

CAUSEWAY VOLUNTARY ACTION TRUST

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JANUARY 2024

The Trustees present their report and financial statements for the year ended 31 January 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006 and 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)'.

Objectives and activities

Purpose of the charity

The charity exists to promote the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland without distinction on grounds of gender, race or political, religious or other opinions by:

- the advancement of education;
- the relief of poverty and the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare and for recreation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said people; and
- such other charitable purposes of an exclusively charitable nature as the Trustees may from time to time in their sole and absolute discretion determine.

Principal activities of the charity

In 2023/24 the charity sought to advance the education of its beneficiaries by providing a space for various groups, businesses and charities to teach and encourage a number of skills in order to increase knowledge or understanding and provide an enjoyable hobby or experience. The variety and detail of these activities are listed below.

Training

There were classes held by organisations to teach specific skills necessary to meet regulations in the workplace, such as health and safety, first aid, best practice and current regulations and procedures. These were held for both local and national charities and small, medium and large organisations in the public and private sectors.

Hobbies

Adult classes such as flower arranging, Spanish classes, table tennis, Art-for-All, sewing and knitting classes and several Christmas wreath making workshops continue to run regularly in the centre. The former two were run by a charity called U3A that organises activities for those who are retired or semi-retired. We have continued to have evening pilates classes and are now able to offer a morning pilates class run by another qualified local physiotherapist. Most of the classes held in the centre are open to all members of the public.

Support groups

The centre was home to several support groups such as Family Mediation NI, Unislim, Tiny Life, Autism NI and Causeway Neurodiversity, thereby offering a place for the community to find relief from their situations and find support from those organisations that were best qualified to provide it. We have also welcomed new clients who have provided therapies on a self-employed basis such as Occupational and Speech and Language Therapy, which has been particularly beneficial for children struggling in this area.

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Charity training

Over the years we have supported charities by offering room hire at a discounted rate. They have used the rooms for training and support for those who are involved in the charities and have provided skills and training to sections of the community that we would not have the essential skills to help ourselves. By facilitating them, we have increased our ability to help those in disadvantaged situations without necessarily having the skill set required ourselves. We also continue to host charities that have been loyal to the centre for many years.

Meeting Spaces

We have continued to offer our rooms to organisations that need a space outside of their normal working environment or a common ground for a number of represented groups to gather. We have been a meeting place for local primary school principals to have a monthly meeting. Similarly, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, NHSCT, PSNI and North Coast Association have used the centre for regular meetings. We have also been the venue for a number of funerals and weddings in the past year.

Community garden

The Mountsandel Community Garden was established four years ago and is accessible to the general public all day, every day. They continue to offer a weekly gardening hour with a time for chores, planting and even the odd freshly baked homemade treat. It continues to draw people in who are lonely or suffering from mental health problems, they are able to come along and be a part of the community as well as having a beautiful and well-maintained space to enjoy.

Children's classes

Jollytots, the centre's very own mother and baby group, is run by a committed team of volunteers and in 2023/24 they had to close registration as they had reached their maximum capacity. The committee who run this group are constantly thinking of new ways to entertain both the children and the adults and make a special effort at times such as Christmas and Easter. The centre was home to a number of other children's classes during the 2023/24 year with baby massage, Babies who Brunch and Push-it-Mama for both baby and mum.

Birthday Parties

We introduced an all-in-one birthday party package during 2023/24, offering 3 hours room hire of the main hall with a bouncy castle included, for £100. We also offered the option to have food catered for by Ground Coffee and Kitchen and face painting by a local artist. This has been a success as it has not only taken the hassle out of organising parties at home for the parents but has increased the number of people using the café during the time of the party.

Youth services

There are regular activities specifically for young people held in the centre. This includes the Friday Fun Club which is for primary school age children. Explore also meet at the centre every Tuesday afternoon and is for secondary school age children to explore the Bible together, share how their week is going and support each other. Animate also meet in the centre fortnightly on Sundays and offers teenagers a chance to have fun and fellowship and often food too. There are also training sessions along with one-to-one mentoring, continuing to run in the centre.

