



## **AUTISM SUPPORT KILKEEL**

# **Annual Report & Statement of Accounts**

**For the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

**Registered Office: 204 Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel, Co Down. BT34 4QA**

**Charity No: NIC102894**

## **Annual Report for the year ended December 31<sup>st</sup> 2022**

Report of the trustees for the year ending 31 December 2022. The trustees are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 December 2022. The financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019).

### **Governance and internal control**

The trustees are responsible for selecting and recruiting suitable trustees to hold office at the Annual General Meeting. The number of trustees shall be not less than three but is not subject to any maximum.

A retiring trustee is eligible for re-election, and there is no limit on the number of times a trustee may be re-elected.

The minimum age for a trustee is 18 years, but there is no upper age limit imposed on trustees. The Trustees from among their number appoint a chairperson.

New trustees are inducted through a process of briefings by the Chairman and other members of the committee and they are provided with key information relating to the charity's governance and operation.

The board of trustees meets approximately 12 times. None of the trustees received remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity this financial year.

### **Monthly Meetings**

Despite lockdown being lifted, we continued to be impacted significantly by changing COVID guidelines and need to review our risk assessment regularly. Despite challenges, we continued delivering all of our services and developed some new ways of supporting those most adversely impacted by the pandemic. We remain mindful however that it is not over and we could be forced to scale activities back at any time.

The group's monthly meeting on the last Thursday of the month is a core activity which contributes greatly to the success enjoyed by the group and it was fantastic to be able to reinstate it on Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> February, our first face to face meeting since covid. As many families had to adjust to the change in everyday life during the pandemic, we subsequently saw rise in usage of our Facebook support group. Which was available to parents 24/7 and offered visuals, social stories and emotional support to our parents.

During this challenging Year, I would like to thank the trustees for their dedicated efforts in Governing the charity.

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## THERAPIES

### Swimming Therapy

We had the opportunity of offering 17 children ages 3 to 15 therapy via swim throughout April to June 2022 with Sarah Swim Safe in Tollymore private pool.

The 1 to 1 session were beneficial to all for different reasons, some children overcame their fear of water while putting their trust in Sarah, others had fun splashing and enjoying the interaction while building confidence and many of our children go on other the sessions swimming unaided. Drowning is the lead cause of death for children with Autism consecutively 2016 -2023 so offering this therapy and the opportunity for children to learn the basics was paramount for ASK.

We ran the programme a few years previous for a smaller group and following its success had even more children/ teens participate in 2022. The 30 min session weekly over a course of 4 or 6 weeks only required a small contribution from families to secure a place for each child.

*"Callum loved swim, Sarah is lovely and has a great way with kids, she is caring and encouraging" Dani*

*"Loved it" Pauline*

*"Lily loved swim, she had a big smile and giggles. Would love to book more sessions even for the swim safety aspect, it's hard to find someone so brilliant to work with our kids." Ashling*

### Music Therapy

We had an overwhelming response to our Music Therapy Summer Scheme. Music Therapy is a great way for children to develop their social, emotional and communication skills. Music Therapy would be one of the most popular therapies at Autism Support Kilkeel and Shane Harvey the therapist is brilliant with the children.

Our first program for 2022 ran from Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> July until Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> July. We had 10 children and the breakdown was 5 one to one sessions, and 1 group session with 5 children. The ages of children who attended ranged from 3 years to 12 years of age. We had amazing feedback from parents.

*"Shane was totally amazing, the interaction and attention he was able to get from Aron brought tears to my eyes. This is a very talented, gifted & passionate therapist whom we are very lucky to avail through ASK." P Kearney*

*Michael loved his music therapy sessions with Shane! He looked forward to them every week! Says he is going back next year! Shane was so thoughtful & kind and each week learned a new song for Michael at his request including "Shotgun" and "Hakuna matata". The joy on his face when Shane sang these made my day. C McDowell*

Our second program ran from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August until Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> August. We had 6 children with more complex needs attend in August so each session was on a one-to-one basis we had no group session. The ages of children who attended ranged from 5 years to 12 years of age. Once again amazing feedback from the parents.

