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**THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)**

(A company limited by guarantee)

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**REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITABLE COMPANY, ITS TRUSTEES  
AND ADVISERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

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**Trustees** (directors for the purposes of company law) Sylvia Gordon, Chairperson  
Andrea Morrow, Treasurer (from 31 May 2023)  
Norah Baillie, Treasurer (resigned 31 May 2023)  
Michael Potter  
Nuala Griffiths  
Maria Bradley  
Siobhan Brown  
Nicola McCleery

**Company registered number** NI034272 (Northern Ireland)

**CCNI Charity registered number** NIC100185

**HMRC registered charity number** NI01295

**Principal operating and registered office** 29 Chichester Avenue  
Belfast  
BT15 5EH

**Company secretary** Lisa McCann

**Chief Executive** Lynn Carvill

**Independent auditor** CG Taggart Accountancy Services  
17 Cypress Crescent  
Donaghadee  
Co Down  
BT21 0QG

**Bankers** First Trust Bank  
35 University Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1ND

**Solicitors** Edwards & Co  
28 Hill Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2LA

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

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

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The trustees present their annual report together with the audited financial statements of The Womens TEC (Training, Enterprise & Childcare Centre) Ltd (WOMEN'STEC) for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Annual report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a Directors' report under charitable company law. The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the charitable company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charitable company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Since the charitable company qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the Strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013 has been omitted.

#### Objectives and activities

##### a. Policies and objectives

**Mission:** "Enable women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented."

**Vision:** "An inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive."

WOMEN'STEC is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland with the following aims:

- To prevent and/or relieve poverty and advance education and training in Northern Ireland; and
- To provide facilities in the interest of advancing women's involvement in sectors of training and employment that have low levels of female participation, specifically women who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

The purpose of WOMEN'STEC is the advancement of education and the prevention and relief of poverty and unemployment, in particular of women and girls aged 12 or over living in Northern Ireland.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Objectives and activities (continued)

##### b. Strategies for achieving objectives

During 2023-2024, the strategic objectives as outlined within our 2021-2024 strategic plan, that have driven our annual operational priorities include:

1. Continued development of organisational resilience and sustainability;
2. Raise WOMEN'STEC profile and influence;
3. Increase social and cultural impact of WOMEN'STEC programmes;
4. Increase reach of WOMEN'STEC programmes; and
5. Assure corporate governance mechanisms.

In April 2023, the staff and board undertook a strategic planning exercise, supported by an external consultant, to reflect on the previous strategic plan period, and develop new strategic objectives as the organisation emerged from Covid and into an exciting, new period of growth and development. Whilst our previous strategic plan was to cover the period until 2024, it was decided that, based on significant changes internally and externally, it was the appropriate time to reflect, review and revise our strategic objectives. Following an intensive period of strategic planning and stakeholder consultation between April 2023 and August 2023, our new strategic plan for 2024-2027 was developed and launched at our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in September 2023.

Our new strategy sets out 10 strategic priorities that we will work towards over the next four years, building upon the foundations laid during the previous years and embracing a sense of optimism for the future. Our mission is clear: to enable women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented. Our plan is not just a roadmap; it is a living testament to our dedication to creating an inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive. The 10 strategic priorities that will drive our work over the next four years are as follows:

1. **Training of women:** Deliver high-quality training programmes to enable women to develop the confidence and skills and build successful careers, particularly in industries in which they are under-represented.
2. **Training of children and young people:** To work with girls to increase awareness of career stereotypes and opportunities in industries where women and girls are under-represented, particularly construction.
3. **Working with employers:** Work with employers and industry bodies to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce and workplace.
4. **Influencing public policy and practice:** Contribute to the development of government policy and practice in support of WOMEN'STEC mission.
5. **Research and evaluation:** Ensure the organisation has the appropriate data and analysis to operate effectively and continuously improve.
6. **Premises, technical and physical resources:** Ensure the organisation has the premises and other technical and physical resources to achieve its aims and objectives and these are effectively maintained and managed.
7. **Human Resources:** Ensure the organisation has the staff to achieve its aims and objectives and these staff are effectively supported, managed and have the opportunity to develop.
8. **Finances:** Ensure WOMEN'STEC has the financial resources it needs to achieve its aims and objectives, and these resources are effectively planned, managed and reported on.
9. **Communications:** Ensure WOMEN'STEC effectively communicates with all its stakeholders.
10. **Governance:** Ensure the governance of WOMEN'STEC complies with the requirements of the law and best practice.

