



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

Period start date				Period end date			
	Day	Month	Year		Day	Month	Year
From	1	April	2022	To	31	March	2023

Reference and administration details

Charity name	BelfastTrad (Traditional Music and Dance Society)		
Registered charity number	NIC 100872		
Charity's principal address	Blick Shared Studios		
	51 Malone Road		
	Belfast		
Postcode:	BT9 6RY		

Names of the charity trustees on date of approval of Trustees' Annual Report

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Date joined	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Tom Clarke	Chair	Over 25 years ago	
2	Deirdre Kearns	Deputy Chairperson	Jun 2007	
3	Martin Dowling	Treasurer	Dec 2012	
4	Anne Marie Walsh	Safeguarding Officer	Jun 2018	
5	Berni Corr	Solo Dance Co-ordinator	Jun 2018	
6	Pat O'Hagan	Set Dance Co-ordinator	Jun 2019	
7	Kevin McCullagh	Music Co-ordinator	Jun 2022	
8	Conor Diamond	Data Visualisation Officer	Jun 2022	
9	Conall Mullan	Volunteer Co-ordinator	Jun 2018	
10	Robert Cuthbert	Officer	Jun 2021	
11	Christine Dowling	Officer	Jun 2022	
12	Alison Morrow	Officer	Jun 2022	
	Fíona Ní Mhearáin	Administrator (Acting Secretary)		

Structure, governance and management

How is the charity constituted?	The Society was formally constituted in 1991. It is a non-profit making organisation.
Trustee recruitment and appointment	Under the Society Constitution the number of trustees for the purpose of law shall not be less than three and is not subject to any maximum. Trustees are elected to serve only until the next Annual General Meeting, at which they shall be eligible for re-election.
The charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works	<p>The executive committee members, who are also trustees for the purpose of charity law, and served during the year are listed in the table on page one. During the period under review the Committee met monthly and the present Committee was approved by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.</p> <p>A regular project that we expanded on this year was our annual Belfast Piping Tionól, we partnered with An Droichead and An Chomharchumann Phíobaireachta to deliver an enhanced programme</p>

Objectives and Activities

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit.	<p>The goals and ethos of the society from its inception in 1991 have been to ensure that the shared traditions of Irish music, song and dance are available to anyone who wants to learn, with classes provided in a welcoming and neutral setting. Our students are aged 5-90 years, with the majority of our students being young adult and upwards in age.</p> <p>We have now completed a full year of classes at Stranmillis University College. This prestigious institution provides the perfect environment for BelfastTrad's traditional arts programme and its custom-designed music and dance spaces.</p> <p>BelfastTrad aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Promote and develop a knowledge and love of the traditional arts of traditional Irish music, song and dance, amongst the public in the area of benefit;b) Provide workshops, classes and training in all aspects of traditional Irish music skills and traditional Irish dancing;c) Organise performances of traditional music, song and dance and promote active participation in such arts;d) Advance the understanding and public appreciation of the links between Irish traditional music and dance and other genres of traditional music and dance. <p>The benefit which flows from the provision of traditional arts of Irish music and dance include education, social inclusion and artistic expression to the people through Northern Ireland that participate in the activities. The provision of workshops, classes, lectures and training in all aspects of traditional music and dancing skills to anyone in the area of benefit who wants to learn also provides the benefit of education, greater understanding of our shared culture and traditions and the attainment of musical skills.</p> <p>We welcome people of all abilities. Through the organisation of the performance of traditional music, song and dance and promoting active participation in such arts provides direct benefits in supporting the arts, social cohesion and better health.</p>
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Summary of the purposes and principal activity of the charity as set out in its governing document

BelfastTrad was originally founded as Belfast and District Set Dancing and Traditional Music Society. Constituted in 1991, it was formed by a small cohort of like-minded dancers and musicians led by set dancer Mary Fox. The principal activity of the Society is to promote and develop a knowledge and love of the traditional arts of Irish Music and dance, and to advance its education and appreciation in the greater Belfast and district area.

Confirm trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit

BelfastTrad Trustees confirm they have complied with their duty under charity law to have regard to the Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the financial period

Our annual programme for 2022-23, supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Lottery funding through the Arts Council, consisted this year of an average of 43 weekly classes per term with Spring Term '22, Autumn Term '22 and Winter Term '23 all happening in-person at Stranmillis University College. We were delighted to have full range of music, song and dance classes all in-person at the same venue for the entire year. BelfastTrad also held a range of special events including sixteen workshops in music, dance & song, four additional workshops at the TradFest Winter weekend, three illustrated lectures, two singing sessions, four music sessions, a piper's chair and one 'In Conversation With' events. We also continued our collaboration with Glengormley School of Music to host two children's sessions at the new arts venue 2 Royal Avenue.

The level of participation in our classes and events grew significantly this year with 733 students attending our weekly classes over the three terms. This is a growth of 6.4% on last year's numbers and our highest student enrolment yet, higher even than our pre-Covid enrolments. Almost 800 more people engaged with us at our other events such as workshops, lectures, sessions, concerts and collaborative events with other organisations. A regular project that we expanded on this year was our annual Belfast Piping Tionól, we partnered with An Droichead and An Chomharchumann Phíobaireachta to deliver an enhanced programme with more events and an increased participation.

BelfastTrad looks forward to growing our programme and audience over the next year as we build on the success of this year now and are firmly established in our new venue. We shall launch our re-branding before Autumn Term of this year which will further help consolidate our image and identity as the leading provider of traditional arts tuition in Belfast's Queen's Quarter and South Belfast and help gain new audiences.