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*"Ezra was a little nervous at the beginning, not knowing what to expect. He really enjoyed the group session, fun & lots of smiles. Shane has a lovely gentle way with the children! Looking forward to the next few weeks. Thanks for this opportunity" J Stevenson*

*"Darragh absolutely loved being back at Music Therapy. He takes part in the group sessions which has really helped him develop his social skills and being able to turn take in group activities. Shane is excellent in what he does I can't sing is praises loudly enough and my favourite part of the music therapy is the report we get at the end. It always brings a smile to my face and a tear to my eye." S O'Hare*

### **Physiotherapy**

Due to the lack of services, especially Occupational Therapy, we approached a local physiotherapist to run a pilot scheme of a six-week block of physiotherapy for the children within our group who struggle to master higher level motor skills such as ball skills, skipping, and riding a bike, as these skills impact the child's overall participation in peer and community activities, which subsequently affect their overall development.

We ran our pilot scheme from 14<sup>th</sup> November until the 19<sup>th</sup> December in which 8 children took part in one-to-one, one hour physiotherapy sessions, ranging in age from 4 years to 6 years. A parent or Guardian was required to participate in sessions and a home exercise program (3x15 mins per week at home) was provided to maximise the benefits of Physiotherapy intervention in between the sessions This therapy was heavily subsidised by the group. Cost to parents was £5 per session.

### **Mental Health Hub**

ASK in partnership with Regenerate ran a Mental health hub for the teenage siblings in the group. The sessions ran from Tuesday the 26<sup>th</sup> April to Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> May. Victoria from Regenerate facilitated the sessions and focused on topics such as Stress & Anxiety, Self Esteem & self-Image, and the impact of social media. Our Teenage hub was made up of 9 teenage girls and 2 boys, ranging in age from 13-18. The Mental Health hub was fully funded.

### **BCPP Siblings Group**

Our BCPP health program was funded by Community Development Health Network in Newry and our pharmacy partnership was with Paul O'Hare from Mayobridge Pharmacy. Our 'Siblings group' consisted of a group of 10 children aged between 11-17 who have a brother or sister with an additional need.

Each week the siblings worked with Paul to deliver an interactive program covering topics such as childhood illnesses like Asthma, Type1 diabetes, skin conditions etc. We hoped that each child will not only gain more knowledge from the program but also gain self-worth as they all have a caring role at home, and we felt it important to reiterate throughout this project that they are not alone

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2022 we hosted a celebration day & night at the YMCA Greenhill in Newcastle. This was to celebrate the end of our successful Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership Program. We offered a day of activities and a swim slot followed by

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an overnight stay to the families who took part in our program. Nine families joined us consisting of 12 adults and 17 children.

We started the day off with a meet and greet and a tour of our accommodations followed by an afternoon of activities and swimming in the on-site pool. In the evening we all came together for dinner and campfire craic! Although it was a busy day everyone had the opportunity to chill out and chat about life and things, we all have in common. We had brilliant feedback from our trip!

*"Great day boys had a ball and so did I, thanks Autism Support Kilkeel "*

*"Thanks to everyone for giving all the kids the great opportunity and the day away! I'm still buzzing after doing that archery! M loved the pool and the archery! He keeps saying mummy I want to do more things with ASK!"*

## **COOK IT**

Starting on 26<sup>th</sup> October we ran a 4 week Cook It programme each Wednesday evening, 7pm to 8.30pm with Jims Youth Centre. Cook it! is a nutrition programme that has been developed for use in local communities in Northern Ireland. It can be used with a wide range of groups included young people. 11 of our young people took part in this fun interactive and hands on program. Where they learned cooking skills, established healthy eating habits, all while making friends.