Our strategic plan is underpinned by the values of inclusion, equality, empowerment and sustainability. In ensuring we are continually striving to work towards our priorities, we undertook operational planning in November 2023 to identify objectives for the first year of implementation of our strategic plan and will continue this process on an annual basis.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Objectives and activities (continued)

##### c. Activities for achieving objectives

In delivering on our strategic priorities, we have three core groups: women returners, children and young people, and young mothers, which our programmes and services are targeted to in working to achieve our charity's aims and objectives. There are four core programmes that target the three core groups; Connect 4 Women, Sustaining Tenancies, Building Futures and Promoting Opportunities: #NotJustForBoys. In addition, we delivered additional programmes which align with our aims and objectives and provide additional opportunities for the three core groups.

##### Connect 4 Women

This partnership programme between WOMEN'STEC, Glow NI and Shankill Women's Centre began year four in April 2023. The five-year programme, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, brings together the unique strengths of three women's organisations to provide participants (women returners) with activities, services and support aimed at improving life opportunities for women across north and west Belfast. Participants are offered skills training (accredited and non-accredited in trades and IT), adult learning (essential skills, GCSE Maths and English) and personal development, supported by other complementary courses designed to bolster skills and knowledge. It provides a personalised pathway of training and development in a way that is suited to their needs and personal situations, supporting them further with wraparound services such as childcare, health and wellbeing, and advice and support in accessing further training, employment or volunteering. This year, WOMEN'STEC continued to provide a range of construction trades and IT courses for 98 women. Courses included DIY (accredited and non-accredited), OCN Level 2 skills in garden horticulture, Introduction to Plumbing, 'Grow your own vegetables', driving theory, sculpture making with an International Sculpture Artists from Poland and a range of site visits. A Community Services Information Day was held with 10+ local community services organisations for women to find out more about additional and specialised support that is available within their communities, including counselling, addiction and advice services. The programme also provides one-to-one support to participants where necessary and this year, there was a significant increase in one-to-one support from the programme coordinator, supporting participants from help with financial distress and emergency situations, food bank support and domestic violence and abuse. As the programme enters its final year in April 2024, the partnership continues to engage with externally appointed evaluators who are reviewing and evaluating the programme, with an aim of producing a final evaluation report at the end of year 5, to support the partnership's futures plans for supporting what is viewed as growing need from this target group.

##### Sustaining Tenancies

This programme, funded through the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Sustaining Tenancies programme, entered its second and final year in April 2023. The programme was aimed at supporting two cohorts of women annually (women returners and young mothers), living in Housing executive homes to thrive in their home environment and increase their opportunities for life and work that will all contribute to increasing their likelihood of sustaining their tenancies and reaching their full potential. Delivery included an 8-week personal development programme, a 10-week home DIY programme, a 6-week life and employability skills programme, and one-to-one support with issues impacting their tenancies, employment or employability-related support, and emergency crisis support. Additionally, the programme facilitates open dialogue between participants and the Housing Executive, where they can discuss issues around home repairs and connect with their local Patch Manager. This year, the personal development programme, adopting a holistic and personal approach, covered topics such as habit busting and resilience, moving forward – financially, socially, emotionally, energetically, relationships, health and family, Relationships – what do good and bad relationships look like, Heal Yourself (Louise Hayes) workshops and relaxation techniques. Participants also met with the Housing Executive to find out more about the services they provide, learn about what maintenance / DIY work they are allowed to carry out in their own homes and to learn about employment and apprenticeship opportunities with the Housing Executive. The 10-week DIY programme delivered to both cohorts was aimed at empowering participants to be confident and to be able to carry out home DIY projects. Topics within this programme included learning how to use drills, hanging shelves and curtain poles, how to fix a leaking tap and bleed a radiator, tiling both floor and walls, wallpapering, repairing plaster board and electrics – changing light fittings and replacing sockets.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### **Sustaining Tenancies (continued)**

The participants also completed a personal woodwork project that they could take home, such as planters and coffee tables. The life and employability course aspect of the programme focused more on life skills and included sessions on healthy eating, fermenting foods, growing herbs and vegetables, managing stress and anxiety and household budgeting, and included a session delivered by the Consumer Council for NI focusing on how to reduce electricity bills. Additionally, a resilience and self-defence course was delivered to participants to help them cope with situations such as walking alone, reading bad behaviour, what to do if feeling unsafe in public. 6 participants also accessed one to one employability support with WOMEN'STEC's employability and support officer, undertaking jobs skills training. 5 young mothers on the programme also attended a site visit with our Champion partner, Heron Brothers, to Templemore Avenue Baths, a local community asset in East Belfast. The site visit occurred to construction stage and enabled participants to experience a live building site, understand heritage restoration and learn about careers and employment in construction.

