

Rural Support
Company Limited by Guarantee
Financial Statements
31 March 2025

Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Rural Support

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

Year ended 31 March 2025

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Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2025

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Rural Support
Charity registration number	NIC102591
Company registration number	NI042579
Principal office and registered office	Unit 3 Molesworth Place Molesworth Street Cookstown BT80 8NX Northern Ireland

The trustees

P S Alexander	
P D P Boyle	
V J Chestnutt	
G M Doran	(Appointed 29 October 2024)
G Gallagher	(Appointed 29 October 2024)
R Irvine	
D B Lough	
C E Lynn	
I H Stevenson	
D Tumelty	(Appointed 29 October 2024)
L Vance	(Appointed 29 October 2024)
G Daly	(Resigned 29 October 2024)
J Hawkes	(Resigned 29 October 2024)
D J McAtamney	(Resigned 29 October 2024)
Z McNaugher	(Resigned 29 October 2024)

Company secretary Mr Robert Irvine

Auditor Finegan Gibson Ltd
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Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Structure, governance and management

Governing Document

Rural Support is a charitable company limited by guarantee (NI042579), established August 2001 and incorporated in March 2002, providing support to farmers and rural families across Northern Ireland. The charity operates within a governance framework defined by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Recruitment and Appointment of Trustees

Trustees are appointed following an open recruitment process to ensure a balance of skills across:

- agriculture and agri-business
- mental health and therapeutic services
- business and financial management
- governance and compliance
- rural policy and community development
- communications and strategic engagement

New Trustees receive induction and guidance on their duties, with ongoing opportunities for training and development.

Trustees for 2024/25:

- Mr Peter Alexander
- Mr Peter Boyle
- Mr Derek Lough (Chair)
- Mr Ian Stevenson
- Mrs Claire Lynn
- Mr Victor Chestnutt
- Mr Robin Irvine (Secretary)
- Mr Gerry Doran
- Ms Gill Gallagher
- Ms Lauren Vance
- Mr Damien Tumelty

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

Organisational Structure

The charity is led by the Board of Trustees. Operational management is delegated to the Chief Executive, supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), programme leads and specialist staff. Rural Support continues to strengthen organisational capacity to meet rising service demand and contract delivery requirements.

Executive & Senior Leadership

- Chief Executive - Kevin Doherty
- Director of Operations - Keelin Reilly
- Director of Programmes - Gyles Dawson
- Farm Support & Therapeutic Services Programme Manager - Melissa Wylie
- Head of Social Farming - Aoibheann Walsh
- FFG Programme Manager - Barbara Alcorn

Programme Delivery Teams

Farm Support & Therapeutic Services

- Farm Support Co-ordinator - Christina Murray
- Farm Support Co-ordinator - Patricia Lynch

Social Farming & Innovation

- Social Farming Co-ordinator - Nikki Foster
- Social Farming Co-ordinator - Elaine Conlon
- Social Farming & Innovation Project Support Officer - Pamela Caldwell

Plough On Programme

- Plough On Co-ordinator - Shannon McGowan

Farming for the Generations (FFG)

- Joint Programme Manager - Catherine McKenna
- Support Officer - Claire Stewart
- Support Officer - Heather White

Corporate Services

- Admin & Executive Co-ordinator - Deirdre McCrudden
- HR & Volunteer Co-ordinator - Deborah Gavin
- Outreach & Communications Officer - Victoria Ross
- Housekeeper - Bernadette Donnelly

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

Risk Management

The Trustees maintain a comprehensive risk register reviewed regularly by the SLT and Board. Key risks and responses during 2024/25 included:

1. High demand for mental health and business crisis support

Mitigation: Additional Counsellor Associates recruited; strengthened triage; expanded mentoring provision; continued partnership with PHA and agri-sector referrals.

2. Funding sustainability and income diversification

Mitigation: Corporate partnership pipeline developed; CRM implementation underway; multiple large-scale funding bids submitted; continuation of multi-year contracts.

3. Workforce capacity & recruitment

Mitigation: HR support commissioned; strengthened induction and workforce planning; plan for new Finance Manager 25/26 year.

Objectives and activities

Rural Support provides confidential, practical and emotional support to farmers and rural families across Northern Ireland. Core objectives include:

- supporting mental health and wellbeing
- promoting farm business resilience
- reducing rural isolation
- assisting farm families in crisis
- providing therapeutic counselling and mentoring
- strengthening generational renewal and succession planning
- supporting vulnerable individuals through Social Farming

All activities contribute to the advancement of public benefit.