## **Relaxed Screenings**

In April committee members met with volunteers from Newcastle Community Cinema (NCC) to discuss the possibility of running a pilot scheme to bring a relaxed screening once a month to the local community. The meeting was a great success and the outcome was that Autism Support Kilkeel would pay the license fee of approx. £120 each month and reduce the cost of a ticket to £1.50pp The NCC was given permission to use the charity logo on any promotional items and we agreed we would fund the pilot scheme for six months and then meet to review.

Working in collaboration with Newcastle Community Cinema (NCC) we brought a relaxed screening once a month, normally the last Thursday or Friday of the month, for people with neuro-diverse conditions and their family so they could enjoy a movie in a relaxed and welcoming environment with dimmed lights, no trailers and freedom to wander about or sing along. People can also take in their own food and drinks. Our first screening was of the movie "Mary Poppins" on the 2 June at 6pm. We had 57 families in attendance.

The relaxed screenings are very popular within the wider community and we regularly had up to 95 young people and their families. At special times of the years i.e., Easter and Christmas we like to turn the screenings into grander events and hold red carpet screenings, with the Easter Bunny giving out Easter Eggs and Father Christmas giving out selection Boxes.

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## Workshops

On Thursday the 6<sup>th</sup> October we had the opportunity to offer a workshop with Mr Quinn of Nicholas Quinn Solicitors. 21 participants had the opportunity to take part in a question-and-answer session in areas of Education/Special Education and Health Care needs for children. Often parents are oblivious to the available services and legal rights in both Education and Health Care for their child. Mr Quinn was able to provide comprehensive advice and assistance in these areas to our families.

*"Many thanks for a very informative evening!" -Kelly Walsh*

*"Really enjoyed this session" -Sinead McGrath*

On the 7<sup>th</sup> November we had the opportunity to offer a workshop with SENAC. Fiona O'Donnell gave information and advice on getting help and support in school for children with learning difficulties and special educational needs (SEN). This workshop was online via Zoom so everyone in the group had the opportunity to take part in the workshop and many of the participants found this helped them better navigate the statutory SEN system here in Northern Ireland

## Group Events

During the Easter Holiday we held various events for our children with additional needs, siblings, parents and grandparents.

On Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> April in partnership with Newcastle Community Cinema we held our very first relaxed screening, Encanto. The evening was a great success, we had 19 parents and 32 children in attendance. This event was fully funded.

On Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> April we held our Easter Party in Cocos Indoor Adventure Playpark from 10am – 12 noon. The venue was closed for our private function and food was provided. This event was fully funded. We had 23 adults and 37 children.

As we all know exercise can help us deal with stress. Just like a good workout can help an adult deal with stress, a fun morning in soft play can help alleviate the stress and anxiety that often trouble our children especially during school holidays when they are out of their normal routines.

When there is a child with special needs in the family, siblings often get less attention. To assist the fathers in our group to spend special time with their siblings we held our first Father/Sibling event at Formula Karting in Newry on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> April. In total we had 18 Fathers and 16 siblings race the night away. This event was fully funded.

*"What a fantastic night thank you all from me, Levi had a ball" D Hanna*

*"Thank you from me and the boys. They had the best time" M Berger*

Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> April brought a fun packed day at the Gamekeepers Lodge Equestrian & Activity Centre. 19 of our siblings enjoyed a morning of paint balling and 22 of our children with additional needs enjoyed a trek through the Mourne Mountains. Both of these events were fully funded.



Our April events were brought to a close with a Tropic Skincare Pamper morning with Tropic Skincare ambassador Lisa Feenan on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> April from 10.30am -12.30pm. Over 20 of our autism mums experienced a well-deserved pampering, which included a facial and free goodies bag. This event was fully funded.