##### **Building Futures Partnership Programme**

WOMEN'STEC, as lead partner, was awarded over £870,000 over 2 years by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, to deliver a partnership programme with Bolster Community and Women in Business, focused on reducing economic inactivity. This new programme, entitled 'Building Futures', began in April 2023 and focuses on women who are economically inactive in the Newry, Mourne and Down and Greater Belfast regions. In year one of the programme, 266 women were engaged in courses across DIY / Trades, Personal Development, multiply funded numeracy and business start-up aimed at increasing confidence and employability skills to support women to move closer to employment. The expanse of delivery ranged across a wide geographical area in the Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD) region and greater Belfast, particularly bringing services to women in rurally isolated communities where fewer opportunities exist for training, support and development. Our partner, Bolster Community, led on the delivery of personal development, IT, work support and numeracy courses, such as Basic Maths for Parents, and Managing Finances, in the NMD region, whilst Women in Business led on the delivery of business start-up / entrepreneurship courses across the programme areas. WOMEN'STEC led on the delivery of all construction and DIY related courses across the programme and IT and employability support in the Belfast area. Alongside the programme, an important element for participants is access to one-to-one mentoring support from the programme's employability and support officers, one based in WOMEN'STEC in Belfast and one based in Bolster Community in Newry. This support offers tailored personal support to participants to help with their CV's, interview skills, plans for professional development, identifying areas for developing and supporting them with job search and connections to employers. With this, participants have access to bursary funds that can support them with studying or training for qualifications or certifications that are not offered through the programme but will enable them to pursue their employment goals. The programme will run until March 2025 and aims to support 420 women over the two-year period.

##### **Promoting Opportunities Programme: #NotJustForBoys**

Our flagship youth programme, POP: #NotJustForBoys, which challenges misconceptions and encourages, empowers and supports young girls to consider career opportunities in sectors where women are under-represented, continued to grow and develop in 2023-2024. Our schools programme continued in 2023. Three primary schools in the Urban Villages area completed 'Under the Bonnet' car mechanics programme between April and May, with 82 primary school girls in total. Additionally, in partnership with our Champions 'GEDA Construction', we delivered gender / careers in construction sessions with 27 P7 girls and boys to challenge gender stereotypes in April. Our Homework Club, which meets on a weekly basis, continued to work in partnership with our Champion, JP Corry, on a project to design and build construction toys for local nursery school children. The project was completed in April 2023 and a celebration event was held for the girls with JP Corry to recognise their achievements and learning over the course of the project.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### **Promoting Opportunities Programme: #NotJustForBoys (continued)**

In April, under WOMEN'STEC Newry, #NotJustForBoys delivered a programme of activities to schools and youth clubs in the Newry area, supported by the CTS Projects contract with the Housing Executive. A six-week programme was delivered separately in two youth clubs, the Magnet Centre and St John's Bosco to 12–16-year-olds, encompassing basic woodwork skills and a small personal project. A programme of courses, starting in March 23, continued into April delivered to Bolster Community's 'Bolster Go Girls' Youth Club, engaging 22 girls from 11-16 years old who struggle with their mental health. The programme of basic woodwork skills and a personal project helped to grow confidence and self-esteem whilst also increasing awareness of trades and careers in construction.

In the summer, the #NotJustForBoys team delivered four summer schemes, each sponsored by a #NotJustForBoys Champion. The 'BuildHer' Trades summer scheme was sponsored by Connolly & Fee and focused on basic introduction to construction skills and awareness of construction careers. The participants built their own stud wall which they plastered and decorated, with a few choosing to panel their walls whilst others tiled. The week culminated in a site visit to Connolly & Fee's construction site in Ardoyne Avenue, where participants were able to see how the skills they learned are put into action on a live construction site and learn about the variety of careers in construction. They explored issues such as gender equality, apprenticeships and other career pathways. In August, the second summer scheme, 'BuildHer Outdoors' for girls aged 13-16 yrs old, was sponsored by our Champion, JP Corry. This brought the girls together to learn basic woodwork and garden construction skills and build outdoor furniture and a brick BBQ. The week culminated in a site visit to JP Corry to learn about the history of JP Corry, apprenticeships, and the various supplies used in construction, and included a talk from a brick supplier on the making / creation of bricks and how they are used in construction. A third summer scheme, 'Under the Bonnet', focused on car mechanics and vehicle maintenance and was sponsored by Translink. Participants learned about basic car maintenance, cars and the rules of the road. The week culminated in a field trip to Translink in Great Victoria Street where they learned of the history of Translink, the variety of career opportunities in transportation, had a ride in an electric bus and met Translink's only female heavy vehicle mechanic. The final summer scheme 'Newry BuildHer' was sponsored by CTS Projects and focused on a basic introduction to construction skills, with participants designing, planning and building their own personal projects.