A highlight of the last year included an invitation to BelfastTrad from Michael D. Higgins to join him at a special garden party at Áras an Uachtaráin celebrating traditional arts on the island of Ireland. Committee members and tutors were able to attend and were treated to music and song from leading practitioners in the traditional music scene. Another major highlight was our end of term student concert at Mandela Hall in January.

Financial review

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The Committee considers it prudent to hold monies in reserve in the event that unforeseen circumstances should lead to financial difficulties which might put the users' well being and charitable work in jeopardy. The committee recognises that in the developing public sector funding climate, competition for future grant aid will be even more intense. Free reserves are defined by the trustees, as those funds are freely available for us as the society so determines and thereby exclude any restricted designated funds.

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period

The society is a non-profit making organisation. The results are set out in detail in our Charity accounts. The Charity recorded a deficit of £11,751 in the year, (2022: surplus of £834).

Income generated by the society activities totalled £83,410 (2022: £63,104) of which £35,824 (2022: £31,374) was received from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. This continues to fund a part-time administrative post within the Society. The remaining income was generated by term fees for a range of instrument classes at various levels, individual and set dancing classes, workshops, oblique masterclasses and end of term concerts/céilí's.

In the year 2022/23, the management committee embarked on a rebranding exercise, pointing a subcommittee to steer the work of the Boom Clap Play Company to redesign our logo, promotional material, and website. This exercise required an investment of £5,000 from our reserves.

The balance of funds at the year-end was £38,969 of which £38,969 was unrestricted. `

The committee have discussed strategies for reducing any unnecessary expenditure and will apply these in the forthcoming programme of events.

Chair's Report

Tom Clarke

Over the past year BelfastTrad has returned to normality in its provision of face-to-face classes to students, and the society has settled into its new home at Stranmillis University College. Excellent feedback from students has indicated that they are satisfied with the service they are receiving.

The usual broad range of classes and workshops was provided, and some of the workshops from prominent musicians, singers and dancers were truly memorable. Our partnerships with TradFest, both last July and this February and our ongoing relationship with An Droichead has brought to Belfast the very best of traditional music, song and dance.

Our special thanks go to Fíona Ní Mhearáin who has worked with great diligence on all aspects of BelfastTrad's work, classes, programming, concerts and financial tasks, patiently and efficiently.

Treasurer's Report

Martin Dowling

From the treasurer's perspective, the year under review (2022-2023) saw BelfastTrad returning to a post-pandemic "normal" level of programming, income, and expenditure. With three full terms of face-to-face teaching, supplemented by numerous workshop weekends, the scope of our programme, the expenditure on it, and the income from it all were all significantly increased compared to the two pandemic years, and have returned to our historic levels. However, under these "new normal" conditions the costs of our programme have significantly increased. This is due almost entirely to the increased rental costs in Stranmillis University College compared to the Crescent Arts Centre. Also in the year under review, the management committee embarked on a rebranding exercise, appointing a subcommittee to steer the work of the Boom Clap Play Company to redesign our logo, promotional material, and website. This exercise required an investment of £5,000 from our reserves. The new brand will be launched over the summer leading in to the Autumn 2023 term.

For the first time in many years, we saw a significant reduction in our reserves, due to the impact of our rebrand and the increased rental costs in Stranmillis University College, compared to the previous years. The financial standing of the Society remains strong. However, with standstill funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and a new higher cost basis for running our programme in Stranmillis College, the committee must continue to diligently monitor enrolment income for classes and workshops, and review our pricing structures, and aggressively advertise our programme to the community, in order to move back to a "new normal" where we are once again marginally augmenting our reserves year on year.

Maintaining a financially healthy organisation is a collective effort. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, our dedicated tutors, our accountants at McGuire + Farry, our members and sponsors, and especially the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for their support.

Safeguarding Report

Anne Marie Walsh

1. Background

Safeguarding is included as a reporting item at BelfastTrad AGM. This includes updates on training, policy review and notification of any incidents which may have arisen throughout the previous year.

2. Update on Activities - Summary

2.1 Volunteer Now continued to offer an annual programme of training in the area of Safeguarding throughout the past year using both the Zoom platform and in-person training. Eight tutors and two members of Committee completed Safeguarding training with Volunteer Now on 27th May 2023, 'Keeping Children and Adults Safe: An Introduction'; six other tutors attended training throughout the year and three received training over the summer break with Children in Northern Ireland. BelfastTrad has a policy priority of mandatory attendance at Safeguarding training on a three year cycle. The training focused on the following areas – Key definitions; Legal and Policy Context; Abuse Issues; Reporting Concerns and Code of Behaviour. Each participant received a certificate of attendance and copies of certificates are retained on record for audit purposes.

2.2 All tutors are requested to complete Access NI checks on a three year cycle and these have commenced and are in progress. Date for completion is September 2023.

2.3 We review all of our policies on a three year cycle. On 16 May 2023 Volunteer Now reviewed our policies. Feedback was received on 24 May 2023 on compliance against the nine standards (67 statements of compliance) set out by Volunteer Now in their document 'Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk'. In summary – of the eight standards and 52 statements that were applicable to BelfastTrad, we had a compliance rate of 88.5%. There were six statements where our policies did not show sufficient evidence to meet compliance and we are now engaging with Volunteer Now to understand how we may improve practice and fully evidence compliance. We aim to have our policies updated by the end of September 2023.

3 Reporting of Safeguarding Incidents and or Concerns

There were no reported incidences nor any concerns raised regarding safeguarding issues during this past year.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	Tom Clarke	Martin Dowling
Position	Chairperson	Treasurer
Date	29/01/2024	29/01/2024