Local Zumba instructors offered our group a complimentary night of Zumba. We were delighted to accept and on Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> May we headed to Annalong Community Centre, where we were invited to join in on one of their weekly Zumba sessions and it did not disappoint. We all had a good laugh and giggle and was a fantastic way to release some stress! It was a great night's craic and the feedback was very good.

*"Definitely what I needed today thank you for organising "*

*"I really had so much fun it was just brilliant thank you"*

*"So much fun"*

The group spend a fantastic evening at "We are Vertigo". The World's largest indoor inflatable activity course on Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> May. Kids with autism often have difficulty with body awareness and understanding where they are in relation to space. Because of this, they can appear clumsy, loud, or overly cautious. That why at Autism Support Kilkeel we like to provide activities that encourage climbing, jumping, pushing, pulling and carrying. Providing multiple opportunities in all of these areas can help our children develop better body and spatial awareness. The group funded 50% of the entrance fee to our members.

On Thursday the 9<sup>th</sup> of June as part of our BCPP health program we invited the mums who took part to a lovely pamper morning at the ASK house. Massage therapist Sharon Graham gave all the mums a lovely shoulder & head massage while they chatted and enjoyed tea and cake! It was a lovely relaxing morning for our mums. We are wonderful feedback from all the Mums.

*"Thank you, Sharon it was a lovely morning, "*

*"Thanks again Sharon I'm so relaxed".*

On Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> of June we had a Father's Day special open day at Mountpanter Farm Park. Every dad or male guardian received a free cup of coffee. 37 adults and 42 children enjoyed a morning of meeting animals from all over the globe ranging from Guinea Pigs to Scaly Snakes and Lizards. It was a completely sensory experience as the children were allowed to handle each of the animals. Entrance Fee to the farm was offered to the members of the group at a 50% discount.

*"Was a fantastic day, thank you so much" L Cunningham*

*"Thank you so much, it was a fabulous morning we loved it" K Walsh*

On Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of July we held our first visit of the year to an old favourite of the children's, Infinity Adventure Park for Rebound Therapy. Rebound therapy has many benefits, from fostering calm, aiding in sensory imbalances, increasing body awareness, or releasing dopamine—because jumping on a trampoline is fun! In total 33 children with additional needs and their siblings/parents/carers attended this event. This therapy was heavily subsidised and the cost to members for this event only £5 per person.

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On Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> August 18 of our children with additional needs spent a morning at Cranfield beach on a 45-minute Alpaca Adventure Trail. They were able to experience up close a family of Alpacas in a relaxed setting and feed and walk them. The group provided 75% funding towards the cost of this event.

Our trip to Infinity Adventure Park in July was so successful we decided to run another evening on the 12<sup>th</sup> August. Over 44 kids with additional needs attended the with their siblings. Parents, carers. The venue was once again closed for our private function and food was provided. The event was again heavily funded and the cost to members remained the same at £5 per person.

On Thursday the 18<sup>th</sup> of August we held our first Sensory Session at Newry Street Unite. The event was facilitated by Gail from "The Big White Coach" who specialises in sensor experiences, creative activities and messy play to support a healthier wellbeing and learning opportunities. The event was attended by 29 of our children who have more complex needs, the ages ranged from 4 years to 14 years. Because of the complex needs of the children the large group was divided into smaller groups depending on the individual needs of each child.

Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 12 of our families heading to sticky Fingers in Newry to experience the MAGIC of this place for kids, absolutely bursting with creativity and imagination. Sticky Fingers provide every child with the space to explore, investigate and experiment, the space to play, to be a child. 16 of our children were transformed to a magic place for 2 hours. Adult members of the group paid the full price but the children received 50% discount towards their entrance fee.

We had the opportunity to offer a bouncy castle at the ASK Sensory Garden over the summer. Many children with autism love to jump and bounce. It's a particularly enjoyable repetitive behaviour that can provide both soothing and stimulating sensory input.

In total we offered 6 days over the July and August period. We were able to offer 12 slots on each day. This was to allow individual families who may not be able to attend group events due to their child's sensory needs to avail of the activity.