Between September and March, #NotJustForBoys ran an enrichment programme for 16-18yr old girls from Mercy College. The programme covered introductions to health & safety, drilling and sawing, and other basic trade skills. They designed, planned and built projects that they could sell at our Christmas Craft Fair, giving them an opportunity to not only put into practice the basic skills they learned to make products, but also to become their own project managers and learn the basics of entrepreneurship, boosting their confidence in themselves and their abilities. In the final quarter of the year the girls worked on an upcycling programme which provided them with the opportunity to choose their own pieces of furniture to strip back and refurbish to look new. They developed new skills, were introduced to new techniques and new tools to achieve their own desired pieces.

In October, in partnership with Henry Brothers, the #NotJustForBoys team hosted another successful Girls in Construction event in Magherafelt.

In November, the programme received new funding from BBC's Children in Need programme, enabling us to expand the #NotJustForBoys programme to other areas of Northern Ireland as well as expanding collaboration with youth clubs. This started in Newry, working with the EA Girls' Youth Service Club on a 6-week woodwork project learning the basic skills of woodwork and supporting their confidence and independence whilst designing and building Christmas themed projects.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### **Promoting Opportunities Programme: #NotJustForBoys (continued)**

In February, in partnership with our Champion, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the team delivered a 'Try a Trade' day for over 60 schoolgirls and women who came along to take part in practical workshops in a variety of trades, including joinery, electrics, plumbing, bricklaying and mechanics. The aim was to increase awareness of careers in trades and highlight the apprenticeship and employment opportunities which exist in these areas within the Housing Executive.

In partnership with our Champion, Heron Brothers, the team also held a construction careers workshop with boys and girls in P5 in Draperstown. This event aimed to show the importance of roles in construction, highlight the role of women in construction and break down gender stereotypes. The #NotJustForBoys team also hosted STEM activities and games for the students.

##### **CBenAct Cross Border Project**

Lead by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the CBenAct project brings together WOMEN'STEC and Creative Spark, Dundalk, to engage on a capacity building programme to strengthen the skills, knowledge and resilience of organisations working in partnership on a cross-border basis. It aims to embed an approach to cross-border cooperation that sees it as central to organisations' work rather than as peripheral to their core missions. Five staff and two board members engaged in a series of workshops and residencies with Creative Spark to explore the skills necessary to deliver cross-border projects, the key principles to collaborating on a cross-border basis, identify shared issues and challenges facing border communities in which both organisations work and to identify solutions and actions that can help to build better communities along the border. Through the programme, WOMEN'STEC engaged with women from Lislea and Hilltown, two small communities just a few miles from the border, to engage in community dialogue and a cross border dialogue programme with women from Dundalk. The project used the strengths and skills of both organisations to provide skills in design and DIY to work on practical projects, empowering women with skills that they can use in their own homes and communities, whilst also boosting confidence and self-reliance, as well as confidence in speaking with other people and working together as a group. The groups came together and discussed challenges and issues facing women and families that are both shared and unique to both communities on each side of the border. The project continues into 2024-2025.

##### **Women's Wellbeing Community Pharmacy Project**

The Women's Wellbeing project is delivered in partnership with our local pharmacy, Crossin Chemist, through the Community Development Health Network's Building Community Pharmacy Partnerships programme. The programme offers women engaged on any of our courses an additional wellbeing programme to support them with issues and learning of health and wellbeing, adopting a community development approach. The programme involved 14 workshop sessions led by Crossin Chemist, covering topics such as the menopause, family health, role of the pharmacist in the community, drugs and alcohol, sexual health, amongst others relevant to the issues or challenges facing participants. The participants also attended sessions with Aware NI (focused on mental health) and Relate NI (focused on healthy relationships). Furthermore, two sessions also included relaxation techniques and mindfulness to help participants reduce stress and anxiety.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITIES

###### WOMEN'STEC NEWRY

We have developed a number of areas which enable us to bring in funds that support the activities of the organisation, whilst also importantly, bolster our relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders. WOMEN'STEC Newry was created on the basis of a social value initiative under CTS Project's contract with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. This came to an end in June 2023, however involvement in this demonstrated to us the possibilities of generating income and delivering services through social value in public procurement contracts. The contract enabled us to establish a second workshop base in Newry and expand our programmes and services to many rural communities across the Newry, Mourne and Down regions. It also enabled us to have a presence closer to the border region that enables us to work closer with our partners in Ireland and expand the reach of our mission and vision.

