

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland · Charity number 102932

Details

Known as	Grass Roots
Status	Received
Registered	2015-10-13
Register	View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register

Contact

Address	11 Wynchurch Avenue Belfast BT6 0JP BT6 0JP
Phone	07901 944001
Email	grassrootsni@fastmail.fm
Website	www.grassrootsni.org

Activities

Purposes: The purpose of the Group is to benefit the general public through the conservation, protection and enhancement of the environment on the island of Ireland.

What the charity does: The advancement of environmental protection or improvement

How the charity works: Environment/sustainable development/conservation

Who the charity helps: General public,Volunteers

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-04-05	£866	£1,046	£0	0

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Dr Anne Hardcastle		
Mr Ken Orr		
Mr. Clive Harvey		
Mr. Robert Shearman		
Mr. Sam Hastings		
Ms Nicola Paul		
Ms. Janis Lunn		
Ms. Pauline White		

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Accounts

Governance

There were few developments in the governance of the group this year. Apart from some minor updating and revisions to Risk Assessments, we spent some time in writing detailed notes on the running of our website, email and Facebook page to improve resilience in the management of Grass Roots.

Private benefit to individuals continued to arise in ways that are incidental and necessary to ensure that benefit is provided to the general public. Private benefit to trustees and volunteers in the form of reimbursement of expenses was limited to only those expenses actually incurred in carrying out conservation activities. Any private benefit arising from social activities was judged necessary to contribute to team building. Private benefit to individuals, who own land where Grass Roots work, was judged to be proportionate to the public benefit resulting from the group's activities.

The Trustees of Grass Roots Conservation Group have taken due regard to the Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

Trustees' Review of Financial position

In compliance with the guidance issued by the Charity Commissioners, our Accounts have been examined by an Independent Examiner. No funds held by Grass Roots Conservation Group are materially in deficit.

Overall expenditure was just a little more than income for the year, and reserves continue to be very healthy. The cash held on deposit is sufficient to provide security for any adverse circumstances likely to arise.

Thanks are due to our Treasurer, Mr. Clive Harvey, for his usual very thorough job on preparing the accounts, and to our Independent Assessor Mrs. Marjorie Guiler.

Dr. A. Hardcastle (Chair) date:

Anne Hardcastle

8th November 2025

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
BT5 7FB
Tel: 028 9048 3530

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2025

	£	<u>At 31/03/2024</u>
	£	£
Current Account	296.94	978.67
Deposit Account	1,883.58	1,864.88
Total Cash	<u>2,180.52</u>	<u>2,843.55</u>
Debtors	819.15	440.80
Creditors	(875.10)	(980.35)
Net Assets	<u>2,124.57</u>	<u>2,304.00</u>

Signed:

Anne Hardcastle 8th November 2025.

Dr A Hardcastle
(Chairperson)

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
BT5 7FB
Tel: 028 9048 3530

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2024/2025

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

		<u>2023/2024</u>
<u>INCOME</u>	£	£
Member's Subscriptions	62.00	67.00
Donations	50.00	0.00
Task charges to User Bodies	290.60	151.40
Mileage charges to User Bodies	444.15	570.05
Interest Received	19.54	15.73
	<hr/> 866.29	<hr/> 804.18
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Membership fees	30.00	30.00
Insurance	172.87	134.72
Volunteer Expenses	15.00	70.09
Web Site	86.87	81.50
Bank Fees	35.53	34.50
AGM Expenses	45.00	40.00
Volunteer Petrol	660.45	840.32
Tools & Materials	0.00	34.98
	<hr/> 1,045.72	<hr/> 1,266.11
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(179.43)	(461.93)

Signed:

Anne Hardcastle

8th November 2025

Dr A Hardcastle (Chairperson)

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Accounts

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Dr. A. Hardcastle (Chair) date:



16th Nov 2024

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
BT5 7FB
Tel: 028 9048 3530

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2024

		<u>At 31/03/2023</u>
	£	£
Current Account	978.67	1,291.13
Deposit Account	1,864.88	1,850.56
Total Cash	<u>2,843.55</u>	<u>3,141.69</u>
Debtors	440.80	396.37
Creditors	(980.35)	(772.13)
Net Assets	<u>2,304.00</u>	<u>2,765.93</u>

Signed:

Anne Hardcastle . 16th Nov 2024 .

