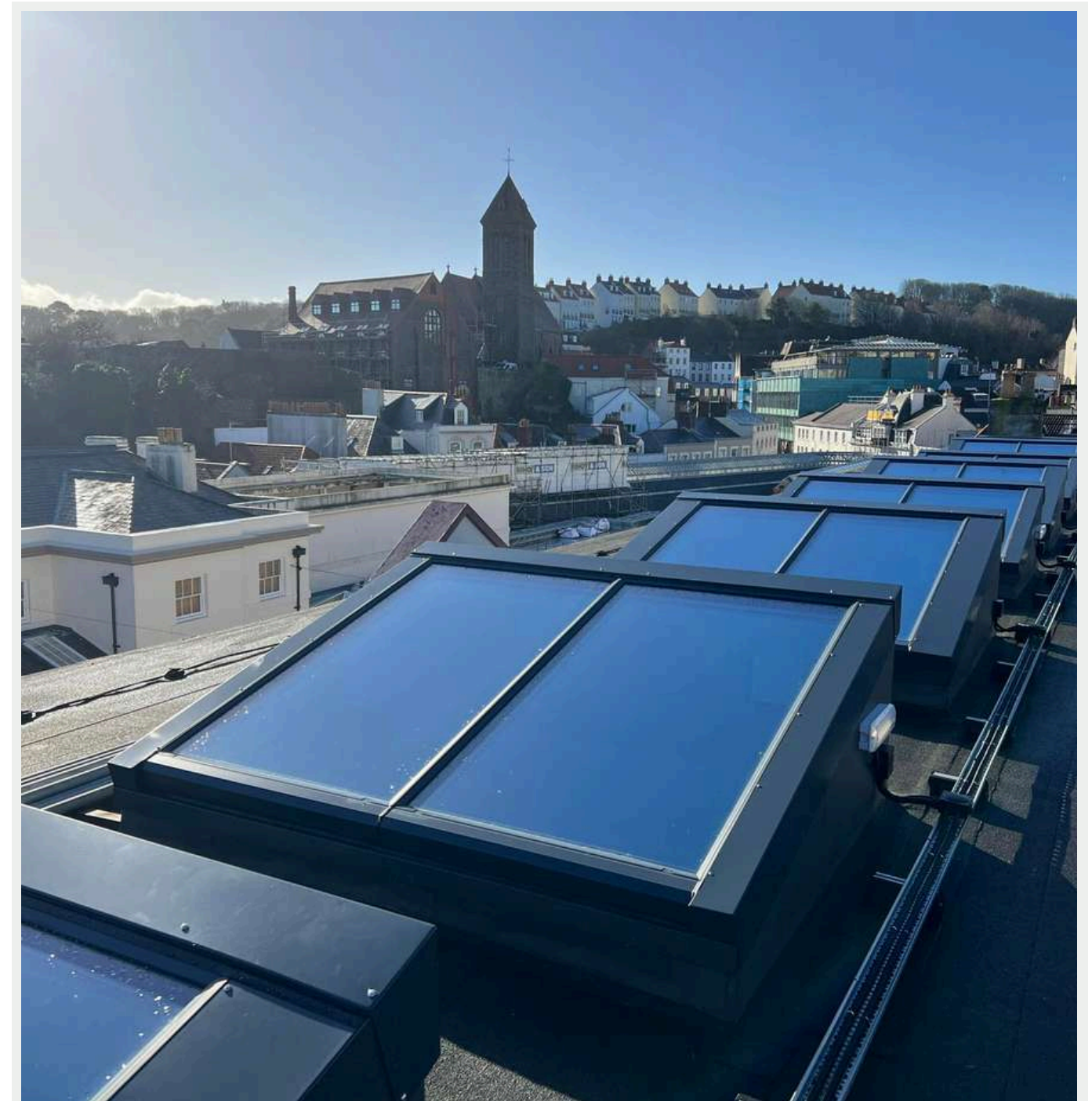
Over the summer, work took place to upgrade the Library's **roof lights**, replacing the old conservatory-style 'boxes' with flatter windows. The previous roof lights were not original to the building, and were only installed a few decades ago. They had reached end of life, and were beginning to leak during heavy rain. The new, triple-glazed windows are more eco-friendly and thermally efficient, and are more in keeping with the building's original Georgian design. The work was carried out with minimal disruption to the public, and was completed before the end of August.

### EBOX

In July we launched a new service, partnering with **Guernsey Post** to host one of their EBOX Parcel Collection Counters. People without a 'safe place' for deliveries at home can now sign up to have their parcels delivered to the Library for collection at their convenience.

The service is proving popular so far.

