

Charity Number 102843 THE CARSON PROJECT

Trustees

- Rodney Quigley – Chairperson
- Colin Graham -Vice Chairperson
- Kim Berry - Secretary

Volunteers

Christina McNeilly

Roberta Anderson

Ruth McCandless

Gary Lamont

Mark Rainey

Ann Gibson

Background to the Organisation Our organisation is made up of ex-combatants, community activists and a women's group. We are heavily involved in community issues and passionate in ensuring a peaceful community for all. We have been involved in ground-breaking inter-community work with members of the Catholic Nationalist Republican community to help all better understand the causes of conflict and how to reduce the conditions of conflict. We have also organised and facilitated various education courses not only providing vocational qualifications but education regarding history, culture and identity. Parading in Northern Ireland and the display of flags and emblems have at times been a

contentious issue in the community and at times this has led to disorder and community discord. Carson Project members have been involved in stewarding parades in the greater Ballymena area and have also been involved in issues regarding flags and emblems to provide a safe environment for all. The women's group provides a safe space where working class women from the area, the women take part in courses which include educational, cultural, personal development, recreational, selfcare and well being. Carson Project members are actively involved in providing a better environment for the community we work in. This can include organising and participating in community clean-ups and upgrading the built and natural environment. The Carson Project continues to interact and lobby with statutory and non-statutory agencies to improve conditions for our community

Purposes of the Organisation Purpose One: Conflict Resolution .

The direct benefits which flow from the purposes include education on the deep roots of conflict that lead to violence, with approaches, methodologies and resources to address and deal with conflict and violence within and between communities, build relationships and reconcile divided communities, networking opportunities for individuals or groups to meet with other minority or socially minded groups and support to organisations providing awareness-raising and education in all matters of diversity. The purpose which flows includes increased participation, in activities and events to ensure the attainment of the community to increase their skill, social interaction, improvement in mental and physical health. The benefits are demonstrated through oral and written feedback from participants, independent evaluation, reflection and feedback by facilitators of respective programmes and other organisations. In providing training, there is a risk of triggering unresolved issues and hurts from those impacted directly by violence. However, programmes allow for the opportunity to deal with such hurts safely and in a safe environment, and as such the benefits far outweigh any potential harm.

Purpose Two: Advancement in education for the Community of Ballymena and surrounding areas.

The benefit which flows from this purpose includes seeking funding for resources and courses for the group to reach out the community inhabitants and build essential links. This is demonstrated through having an active community development group that works in partnership with the community and other bodies. The public benefit will be the empowerment of residents to improve their living conditions, enhanced knowledge and understanding to all in the area through receiving an education and training in first aid, child protection, environmental issues, cultural awareness, committee skills, suicide and drug awareness, youth and enhancement of the young community inhabitants, increased volunteering opportunities and new skills to improve employment opportunities. The benefits are demonstrated through the results achieved, regular feedback from those and evaluation of the services provided. This purpose does not lead to harm. The benefit is for the community of the Greater Ballymena area and its environs, specifically those who have or will attend the courses on offer.

Purpose Three: Culture and Heritage

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include the promotion and of the history, culture, musical and marching heritage of the Ulster tradition to the community of the Greater Ballymena area, its environs and the general public. The benefit which flows from this purpose is culture validity. This is demonstrated through sharing experiences and stories with others, learning through factual education about historical topics, engendering a sense of belonging whilst confirming validity of their culture and how it contributes to their community. These benefits are evidenced through

participants and members of the public who make use of our services. The purpose does not lead to harm.

The year 2024 has again been an extremely busy and challenging year again for staff and volunteers. Despite this the Carson Project has continued to strive to deliver an effective and meaningful service to our community. We currently have 1 employee who's post is funded from Saint Stephen's Green Trust and our social enterprise. Personnel employed by the Carson Project are as follows: Ronda Rainey - Project Manager.

The Carson Project has continued to work within the community addressing the needs of the most marginalised and disadvantaged members of our community. The Carson Project has worked closely with Mid and East Antrim council officials , Northern Ireland Housing Executive and non-statutory agencies in a number of fields to promote good relations. The Carson Project has also developed new relationships with other groups across Northern Ireland. The Carson Project has continues to deliver a number of events within the reporting period to promote greater understanding of historical and cultural aspects which shape community members identity, beliefs and values. The Carson Project continues to empower individuals and the wider community to help build vibrant and confident communities.