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Objectives and activities *(continued)*

Updated Strategic Aims for 2024/25

Building on the previous strategy, key strategic aims during 2024/25 were:

Strategic Aim 1 - Strengthen Mental Health & Therapeutic Capacity

Enhance counselling, crisis response and emotional support, including developing a Suicide Prevention Officer role.

Strategic Aim 2 - Support Farm Business Resilience

Expand mentoring, financial support, and succession planning interventions under FFG and Life Beyond.

Strategic Aim 3 - Expand Social Farming Provision

Grow placement capacity, invest in farm partners, and deliver the PEACEPLUS "Growing Together" project.

Strategic Aim 4 - Reduce Rural Isolation

Enhance Across the Hedgerow and Plough On group activities to improve social connection for older and vulnerable individuals.

Strategic Aim 5 - Advance Generational Renewal

Deliver Year 1 of DAERA's FFG contract and progress successor development and legal/financial planning across 70+ families.

Strategic Aim 6 - Strengthen Outreach, Training & Rural Health Leadership Broaden rural health promotion, awareness campaigns, and stakeholder collaboration.

Strategic Aim 7 - Build Organisational Capacity

Implement CRM, grow the workforce, enhance HR systems, and secure training and development opportunities.

Strategic Aim 8 - Increase Fundraising & Corporate Engagement

Develop a pipeline of multi-year corporate partnerships and diversify funding streams.

Public Benefit Statement

The Trustees confirm that Rural Support has met the public benefit requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. All services, including the Support Line, counselling, mentoring, Social Farming placements and community programmes, are delivered for public benefit across Northern Ireland's farming and rural communities.

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Achievements and performance

Support Line

- 368 calls received covering mental health crises, financial stress, relationship breakdown and bereavement.
- Increased referrals from agri-sector partners.

Business Mentoring

- 174 clients supported with complex business, financial and personal issues.
- 192 external referrals received - a 96% increase.

Therapeutic Services

- Significant rise in complex emotional distress cases.
- Additional counsellors appointed following remuneration review.

Social Farming & Innovation

- 18 farm placements active (Apr-Jun 2025).
- PEACEPLUS programme secured (€2.1m) implementation from December 2025.
- Strong presence at Balmoral Show.

Farming for the Generations

- Succession mentoring underway with 72 families.
- Multiple workshops and legal/financial consultations delivered.
- Pilot Scheme fully implemented.

Plough On

- Regular group activities maintained.
- On going fundraising, including contribution from Ireland Funds.

Across the Hedgerow

- Continued expansion of volunteer-led befriending calls.

Life Beyond

- Significant demand for bereavement support; annual remembrance event grew in attendance.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Represented on DAERA Rural Policy Co-Design Working Group.
- Engagement with Ministers and senior officials.

Fundraising

- Community events, marathons, church collections and corporate partnerships progressed.

Operations & HR

- New Finance Manager to be appointed 25/26.
- Staff Development Day delivered.
- CRM implementation began.

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Financial review

Income & Expenditure

Total income for the year was £1,204,704; total expenditure was £1,196,353, resulting in a surplus of £8,351.

Funds

- Unrestricted: £93,673
- Restricted: £143,546
- Total: £237,219

Reserves

Reserves are needed to bridge the timing gap between spending and receiving of income and to cover unplanned temporary shortfalls in income should they arise. Holding adequate reserves safeguards the provision of our services in the event of unexpected significant financial pressures. Unrestricted reserves remain below the target of three months' operational costs. The Trustees are aware of this position and have developed a recovery plan to rebuild reserves over the coming period. This plan includes close monitoring of cash flows, careful management of expenditure, and proactive steps to increase income streams. The Trustees remain confident that, with these measures, the charity will return to its target reserves level while continuing to meet its charitable objectives.

Cash Flow

Year-end cash: £75,852, reflecting programme growth and timing of grant receipts.

Going Concern

Multi-year contracts, strong demand and robust financial controls support the Trustees' assessment that the charity remains a going concern.

Plans for future periods

Key priorities for 2025/26 include:

- Implementing the PEACEPLUS project
- Developing corporate partnerships
- Completing CRM system rollout
- Securing funding for Suicide Prevention Officer
- Delivering Year 2 of the FFG programme
- Enhancing Social Farming capacity
- Completing Investing in Volunteers accreditation
- Strengthening governance and impact measurement

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors 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).

Rural Support

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Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2025

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the 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 in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and 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.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 4 December 2025 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



I H Stevenson
Trustee