Café

Ground Coffee and Kitchen continues to be a very valuable way to provide the community with a place to meet up with friends and family. It is also a place for lonely people to just come and hang out and have a chat with the staff and people coming in and out of the centre.

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Church

The building is also home to Mountsandel Christian Fellowship (MCF) and by maintaining the building we have allowed them to focus on providing groups for the community such as Jollytots, Art-for-All, Animate and Explore, to mention just a few. They also held an annual community event, Sandelfest, which involves a Children's Club in the mornings, activities for teenagers in the afternoons and then evening events for adults and teenagers e.g. a table tennis tournament, quiz and acoustic café for local artists to showcase their talent. Monthly meetings called Young at Heart are available for anyone over 60 that provides entertainment and refreshments. From this, they have also started a Wednesday Get Together, which is a more informal setting for refreshments, a chat and friendship. There is also a weekly men's walking group which is run from the centre, offering men the opportunity to walk and talk and then have a coffee together.

Community

The charity, CVAT, works closely with the church to hold children's seasonal events, family friendly walks and also a Christmas Fair which has been a great success in the last couple of years. These are to promote the centre as a place that can be used by families and is open to all ages of the community, free of charge.

The charity has also been proactive this year in finding ways to tackle mental health issues mainly by incorporating the 5 Steps to Wellbeing as promoted by the Public Health Service. This has not only been highlighted in the existing activities but also in a week of events around the time of Blue Monday in January.

The charity wants the centre to be used by the community as much as possible so that they find a place where they can find activities that interest them, a relief from their hardship or somewhere that they feel included in a community. The number and variety of the groups that have used the centre this year is demonstrative of the wide range of people who are benefitting from the centre being in the Knocklynn area. We are constantly trying to widen the range and number of groups that know about the centre and use it for their benefit.

Achievements and performance

It is always hard to measure the outcome of the welfare of the individuals who use the centre as we are not always the direct contact with them. This would be monitored by the organisations that hire the venue. We do however keep records of the organisations that use the rooms and are pleased that we were able to offer highly discounted rates as well as a 20% discount rate to charities and community groups. We are determined to provide quality venue hire at affordable prices and so it is good that we have been able to do that this year. The high level of charities and counsellors that have used the centre has also been an achievement as we want the centre to function as a place to meet a need within the community whether that be physically, mentally, spiritually or emotionally.

The charity works hard at making the centre available to the public as much as possible. By providing spacious and well-maintained rooms at affordable prices, they hope that clients will benefit from using the centre. We offer discounts to charity groups and community groups as we are aware that they need to keep costs as low as possible. We also offer generous discounts to start up groups, to take some pressure off them as they begin a new venture.

The centre not only benefits those who are looking for inclusion in a community or to learn new skills but also those who are needing relief from difficult circumstances such as health issues (both physical and mental), bereavement, age concerns and family issues. The parents and carers in the community have a few classes and groups to attend for their children: enabling them to learn new skills and providing an environment for community to develop.

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To ensure that the building is a safe place for hire, we have carried out regular inspections on the electrics, lift and fire alarm. We also ensure that the insurance is up to date and that any groups using the building have relevant insurance in place. We also ask that they provide PAT testing certificates for any portable devices they may use while in the centre.

The centre often has groups using the building who advertise their events with the Sandel Centre as the address. In this way the committee benefit from the publicity arranged by the groups but this is incidental when providing the community with information about the event and therefore is necessary in doing so.

Financial Review

The key funding sources for this reporting period that enabled the delivery of the organisation's strategic priorities include:

- Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
- Community Development & Health Network
- HUG Initiative
- John Moore Foundation
- Power NI

The results for the year are set out on page 10. The company returned net incoming resources for the year of £9,090 (2023 – £629 net outgoing resources). At 31 January 2024 the total funds of the charity amounted to £25,487 (2023 - £16,937) comprising unrestricted income funds of £13,592 (2023 - £9,700), unrestricted designated funds of £3,717 (2023 - £4,306) and restricted funds of £8,178 (2023 - £2,391).