###### Mid and East Antrim Borough Council: Women's DIY Pathway Programme

In September 2023, we successfully bid for our first tender to deliver a women's DIY pathway programme, contracted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and funded by the Department of Communities under the Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership Action Plan 2023-2024. The purpose of the programme was to inspire and increase confidence of women who want to re-enter or enter the world of work, encourage greater female participation in traditional trades, provide opportunities for participants to achieve accredited qualifications and develop employability skills and create greater linkages between employers, stakeholders and potential employees. The programme engaged 10 women in introductory DIY / trades sessions, a level 2 accredited training in DIY skills and employability support. As our first contract, it provided us with experience and learning as delivery agents for a public contract whilst also enabling us to build relationships with stakeholders and partners in the mid and east Antrim area, which has undoubtedly led to other opportunities. The programme was so successful that the contract was extended to deliver a second programme and we are now bidding for further work in this area with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

###### #NotJustForBoys Champions Initiative

Our Champions initiative entered its second year, with over 23 private sector businesses becoming #NotJustForBoys Champions, supporting our mission and providing us with unrestricted income. More importantly, the Champions have been a major driver for us in developing our programmes and operations and supporting more women to explore careers in industries where women are underrepresented. This has included opportunities for many site visits, supporting the delivery of projects, donating materials and volunteer time, particularly from female role models. Four of our Champions, Connolly & Fee, CTS Projects, JP Corry and Translink provided further support through sponsoring a #NotJustForBoys summer scheme, whilst Henry Brothers and the Housing Executive supported a Newry Girls into Construction Day. Our Patron, Gilbert-Ash, sponsored WOMEN'STEC's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event in September 2023. Henry Brothers also hosted a Girls into Construction Day in Magherafelt, bringing the programme to Mid-Ulster and helping to increase awareness and inspire girls to consider careers in construction. In partnership with Heron Brothers, we held an 'Inspiring Future Builders' event in Draperstown, for St Mary's Primary School, aimed at inspiring children, both boys and girls, to explore careers in construction and break down gender stereotypes. In collaboration with the Housing Executive, we held a 'Try a Trade' day at WOMEN'STEC Belfast for secondary school students and women. In partnership with Translink and Vix, we held a Women in Transport event for students and staff to explore careers in transportation. JP Corry continued to support our weekly Homework Club with Blessed Trinity College, Belfast donating materials, providing staff, hosting a site visit and developing a community project where the girls project managed the design and construction of tool stations and work benches for a local nursery school. CHC Group showcased employment and career opportunities for participants at the launch of our UKSPF funded project, 'Building Futures.' Combined Facilities Management (CFM) sponsored a women returners DIY programme for women in the Newtownabbey area. We piloted a gender diversity awareness workshop with the Direct Labour Organisation office for our Champion, Housing Executive. The session was aimed at raising awareness of the potential barriers that women and girls who want to join the construction industry face, to the trades staff who work to deliver repairs and maintenance services to Housing Executive tenants.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### **#NotJustForBoys Champions Initiative (continued)**

It is evident to see the non-monetary value of the partnerships and collaborations over the past 12 months, particularly in enhancing the opportunities and experiences for the participants on our programmes. This work contributes significantly to our mission of enabling women and girls to access careers in industries where they are under-represented and our vision of an inclusive, sustainable society and economy where women and girls can reach their full potential and thrive.

##### **Sales Courses**

We continue to work on developing our suite of courses available for selling to the public and other Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise organisations. Clanmil Housing has become a significant purchaser of our sales courses, buying DIY programmes to deliver to Clanmil tenants with the aim of increasing confidence, community cohesion, and independence in carrying out home maintenance. We also continue to run evening and weekend classes available to the general public which helps to boost our profile and generate some income. In the past year we have also provided courses and programmes for other charities and community organisations. The success of these indicates an opportunity to develop this as an area to bring in further unrestricted income and we will be working to grow this into 2024-2025.

We continue to house and manage the work of the Northern Ireland Women's Budget group, be represented on the Greater North Belfast Women's Forum, advise on the Rank Foundation's RankNet Leaders Action Group, sit on the DfE Skills Strategy sub-committee on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, sit on the Urban Villages Reference Group, and work alongside our partner organisations on the Women's Regional Consortium funded through the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme.

##### **Other key notable activities and achievements**

After another highly successful year of growth and development, with a second workshop in Newry and expanding our delivery into rural communities across Northern Ireland, we made the decision to invest in the purchase of a van. This enables us to transport our outreach kits, portable workshop benches and materials and equipment needed to bring our DIY and basic trades courses into communities where travel access to our workshops is a barrier for women. This has transformed how we deliver our programmes and services and enables us to greater work towards our strategic objectives of reaching and expanding our services and programmes across Northern Ireland.