*"Our Library is one of the biggest treasures we have. The activities on offer are always engaging, and the staff are such a pleasure to be around, too. It has provided so much joy for me and my son."*





# 9. TRUSTEES

*Steve Williams, Chair of the Trustees*

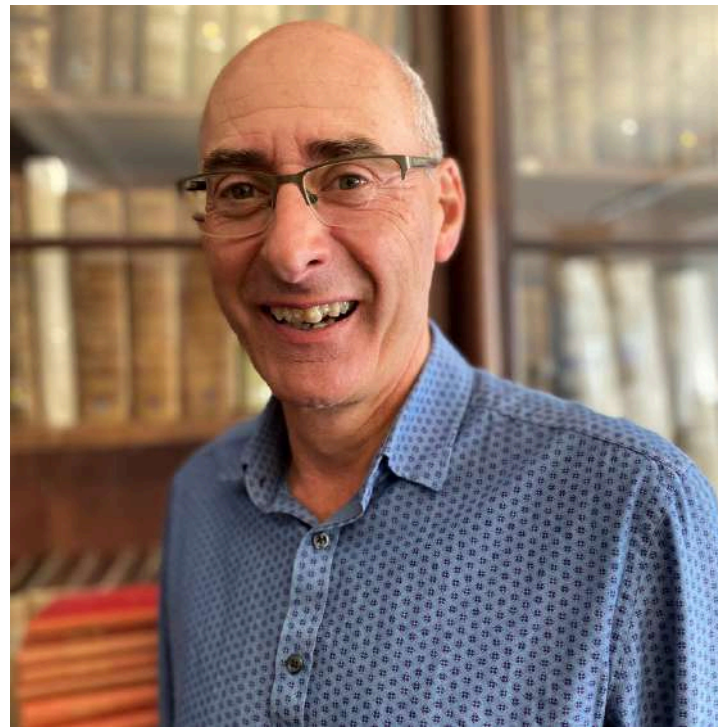
The Trustees are delighted with the staff for the excellent service to the public and their dedication to maintaining the Library during the year.

However, all is not rosy, as the Library is now running a financial deficit each year and we are steadily running out of funds. A major expenditure is maintaining our historic building, which costs us more each year than the States' grant we receive. Such improvements that we have been able to make are thanks to generous sponsors supporting specific projects. Building maintenance is the issue and it's a serious one.

We are exploring potential solutions such as how we might increase our income, and reduce our costs, as well as examining the services we provide to see what can be done, ideally without jeopardising the vital support that the Library provides throughout the community.

## **Trustees:**

Steve Williams (Chair)  
David Clark (Treasurer)  
Caroline Lane  
Simon Howitt  
Darryl Ogier







## 10. FUTURE PLANS

*Cornelia James, Chief Librarian*

2025 looks set to be another extremely busy year for the Library, with several exciting developments coming in the first half of the year alone.

January will see the launch of the bigger and better **Fab Lab** on the first floor, bringing this cutting-edge part of the service into a much more visible and accessible area of the building.

Once this is complete, our attention will turn towards upgrading our study facilities. We're extremely grateful to have received support from the Social Investment Fund and the John Ramplin Trust to conduct a **major refurbishment of the Hayward Room**, with the works scheduled to take place in February and March. We will then be pursuing corporate sponsorship for high-quality new study furniture as the next step to transforming that room into a world-class learning space.

Another key project next year will be the launch of a new **Library App**. The app will make it easy for users to renew their loans, access our eBooks and other digital resources, and even borrow and return items with their device. We're confident it will provide a significant improvement to our customer experience, making it easier than ever to use the Library. It should also be another great opportunity to generate publicity and raise our profile.

In 2025 we will also be partnering with Guernsey Museums, the Priaulx Library, the Island Archives, Guernsey Arts and the Royal Court on an exhibition trail for **Liberation 80**. Islanders and visitors will be encouraged to visit all the participating sites for a holistic view of the Occupation, the Liberation, and the aftermath. Guernsey Museums are working with us to house an exhibition in the Library about the deportations of 1942. This is set to open in April, and we expect it will draw lots of visitors, including tourists, to the Library.

Alongside these exciting developments, there will also be challenges. While usage is booming, the question of **future funding** is becoming ever more urgent. Inflation has led to a steep rise in the Library's running costs, putting considerable pressure on our finances. We're working closely with the Committee for Education, Sport and Culture to resolve this issue, while at the same time the Senior Management Team pursue creative solutions to both reduce costs and generate income. But there's no doubt that the question of funding will continue to be a key consideration in 2025 and beyond.

Whatever happens, I'm certain that our passionate and hard-working team will make sure that the Library keeps evolving to meet the changing needs of the community – in the delightful words of Mr Guille and Mr Allès, to show the “elasticity of adaptation” required to provide the kind of service that the people of Guernsey need in 2025 and beyond. I look forward to seeing what the year holds in store.







Guille-Allès  
Public Library

# THANK YOU

**Managing Director:** Richard Hamilton

**Trustees:** Steve Williams (Chair), David Clark (Treasurer), Simon Howitt, Caroline Lane, Darryl Ogier

**Readers' Representatives:** Ric Carter, Rose Ann Moore, Natalia Tanser

**Chief Librarian:** Cornelia James

**Senior Management Team:** Adam Bayfield, Jodie Hearn, Chris Jordan, Catherine Stuart