

## Structure, governance and management

The Charity was established by a charitable trust deed on 17 October 2014. Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the Charity is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

## Objectives and activities

Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network was established to enhance the quality of life for residents by delivering a broad spectrum of social, educational, and environmental projects.

## Benefits

All activities delivered by Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network are designed to empower participants and provide clear public benefit by improving community wellbeing, widening access to education and skills development, and supporting cultural participation. These programs are open to the wider community and respond directly to identified local needs. Any private benefit is incidental and necessary to the effective delivery of our charitable purposes.

## Evidence of Benefit

NACN will demonstrate the impact of our work through evaluation of all programs delivered during the year. This will include the collection and analysis of participant feedback, monitoring data, and reflective assessments from project leaders. Evidence of benefit will also be supported by reports and observations from partner organisations and funders. This combined approach enables the Trustees to assess the effectiveness of activities, measure progress against stated objectives, and ensure that the Charity continues to deliver meaningful and measurable public benefit to the community.

## Possibility of Harm

All NACN activities are developed in direct response to participant needs, and we are confident that initiatives focused on improving life/living conditions and supporting personal growth carry no risk of harm to residents. Rather, they build individual capacity, promote confidence, and enhance overall community wellbeing.

## Beneficiaries

The Charity's beneficiaries are individuals and communities living in Newtownabbey and the neighbouring areas.

## Private Benefit

The only private benefit received by Trustees is the development of their skills and the experience gained through their involvement in the Charity's activities. The organisation provides a structured program of training covering all aspects of good governance, which is essential to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and the requirements of funding bodies.

The Trustees have considered the guidance issued by the Charity Commission when determining the activities the Charity undertakes.

Since its establishment, NACN has delivered a wide range of training opportunities, enabling community members to develop skills in Leadership and Management, Human Rights, Conflict Resolution and Management, Child Protection, Volunteer Development, ICT, and Community Development (HND). We also promote inclusion by supporting the formation of new community groups where a need is identified—for example, the development of an Autism Support Group.

NACN continues to act as a key link between residents and statutory organisations, ensuring that issues relating to health, wellbeing, and wider community concerns are communicated and addressed effectively.

We remain committed to meaningful community engagement. Through music, drama, technology and creative arts, we encourage cultural participation, strengthen intergenerational connections, and support wider involvement in community life.

## **Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network (NACN) / Coole Studios**

### **Reporting Period: 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025**

During the 2024–25 financial year, the Newtownabbey Arts & Cultural Network (NACN) continued to fulfil its charitable objectives by providing accessible, high-quality arts, cultural, and educational opportunities for children, young people, older adults, and the wider community. Programme delivery remained consistent throughout the year, supported by strong governance, effective partnership working, and ongoing investment in facilities and digital infrastructure.

## **Programme Delivery and Oversight**

The organisation delivered a structured weekly timetable across creative technology, digital fabrication, music production, performing arts, and community storytelling. All activities were monitored to ensure alignment with NACN's charitable purposes, safeguarding requirements, and quality standards.

**Monday activities** encompassed creative technology and vocal development, including coding and game design, costume and prop creation, intergenerational music sessions, and structured preparation for London College of Music examinations.

**Tuesday sessions** focused on digital fabrication and enterprise development. Participants received training in 3D printing, laser cutting, vinyl cutting, and screen-printing, with additional opportunities to design merchandise for NACN's online shop. The DJ Academy provided age-appropriate training and artist development, with demand requiring additional mid-week provision.

**Wednesday programming** strengthened participants' skills in music production and digital media. Activities included 1:1 DJ development, introductory music production, video editing, and creative writing workshops addressing social themes relevant to young people.

**Thursday sessions** supported band development, studio recording, and artist portfolio creation. Participants engaged in rehearsals, recording, multi-track editing, and the development of professional materials to support progression into further training or performance opportunities.

**Saturday's Performing Arts Academy** delivered early-years and youth theatre training. Rehearsals and skills development culminated in public performances at St John's Church and Theatre at The Mill, ensuring participants had structured opportunities to apply their learning in professional settings.

## **Community Engagement**

NACN continued to strengthen community participation through open-mic events, seasonal showcases, and public performances. These activities provided accessible platforms for residents to engage with the arts and contributed to wider community cohesion.

## **Artistic and Cultural Development**

The organisation produced original short films and scripts addressing local issues and community experiences. These initiatives supported youth voice, creative expression, and the development of transferable skills.

## **Partnerships and External Collaboration**

NACN maintained and expanded partnerships with schools, libraries, youth organisations, and sectoral bodies. Collaboration with external facilitators and industry professionals enhanced programme quality and ensured participants had access to specialist expertise. The organisation also hosted a visit from the Arts Council CEO in relation to the *Rathcoole Memories* project and continued to work with Ulster University and Future Screen NI on media-related initiatives.

## **Media, Publications, and Digital Output**

Two editions of *Coole News* were produced in partnership with the Department for Communities and Rathcoole Neighbourhood Renewal, providing updates on local projects, youth achievements, and community stories. NACN further expanded its digital output through *Coole Cast* and *NACN Radio*, supporting skills development in broadcasting and content creation.

## **Training and Leadership Development**

Accredited training in music, media, and performance was delivered throughout the year. NACN also supported the development of young leaders, enabling participants to take on peer-led facilitation roles under appropriate supervision.

## **Special Projects and Guest Engagement**

The organisation hosted a range of guest artists and industry professionals, including Daniel James (Yell) and writer Leesa Harker, who delivered masterclasses and Q&A sessions. NACN also facilitated site visits to local theatres and creative hubs, broadening participants' exposure to professional arts environments.

## **Accessibility and Community Support**

NACN continued to prioritise accessibility by offering subsidised places, transport assistance, and targeted outreach to reduce barriers to participation. Two editions of the *Coole News* community newsletter supported wider engagement and information sharing.

## **Facilities and Infrastructure**

During the reporting period, NACN invested in upgrading studio equipment, fabrication tools, and digital infrastructure. These improvements strengthened organisational capacity, supported programme expansion, and ensured the continued delivery of high-quality creative learning.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

L McGurk

Dated 30/07/2025