This event was hugely popular with both kids and adults alike with 55 families using the bouncy castle to make family memory's and provide sensory stimulation for their children.

*"Thank you so much for arranging the bouncy castle for the ask garden. Rosie absolutely loved it!" - Libby Nicholas Flanagan*

We celebrated Halloween in 2022 with a fabulous bus trip to Crumlin Road Gaol, Pumpkin Patch and Halloween Extravaganza on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. 38 Adults and 37 children enjoyed the spooky Jail tour, Petting Farm, walking round the Pumpkin patch, riding the Pumpkin Puffer Train and the amazing live interactive Halloween Musical. Entrance fee to this event was offered to members with a 50% discount and transport was provided for free.

Halloween celebrations continued with an amazing Halloween party held in Infinity Adventure Park on Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> November. 35 Adults and 53 children enjoyed an hour of rebound therapy and party food. This event was gifted to us by the owners of Infinity Adventure Park as a contribution to our Christmas fundraiser.



Our Christmas celebrations began with a Christmas Party night for our parents in the Kilmorey Arms Hotel on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> December. 31 parents attended the event and paid full price for their tickets as the consensus was that funds should be kept for therapies and events for the children.

Our Christmas celebration continued with a fantastic Christmas night of play, sensory activities and games which was enjoyed by 20 of our children accompanied by parents at Global Adventure Play, Ballynahinch on 15<sup>th</sup> December. This was a fully funded party at no cost to the families. A buffet tea was provided along with tea and coffee and the night ended with a surprise visit from Santa in his magical Lapland cottage with a special gift for each child. Everyone had a fantastic time and went home tired but happy after enjoying the swinging obstacles, ball pools, multiple slides and a quiet area with sensory toys, lighting and soothing sounds.

#### **ASK FAMILY FUN DAY**

On Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup> August we held our first ever Family Fun Day at Kitty's Road Community Centre from 12 noon to 3pm. It was a great success with over 40 families in attendance. 65 Adults and 78 Children, 43 with additionally needs. The funday was fully funded.

Entertainment provided on the day was 2 large bouncy castles, a Fire Engine, Balloon Modelling, Wee Bugs and Beasties and Alex Alexander of DJ Entertainment was our DJ for the day. Food provided on the day by Kevin McCulla's Chipvan and Malones Ice Cream

All SEN children and their siblings got to enjoy a Kids meal and Ice cream cone. These were accessed via tokens given out on entry. A raffle was held on the day with prizes donated by local businesses, the money raised from the raffle help to fund this fantastic memorable day.

#### **Autism Support Kilkeel Centre**

In the year to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, due to the increase in therapies provided, the return of our monthly parent's meetings and providing a Mental health Hub the centre has been heavily utilised.

The centre has been well maintained by the usual volunteers. Thanks to our members involved in this activity.

#### **Centre Improvement Feasibility Study**

We got our Sensory Garden completed and it was wonderful to see so many of our families make great use of this in the year 2022.

#### **Membership**

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 membership of the private group was 101; the group has accepted 27 new families, from Kilkeel, Rostrevor, Warrenpoint, Hilltown, Ballymartin, Kilcoo Newcastle, in the past year, and we extend a very warm welcome to them. Membership of our public group reached the amazing figure of 758 members.

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## Financial Review

### Financial Performance

Financial Performance in the year to December 2022 has resulted in a surplus of expenditure over income of £4,681.41

#### Income

Income receipts for the year totalled £28,546.42. The year to December 31st, 2022 included an Awards for all grant of £10,000, Brighter Community Grant (NIE) of £1,000 and the CHDN NI final payment of £2,400, this was the reminder from a £12,000 grant awarded in 2021 to run our BCPP program. Amazon donations of £98.03, and the reminder income was made of members of the community running fundraisers for the charity.