Dr A Hardcastle
(Chairperson)

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
BT5 7FB
Tel: 028 9048 3530

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2023/2024

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

		<u>2022/2023</u>
<u>INCOME</u>	£	£
Member's Subscriptions	67.00	61.00
Donations	0.00	76.00
Allstate NI Grant	0.00	37.50
Task charges to User Bodies	151.40	144.00
Mileage charges to User Bodies	570.05	582.65
Interest Received	15.73	3.14
	804.18	904.29
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Membership fees	30.00	0.00
Insurance	134.72	115.07
Volunteer Expenses	70.09	0.00
Web Site	81.50	87.35
Bank Fees	34.50	34.34
AGM Expenses	40.00	5.00
Volunteer Petrol	840.32	553.60
Tools & Materials	34.98	176.84
	1,266.11	972.20
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(461.93)	(67.91)

Signed:

 16. Nov 2024.

Dr A Hardcastle (Chairperson)

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Annual report

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Annual Report

Financial Year: 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024



Wood ear fungus – Red's Wood November 2023

Grassroots

CONSERVATION GROUP

Charity No: NIC 102932

Introduction – Purposes

Grass Roots Conservation Group ('Grass Roots') is a charity registered with the NI Charity Commissioners, number NIC102932. The public address is: 11 Wynchurch Avenue, Belfast BT6 0JP

The Purpose of the Group (as registered with the Charity Commissioners) is to benefit the general public through the conservation, protection and enhancement of the environment on the island of Ireland.

Grass Roots is governed by the Constitution as last amended on 10 October 2015, which is available from the Secretary. The Trustees of Grass Roots during the Financial Year 2022-23 were:

Dr. Anne Hardcastle (Chair)
Mr. Clive Harvey (Treasurer)
Ms. Pauline White (Membership Secretary)
Mr. Sam Hastings
Ms. Janis Lunn
Mr. Ken Orr (Secretary)
Mr. Robert Shearman (Task Organiser)
Ms. Nicola Paul

Secretary's Report on Activities and Achievements

The period between April 2023 and March 2024 saw a packed programme of events, with a record breaking 27 days of work scheduled, though 4 days were cancelled for reasons such as flooding, or the illness of the landowner. Volunteer numbers were good, in keeping with recent pre-pandemic levels.



Figure 1 Walling in Inishowen – August 2023

As always, a varied programme included familiar sites such as Saintfield Estate and Rea's Wood at Antrim, occasional sites like Oxford Island and the Bog Meadows, and new ones such as the former Ecos centre near Ballymena and Castlewellan Forest. October Wood, Carryduff, has become a real favourite and our thanks again go to Alexey Janes for providing several days' work in the woodland and hosting our established Christmas Decorations workshop. We had a three day trip to Inishowen to continue work on the drystone wall at

the White's cottage; once again we had remarkably good weather and greatly appreciate the opportunity to stay in such a beautiful location.



Figure 2 Ideal work for Duke of Edinburgh participants - making the entrance ramp (above) for the composting toilet at October Wood, and planting trees at the Mehargs' farm



As another established regular task, we had an August day of seed collection along with Debbie Gillies of True Harvest Seeds, but this time we started at their Centre near Ballyhornan. We had a fascinating morning touring the site and hearing of the ambitious development plans, and then focussed on seed collection in the afternoon at Ardtole Nature Reserve, just a little way along the coast.

Figure 3 Seed collection at True Harvest

2023 was a special year for the Marine Conservation Society, celebrating 30 years of the BeachWatch survey and litter collection. Grass Roots Conservation Group was given a special Award for having participated in more Beachwatch days than any other group in the UK – we have amassed 29 years, only missing the first year which had not been widely publicised. Ken Orr (Secretary) was invited to give an (on-line) presentation about our work at the national MCS AGM in November 2023, which helped to raise our profile still further.



Figure 4 Pond construction at October Wood: never happier than when we are working in a muddy hole.

As well as several days' work (and hospitality) at their farm and woodland and at Tolan's Point, Michael and Judy Meharg came up with a task that was new to Grass Roots, making faggots of tree hay at the former Ecos centre. These are basically bundles of cut branches of species such as willow and birch that are subsequently dried and used as cattle fodder through the winter. This provides highly nutritious feed, and the (indoor) cows love to strip the leaves from the branches.