In January 2024, with a growing staff team, higher provision of services and programmes and expanding the reach of our work, we decided to engage a consultant to undertake an organisational review, with recommendations for staffing structure and management. This identified a need for additional roles to support the level of services we are providing and to enable us to continue to expand our services across Northern Ireland, in response to need and demand. These roles include Head of Operations, Finance and Administration Officer, Project Officer. The report also recommended several structural, management and operational recommendations which will be implemented in 2024-2025. Alongside this, a governance review was undertaken with the board to provide recommendations for improving governance.

This year, we welcomed significant visitors to WOMEN'STEC. In March, we were delighted to welcome the Prime Minister of Kosovo and his delegation to showcase our work and discuss the impact of the role of women in communities in contributing to peacebuilding. The Prime Minister was visiting Northern Ireland to learn more about post-conflict societies and peacebuilding and was invited to WOMEN'STEC by Urban Villages who have supported our programmes in North Belfast over the past 6 years. Only a week later, in March, we also welcomed the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Chris Heaton-Harris to our workshop in Belfast to showcase our programmes and services, discuss skills and lifelong learning and the barriers for women to participating in the labour market.

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### c. Activities for achieving objectives (continued)

##### Other key notable activities and achievements (continued)

Unsurprisingly, the Cost-of-Living crisis continues to impact the women and girls we work with. In response to this, we established an Emergency Support Fund that is funded by donations from stakeholders who want to support those in need. This fund means we can provide quick, practical support to a woman in an emergency or financial crisis situation, such as purchasing gas or electric or buying food and other essentials that are an immediate necessity.

Finally, in September 2023, WOMEN'STEC held a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration event at The Mac, Belfast, to celebrate 25 years of supporting women and girls. The event, sponsored by our patron, Gilbert-Ash, brought together funders, partners, past and present supporters and other stakeholders to look back, celebrate our achievements, hear about the impact of our work and to launch our new strategic plan for 2024-2027. Guest speakers at the event included Dr Jayne Brady, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and Ray Hutchinson MBE, MD of Gilbert Ash.

#### Achievements and performance

Between April 2023 to March 2024, 259 women engaged with our Connect 4 Women (WTEC's delivery), Sustaining Tenancies, Building Futures, and women's wellbeing programmes and 398 girls engaged with the #NotJustForBoys Programme.

During this year, of those who responded to our progression survey, that enables us to see where women progress to upon leaving our programmes and courses, 14.9% stated they have moved into employment and 58% have moved on to further education / training or volunteering. 50 women received an accredited qualification.

#### STUDENT SURVEY

Annually, we conduct a student survey that enables us to gain feedback and impact data for our work, including the motivations for women engaging with our programmes and services, the need for different types of programmes and services, the experience of using our services, the impact of our programmes and services and areas of our work that we can improve. A summary of the key findings of the survey are highlighted below:

#### *Motivations for engaging with WOMEN'STEC*

The following reasons for engaging with WOMEN'STEC, selected as 'very important', are ranked in order of frequency selected (number of students selecting answer):

1. To learn something new (49)
2. To build my confidence (45)
3. To be able to do things around the house (43)
4. To improve my mental health (41)
5. To meet new people (37)
6. To gain skills for work (27)
7. To get out of the house (24)
8. To get a qualification (24)
9. To have something to do (22)
10. To make something (22)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Achievements and performance (continued)

##### STUDENT SURVEY (continued)

Some comments from students relating to their motivations for engaging with WOMEN'STEC:

- "I wanted to do something to help me feel like I was regaining my independence"
- "All women doing it together – felt more comfortable than going to a tech with all boys doing woodwork"
- "To be able to do DIY and cut down on expenses. Knowledge is powerful. To know what you need done and not be ripped off by tradesmen or male dominated skills who see you coming"
- "Increase my confidence with people"
- "I want to boost my confidence and make more new friends"

##### *Outcomes for participants engaged in WOMEN'STEC programmes*

The top three outcomes' participants noted were:

- Learn new skills
- Be more confident
- Improve my qualifications

Percentages of survey respondents who stated:

- Being at WOMEN'STEC has helped improve soft skills (communication, time management, teamwork) – **85%**
- Being at WOMEN'STEC has helped with my wellbeing – both mentally and emotionally – **94%**
- While at WOMEN'STEC, I have learnt new skills – **88%**
- Since being at WOMEN'STEC, I feel more motivated than before – **92%**
- My self-esteem has increased since being at WOMEN'STEC – **81%**
- Being at WOMEN'STEC has helped improve my confidence – **94%**