The group's income is generally healthy but we are concerned about a shortfall in cash donations in the future as more people turned to contactless payment amid fears over the use of cash during the pandemic.

Fundraising Income for the year to December 2022 was £2475.52 compared to Nil to the same date last year. The committee recognises that due to the global pandemic it has been a challenging external environment for fundraising. Over the past year we have had to review our strategies, invest in new approaches and respond to changes in data protection legislation.

Donation income has greatly increased; incoming donations totalled £7674.26 compared to £1019.92 last year. The increase is mainly due to donations from 2 local businesses, Gavin Recovery and SEK Ltd and to the fundraising efforts of individual members of the group.

Other income was generated through parents' contributions for events and therapies provided by the group which totalled £3,626.64.

There are so many people that have helped us raise money, donated or sponsored us to name individually but as a group we are extremely thankful and grateful for all their support, as someone once said **"it takes a village to raise a child"** this is never truer than when you have a child with special needs.

#### Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £23,865.01 an increase on the previous year (£6,412.59). This was mainly due to the reinstating of therapies and programs normally provided which had been previously been cancelled due to Covid.

During 2022 we found ourselves in the privileged position to be able to give back to our community. We were able to donate to several local causes. Mourne Community First Responders £300, Regenerate £150, Newry Hospice £150 and Rathore Special School £500. Giving back is about contributing what you can and making a positive impact on the lives of others. Together, we can create a more compassionate and thriving society.

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Administrative & General was higher for the year to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 (£2063.73) than the year December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 (£70.50). This expenditure is due to bank fees for our Current account and Annual Fees on our Credit card account. Committee expenses of Access NI checks and uniforms provided. ASK Lanyards & Banner and ASK thank you cards. Stationary.

ASK Centre development expenditure for the year to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022 was £93.99 compared to nil in the previous year.

Fundraising Expenditure was £1300 at the date of this report. This is a 100% increase on December 2021. This increase is due to our Ask Christmas Raffle where the group provided the top five prizes. £500 Heating oil. £300 Pillo Hotel Voucher, £200 Asda Voucher, £200 Smyths Voucher and £100 Butchers Voucher.

It is fair to say that 2022 was again a difficult year for our group we were very worried about having to reduce our services and one of our biggest fears was managing social distance whilst returning to providing what we hope is life enhancing opportunities for the families identified. Our aim is continuing the outreach to more families in 2023

#### **Stock**

As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the group held a stock of Sensory Equipment valued at £500, and Weeenet Tracking Devices with a value of £623.

#### **Gifts and support of Kind**

In assessing the finances and assets of the group it must be noted that the treasurer gave a great deal of support in kind. Many purchases are made and the payment never claimed back: for example, printing, stationery and postage costs, have all been paid for by the treasurer but the cost not claimed despite such a claim being perfectly legitimate.

Members give generously of their time; with the many hours given to preparing and delivering talks, days out, residential breaks, and managing the group, without this its growth and success could not be achieved.

The chairperson wishes to place on record their recognition of and gratitude for all these contributions.

#### **Funds materially in Deficit**

As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the group had no funds in material deficit

#### **Financial Management and Reserves Policies**

The group has a Financial Management Policy which meets the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Charity Commission guidelines "Internal Financial Controls for Charities" and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005)

The general Fund is unrestricted and is used for the day –to-day operation of the group.

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The group operates with an unrestricted reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £4500 which equated to approximately 12 months running costs. The reserve is held to allow the Group to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.

Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

As of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the General Fund had a balance £36,090.51 (compared to £30,829.10 at the same time last year).

While the current unrestricted fund level is above the reserve, we feel it is prudent in the current economic climate; maintaining a substantial reserve will better allow the group to meet the funding challenges which the wider economic situation may impose. We also note that securing external funding is becoming increasingly difficult as sponsor and grant making bodies are forced to address their own funding issues.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022 and signed on their behalf.

Michael Shiels

Michael Shiels  
Chairman