Figure 5 Making tree hay at the former Ecos centre

We also enjoyed outings to Brackagh Moss for scrub clearance work and to Oxford Island for Himalayan balsam bashing for Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon council. A visit to the TCV tree nursery at Cultra showed the potential of the site, though there are also difficulties in the form of rabbits and a very wet field. We were back at the Ballynature Show in Ballynure in March 2024; it's always a good networking opportunity, as well as generating interest in our work at the stand.

The Summer outing went to Enniskillen this year, with visits to the Castle and nearby Florencecourt. After a walk around the Marina, we finished with a very enjoyable meal at a local hostelry. It's a good opportunity just to relax in each other's company rather than always being focussed on-task.



Figure 6 Choosing a new boat at Enniskillen Marina

Governance

There were few developments in the governance of the group this year. Apart from some minor updating and revisions to Risk Assessments, we revamped our Consent Forms to better target just the information we really need, and introduced an Emergency Contact list to condense the essential details required for every task, along with a sign-in sheet to be used at the start of each day.

Private benefit to individuals continued to arise in ways that are incidental and necessary to ensure that benefit is provided to the general public. Private benefit to trustees and volunteers in the form of reimbursement of expenses was limited to only those expenses actually incurred in carrying out conservation activities. Any private benefit arising from social activities was judged necessary to contribute to team building. Private benefit to individuals, who own land where Grass Roots work, was judged to be proportionate to the public benefit resulting from the group's activities.

The Trustees of Grass Roots Conservation Group have taken due regard to the Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.



Figure 7 Snowdrops in the woods at Saintfield House

Trustees' Review of Financial position

In compliance with the guidance issued by the Charity Commissioners, our Accounts have been examined by an Independent Examiner. No funds held by Grass Roots Conservation Group are materially in deficit.

Overall expenditure almost exactly balanced income for the year, and reserves continue to be very healthy. The cash held on deposit is sufficient to provide security for any adverse circumstances likely to arise.

Thanks are due to our Treasurer, Mr. Clive Harvey, for his usual very thorough job on preparing the accounts, and to our Independent Assessor Mrs. Marjorie Guiler.

Dr. A. Hardcastle (Chair) date:

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Annual return

Independent Examiner's report to the charity trustees of Grass Roots Conservation Group

I report on the accounts of the charity set out in the Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- . examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- . follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- . state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Signature

Marjorie Guiler

4 November 2024

Marjorie Guiler

30 Beechmount Road, Carryduff, BT8 8AD

Independent Examiner

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Accounts

Trustees' Review of Financial position

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Dr. A. Hardcastle (Chair) date:

Anne Hardcastle 21st Oct 2023

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
BT5 7FB
Tel: 028 9048 3530

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2023

	£	<u>At 31/03/2022</u>
	£	£
Current Account	1,291.13	1,461.78
Deposit Account	1,850.56	1,848.84
Total Cash	<u>3,141.69</u>	<u>3,310.62</u>
Debtors	396.37	158.75
Creditors	(772.13)	(635.53)
Net Assets	<u>2,765.93</u>	<u>2,833.84</u>

Signed:

Dr A Hardcastle
(Chairperson)

Anne Hardcastle

GRASS ROOTS CONSERVATION GROUP

C/O 18 Kingsland Park
Belfast
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Tel: 028 9048 3530

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2022/2023

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

		<u>2021/2022</u>
<u>INCOME</u>	£	£
Member's Subscriptions	61.00	60.00
Donations	76.00	192.00
Allstate NI Grant	37.50	683.13
Task charges to User Bodies	144.00	147.00
Mileage charges to User Bodies	582.65	344.25
Interest Received	3.14	0.78
	<hr/> 904.29	<hr/> 1,427.16
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Membership fees	0.00	30.00
Insurance	115.07	115.07
Stationery & Stamps	0.00	5.28
Web Site	87.35	61.86
Bank Fees	34.34	25.96
AGM Expenses	5.00	0.00
Volunteer Petrol	553.60	475.30
Tools & Materials	176.84	24.99
	<hr/> 972.20	<hr/> 738.46
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(67.91)	688.70