##### *Comments from students:*

- "I hope you will continue to support the work of WOMEN'STEC to provide more opportunities and resources for women to achieve greater success. Your contribution is so important to WOMEN'STEC and society at large" (comment to funder)
- "Excellent training programmes available to all women. The centre has made me more confident and able to do many new tasks. New friends made along the way too. Such a friendly and encouraging environment. Thank you"
- "I think the opportunity for women to learn new or improve on existing skills and to be more self sustaining is not something that has been at the top of anyone's agenda for a long time until the fabulous ladies at WOMEN'STEC got started. They ensure this is done to the best of their ability, being a woman taught by women is incredibly important to me as too often women are overlooked and underestimated, that definitely doesn't happen at WOMEN'STEC. Great place with great staff and I will definitely be back for more training"
- "WOMEN'STEC is absolutely invaluable. I can't stress how much joy the courses I've attended have brought me and the onsite childcare has been amazing. It's brilliant to get out of the house and learn something without being mum for a while. Really helped make me feel human again whilst dealing with postpartum depression."
- "I came across WOMEN'STEC through my key worker in Women's Aid. I'm so thankful for both organisations as they have helped me to get out of the house and find myself again. WOMEN'STEC really builds confidence and shows us that girls can do it all!"

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

(A company limited by guarantee)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Financial review

The Financial Statements deal with all the income and expenditure of the charitable company, as well as its financial position at the year end. The results for the year and the financial position were considered satisfactory by the trustees.

At 31 March 2024, total charity funds were £537,522 (2023: £391,598), of which £356,720 were unrestricted (2023: £257,151). Overall, reserves increased by £145,924, £99,549 of which were unrestricted (2023: £23,715 increase).

All monies received supported key objectives of the charitable company, funding charitable activity costs, both direct and support.

#### a. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charitable company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

#### b. Reserves Policy

The trustees' policy is to retain a level of free reserves which matches the needs of the organisation both at the current time and in the foreseeable future. The charitable company has developed a plan to establish and maintain an agreed level of free reserves of £230k to cover 3 months' salary and core running costs, a redundancy pay reserve and a reserve for final audit fees, leasing charges and other contingencies as at 31 March 2024.

Whilst actual unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024 were £356,720 (2023: £257,151), £30,000 was designated for future capital spend and £43,584 was tied up in fixed assets, leaving free reserves of £283,136 (2023: £202,066).

The charitable company will continue to monitor compliance with this policy on a regular basis and the Board will review the appropriateness of the policy annually.

#### c. Principal funding

The principal funding of the organisation derived from an anonymous Private Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, UK Shared Prosperity Fund/Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Construction Industry Training Board NI, BBC Children in Need, The Executive Office (Urban Villages), The Rank Foundation, The Ireland Funds, Centre for Cross Border Studies/IFI, Community Development & Health Network, The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Ulster University/Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Department of Foreign Affairs, Dormant Accounts Fund NI, Garfield Weston, LFT Charitable Trust, Department for Communities (RISP) and Belfast City Council.

#### Structure, governance and management

##### a. Constitution

The company is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee and was set up by a Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The charitable company is constituted under a Memorandum and Articles of Association and is a registered charity, number NIC100185.

The principal object of the charitable company is to provide advancement of education and the prevention and relief of poverty and unemployment amongst people and in particular women and young girls primarily in Northern Ireland and also elsewhere.

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

(A company limited by guarantee)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Structure, governance and management (continued)

##### b. Public Benefit Statement

The trustees have complied with the duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's statutory guidance on the public benefit requirement issued under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

The direct benefits accruing from our purposes as noted with the Charities Commission in Northern Ireland include:

- Students gain qualifications and practical skills;
- Students experience heightened self-esteem and confidence enabling them to move forward into further training and education or employment;
- Students enhance their employability, increasing their opportunities to move into further training and education or employment; and
- Students are better equipped to move into paid employment, therefore increasing their economic security.

There have been no changes in the objectives since the last annual report.

##### c. Governance and methods of appointment or election of trustees

The management of the charitable company is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association.

Day to day management was delegated to the CEO, Lynn Carvill, whose salary is set by the Board.

Other employees are paid in accordance with the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services Payscales.

##### d. Risk management

The trustees have a risk management policy which comprises:

- An annual review of the principal risks and uncertainties that the charity faces
- A risk register covering 7 key categories of risk is maintained and updated annually, more frequently where risks are known to be volatile, and an accompanying risk mitigation plan which outlines existing controls procedures and proposed controls procedures improvements and actions
- Key roles and responsibilities of the board and staff in risk governance

Financial sustainability continues to be a major financial risk, and several key financial risks have been identified through this process. Much work has been done over the last number of years to diversify both our income and grant funding streams. Whilst we are in a strong financial position this year, the principal financial risk is there are several funded programmes which will be coming to an end in 2025 which could impact our delivery plans and our 2025-2026 budget. In minimising the impact of this, we are forward planning, including reviewing programmes for need, demand and effectiveness, reviewing staffing resources, reviewing funders and developing a funding plan for the 2025-2026 financial year. Regular monitoring of the organisational budget and continuing to increase our unrestricted income will ensure early and appropriate financial planning as we move ahead and finalise the 2025-2026 budget.