Reserves policy and going concern

The Trustees recommend that the surplus of £9,090 be transferred to the total income funds brought forward. The relevant fund now has a balance of £25,487.

The Trustees consider that with the continued support of its bankers, the reserves retained by the company are sufficient for its ongoing needs.

Plans for the future

Causeway Voluntary Action Trust plans to work hard in 2023/2024 to provide a safe and welcoming environment. Ground Coffee and Kitchen are now an integral part of what the centre has to offer and provide a great service to the community and centre clientele. We still plan to redesign the website for the Sandel Centre and provide a dedicated area for Ground Coffee and Kitchen to promote itself and be able to facilitate online bookings for the catering service offered to our clients. We still want to integrate the online booking platform with our invoice platform (Xero) to save considerable admin time and cost. This will free up more time for the Centre Manager to pursue business development opportunities. It is also hoped that we can attract new clients to come along to "open-days" in Spring 2025 - showcasing what the Sandel Centre can offer to potential new clients over our competitors. We would also hope that Ground Coffee and Kitchen would play an active part in these promotional days. We also plan to continue to offer more community focused events to tackle mental health issues and loneliness – across all ages.

Taxation

The company is a charity (charity no NIC102521) and is recognised as such by HM Revenue & Customs for taxation purposes. As a result, there is no liability to taxation on any of its income.

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Structure, governance and management

Causeway Voluntary Action Trust continues to operate as a not-for-profit charitable organisation with Company Limited by Guarantee status and was incorporated on 14 May 1996. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objectives and powers of the company and is governed by its Articles of Association. The liability of its members is limited in that every member of the company undertakes to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 in the event of the company being wound up.

The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees, comprising of 8 in total. The Board meet on a bi-monthly basis and are serviced by the chairperson of the company. The Trustees manage the business of Causeway Voluntary Action Trust and may exercise all the powers of the company. The Trustees have the power at any time and from time to time to appoint any person to be a Trustee.

New Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making process, the strategic priorities and recent financial performance of the charity. They are free to discuss any issue with other current Trustees or employees. Trustees are encouraged to attend any appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role. This provides an understanding of what Charity Trusteeship entails and the responsibilities and duties that go with that position. It is planned to facilitate a further examination of direction, with a view to strategic sustainability and succession on an ongoing basis.

The registered office of the company is The Sandel Centre, 6 Knocklynn Road, Coleraine, Co Londonderry, Northern Ireland, BT52 1WT. The company registration number is NI030816.

The Trustees, who are also the Directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mrs Suzanne Brown	
Mrs Rachel Coural	(resigned 30 July 2024)
Mr William Crymble	
Mr Alan Hutton	(appointed 17 October 2024)
Mr John Mairs	(resigned 30 July 2024)
Dr Paul Martin	
Mr Trevor McKeown	(appointed 30 July 2024)
Mrs Deborah Mullan	(resigned 19 May 2023)
Mrs Danielle Rosborough	
Mrs Catriona Ross	(resigned 27 October 2023)
Prof Arthur Williamson	

Appointing of Trustees

Appointment of Trustees can be effected by a decision of the existing Trustees, and termination of the role of Trustee can be effected by a Trustee submitting a written resignation or being determined no longer capable or allowed by law to continue in the role.

Related parties and co-operation with other organisations

None of our trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity, apart from what is disclosed in note 9 to the accounts. Any connection between a Trustee or senior manager of the charity with any related parties must be disclosed to the full board of Trustees in the same way as any other contractual relationship with a related party. In the current year any such related party transactions are reported in note 18 to the accounts.

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Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees, who are also the directors of Causeway Voluntary Action Trust 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 which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principals in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity 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 charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Statement as to disclosure to our Independent Examiners

Each of the Trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the independent examination, but of which the Independent Examiner is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the Independent Examiner is aware of such information.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Mrs Suzanne Brown

25 October 2024