Signed:

Dr A Hardcastle (Chairperson)

Anne Hardcastle 21st Oct 2023

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

Annual report

Grass Roots Conservation Group

Annual Report

Financial Year: 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023



Brackagh Moss October 2022

Grassroots

CONSERVATION GROUP

Charity No: NIC 102932

Introduction – Purposes

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Mr. Robert Shearman (Task Organiser)
Ms. Nicola Paul

Secretary's Report on Activities and Achievements

During the period of this report, we were able to emerge further from the shadow of the pandemic. A very full programme of work was put in place, with a remarkable 25 work days scheduled between April 2022 and March 2023, though three of these had to be cancelled for differing reasons. Volunteer numbers were up a little from the last two years, though still not back to pre-pandemic levels.



Figure 1 The traditional bonfire at Saintfield

The programme was varied, including familiar sites such as Saintfield Estate and Rea's Wood at Antrim and new ones such as Hugh's Meadow, a nature reserve being constructed near Parkgate. October Wood, Carryduff, is now a regular and well-loved site and our thanks again go to Alexey Janes for providing several days' work in the woodland and hosting our established Christmas Decorations workshop.



Figure 2 Different styles of fencing at Hugh's Meadow and October Wood - ideal work for Duke of Edinburgh participants



Another established fixture in the programme is an August day of seed collection along with Debbie Gillies of True Harvest Seeds. This year we went to Minnowburn and gathered two conservation grade collections, of pendulous sedge and cow parsley, to be added to the Irish seedbank near Ballyhornan. Mentioning Ballyhornan, we had a beautiful day of sunshine for our annual beach clean there; overall the levels of litter were down on previous years but there was far too much plastic, and far too much fishing-related debris.



Figure 3 Seed collection at Minnowburn



Michael and Judy Meharg again provided several days' work at their new woodland at Dundrod, and at Tolan's Point. We also enjoyed outings to Brackagh Moss and Craigavon Lakes for scrub clearance work for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon council; the latter site is home to the scarce cryptic wood white butterfly and our work there is to remove willow and birch to preserve open grassland essential for the butterfly.



Figure 4 Never daunted by a wall of Himalayan balsam at Tolan's Point...even on an absurdly wet day.

A first for Grass Roots was a Food Foraging day, held at Lagan Meadows, which turned out to be a really special event! Our leader, Clare McQuillan, was so knowledgeable about the plants to be found in Lagan Valley Regional Park, and the stories of their uses through the ages. After a morning spent collecting a variety of herbs, flowers and leaves, we cooked the most delicious lunch, accompanied by an elderflower champagne. Funding for this event was kindly provided by Lough Neagh Partnership.



Figure 5 Foraging at Lagan Meadows



Funding was also provided, as part of the same scheme, for two of the committee to undertake a City and Guilds course in Knapsack Spraying. Grass Roots never uses pesticides, but there are occasions when we need to use herbicides to control invasive species; usually this is by direct application but it is useful to have a spraying capability if the need should arise. The C & G course was intensive, interesting and enjoyable, with both practical and on-line examinations at the end, and result in a qualification which is not time limited. Thanks to Lisa Allen of Lough Neagh Partnership for making the arrangements.

The Ballynature Show took place again in March 2023, for the first time since the pandemic, and Grass Roots stand attracted a lot of interest.



We also restarted our Summer outing, this year to a variety of locations centred around Randalstown and Garvagh. The Viaduct Garden at Randalstown, an enigmatic Pyramid in Garvagh Forest and Garvagh Museum were new venues for most of us, and amounted to a very enjoyable day out; thanks to Janis for doing the preparation work.



Figure 6 Randalstown Viaduct Garden and the Garvagh Pyramid

Governance

During 2022-23, we completed a thorough review and updating of our Safeguarding Policies, along with a complete revision of our Risk Assessments. All of these are now available on the Grass Roots website, www.grassrootsni.org. The security of the website itself was improved by obtaining an SSL certificate (so that the site now shows up as <https://>, and transactions with the site are encrypted), and all documents on site are now stored as pdf.

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Grass Roots Conservation Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102932

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Signature

Marjorie Guiler 8 October 2023

Marjorie Guiler

30 Beechmount Road, Carryduff, BT8 8AD

Independent Examiner