Our ageing premises continue to be a growing risk to the organisation, with energy inefficiencies leading to higher utility costs, higher levels of ongoing maintenance impacting financial budgets and lack of control of facilities as we are limited to the constraints of the Education Authority. In our recent strategic planning exercise, the board has committed to exploring our options to ensure WOMEN'STEC operates from premises that are fit for purpose. This includes regular communication with the Education Authority regarding the premises and any urgent maintenance requirements.

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

(A company limited by guarantee)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Structure, governance and management (continued)

##### d. Risk management (continued)

Staffing capacity and recruitment challenges are other risks which are regularly monitored and actioned upon. As a growing organisation, the need for more staff to meet the demands of a growing programme of delivery led to a staffing structural review undertaken in January 2024. This identified the need for a third senior leadership role, Head of Operations, and some adjustments to existing roles and responsibilities, as well as new finance administration and project officer roles.

Outsourced childcare is also a key risk for the charity which is undergoing close monitoring. The reason for this is rising childcare costs which could become unsustainable and not financially viable for the organisation to continue with. A risk mitigation plan is in place, including regular meetings with the Creche manager to ensure any potential issues or concerns are quickly and appropriately dealt with, close monitoring of creche usage and demand from our students and exploring alternative options for childcare provision for students.

##### Funds held as custodian

No funds are held as custodians.

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

(A company limited by guarantee)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Plans for future periods

After a successful year of growth and development, guided by our strategic plan, key activities for growth and development during 2024-2025:

- Implement a new management structure and improved processes and systems for both operational management and governance management
- Implement a new CRM system to improve our data and relationship management.
- Begin the process of exploring options and viability of building a new home for WOMEN'STEC
- Invest in additional outreach kits and equipment to expand the delivery of our programmes in community locations across Northern Ireland
- Explore the opportunity to open a third workshop in the North West of Northern Ireland, Derry.
- Continue to deliver the 'Building Futures' programme, in partnership with Bolster Community and Women in Business NI, focusing on expanding the areas of delivery and achieving employability outcomes for women on the programme
- Having undertaken a strategic planning process between June 2023 and September 2023 and launching our new strategic plan, the key strategic priorities for WOMEN'STEC over the next 2023-2027 period:
  - Deliver high quality training programmes to enable women to develop confidence and skills and build successful careers, particularly in industries where they are under-represented.
  - To work with girls to increase awareness of career stereotypes and opportunities in industries where women and girls are under-represented, particularly construction.
  - Work with employers and industry bodies to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce and workplace.
  - Contribute to the development of government policy and practice in support of WOMEN'STEC mission.
  - Ensure the organisation has the appropriate data and analysis to operate effectively and continuously improve.
  - Ensure the organisation has the premises and other technical and physical resources to achieve its aims and objectives and these are effectively maintained and managed.
  - Ensure the organisation has the staff to achieve its aims and objectives and these staff are effectively supported, managed and have the opportunity to develop.
  - Ensure WOMEN'STEC has the financial resources it needs to achieve its aims and objectives and these resources are effectively planned, managed and reported on.
  - Ensure WOMEN'STEC effectively communicates with all its stakeholders.
  - Ensure the governance of WOMEN'STEC complies with the requirements of the law and best practice.
- Continue to grow the #NotJustForBoys Champions network to increase support from relevant industries
- Build on our partnership work with Creative Spark in Dundalk and Longford Women's Link in Longford.
- Develop our offering to the construction sector to support companies with the delivery of social value initiatives within public contracts
- Increase our capacity to meet and deliver on the level of growing need and demand for our programmes and services

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## THE WOMENS TEC (TRAINING, ENTERPRISE & CHILDCARE CENTRE)

(A company limited by guarantee)

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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#### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) 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).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law, the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, 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 of the Charities SORP 2019 (FRS 102);
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) 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 charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website.

#### Disclosure of information to auditor

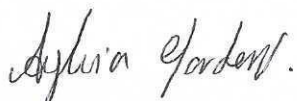
Each of the persons who is a trustee at the time when this Trustees' Report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware, and
- that trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a trustee in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's auditor is aware of that information.

#### Auditor

The charitable company retendered for auditors. Grace Taggart of CG Taggart Accountancy Services, was appointed for a period of 3 years: years ended 31 March 2021, 2022 and 2023, and was extended to 31 March 2024.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies and was approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 8 December 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Sylvia Gordon