

Company Registration Number: NI038784
HM Revenue & Customs Charity Registration Number: XR28895
NI Charities Commission Reference Number: NIC103426



(Private Company, limited by guarantee without Share Capital Exempt from using Limited)

Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2024

Sustainable Northern Ireland

Company Information

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Charity Name Sustainable Northern Ireland

Company Number NI038784

Charity Registration Number NIC103426

Registered Office 385 Springfield Road
Belfast
BT12 7DG

Operational Address 385 Springfield Road
Belfast
BT12 7DG

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Directors

Rachael Singleton	(Chair)	appointed 08/03/2022
Andrew Benfield		appointed 07/06/2022
Jacqueline Callan		appointed 08/12/2022
Robert Clements		appointed 08/03/2022
Dr Aoife Foley		appointed 19/12/2017 - resigned 05/09/2023
Dr Ian Garner		appointed 22/12/2017 - resigned 12/12/2023
Alan McVicker		appointed 02/12/2020
Keith Patterson		appointed 10/05/2022
Dr Susann Power		appointed 10/12/2019

Company Secretary Nichola Hoehn appointed 06/03/2018

OTHER INFORMATION

Independent Examiner Diamond & Skillen
Chartered Accountants
Sinclair House
89/101 Royal Avenue
Belfast
BT1 1FE

Bankers Danske Bank Limited
Shaftesbury Square
Belfast

Sustainable Northern Ireland Director / Trustees' Report for the year ended 31st March 2024

The Board of Directors/Trustees submits its report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

The Company is a private company limited by guarantee without a share capital, exempt from using limited, registration number NI038784, is a registered charity, number XR28895 and is also registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, number NIC103426. The names of the present Directors/Trustees, and any past Directors/Trustees who served during the year, are given on page 2, together with the names of the charity's external advisors.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Directors/Trustees

The Board of Directors/Trustees is responsible for the overall governance of the Company. Directors/Trustees have the power at any time and from time to time to appoint any person to be a Director/Trustee and the total number of Directors/Trustees may not be less than eight. The maximum number of Trustees is fifteen. Any Director/Trustee appointed shall hold office for a term of three years (subject to meeting the requirements of Article 33) and shall then be eligible for re-appointment, also for a term of three years. The Board elects one of its number to act as Chairperson for the term at their first meeting following the Chairperson's appointment.

The Board meets at least four times each year where Directors/Trustees review strategy and operational performance and set annual operating plans and budgets. New Directors/Trustees meet with the Chief Executive who provides them with all the information they need on the work of the Company which is further enhanced at the meetings of the Board thereafter. Directors/Trustees are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events where these will help their role. The Board delegates the exercise of certain tasks in connection with the management and administration of the Company. This is controlled by requiring regular reporting back to the Board so that all decisions can be ratified in due course.

Statement of Directors/Trustees' Responsibilities and Corporate Governance

The company is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Directors/Trustees are responsible for their annual report and for the preparation of financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of the net movement in funds of the Company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the Directors/Trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable 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 company will continue in business.

The Directors/Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Company keeps proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities and to provide reasonable assurance that:

- The Company is operating efficiently and effectively;
- All assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition and are properly applied;
- Proper records are maintained and financial information used within the Company, or for publication, is reliable; and
- The Company complies with relevant laws and regulations.

Statement of disclosure to our independent examiners

In so far as the Directors/Trustees are aware at the time of approving our trustees' annual report:

- there is no relevant information, being information needed by the independent examiner in connection with preparing their report, of which the charity's independent examiner is unaware; *and*
- the Directors/Trustees, having made enquiries of fellow directors/trustees and the charity's independent examiner that they ought to have individually taken, have each taken all steps that he/she is obliged to take as a Director/Trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the independent examiner is aware of that information.

Internal controls

Internal controls over all forms of commitment and expenditure continue to be reviewed to ensure their effectiveness. Processes are in place to ensure that performance is monitored and the appropriate management information is prepared and reviewed monthly by executive management and quarterly by the Board. The systems of internal control are designed to provide reasonable but not absolute assurances against material misstatement or loss. They include:

- A Strategic Plan, Annual Business Plan and Annual Budget approved by the Board;
- A Strategic Plan, Annual Business Plan and Annual Budget approved by the Board;
- Regular consideration by the Board of financial results, variances from budget, non-financial performance indicators and bench marking reviews;
- Delegation of day to day management authority and appropriate segregation of duties; *and*
- Identification and management of risks.

Risk Statement

An internal risk assessment has been undertaken in order to identify the major risks to which the organisation is exposed. These have been identified as:

- Financial - the organisation's funding is uncertain and historic income streams may be at risk. To mitigate against this the Board has formulated a Reserves Policy (see Finance Review below);
- Operational - as an organiser of a variety of events and programmes, the organisation takes great care to ensure the safety of all participants and that the appropriate liability policies are in place;
- Operational – failure to meet targets and objectives specified by our Sponsors and funders.
- Operational – cyber security breach or loss of sensitive data. To mitigate this data is password secured with appropriate backup copies and cyber insurance policies are in place

The Board recognises its responsibility for the management of risk and has in place a Risk Strategy, which categorises risk in terms of severity, likelihood and consequence. The Strategy is reviewed annually and risk is monitored regularly.

Risk Management

The organisation has in place a well-established system of internal controls that governs its operations. These controls have been designed to provide a reasonable assurance against risk and include:

- A Governance Framework;
- Financial Standing Orders and Regulations;
- A long term Strategic Plan, an Annual Business Plan and an Annual Budget for the year, all of which have been approved by the Board;
- Monthly review of financial results by the CEO including variance from budget and variance from cash flow and quarterly review by the Board of these financial performance indicators;
- In depth appraisal by the Board of financial performance, risks and growth objectives;
- Detailed objectives are set annually for all aspects of the organisation's activities. Progress against these objectives is monitored monthly by the CEO and quarterly by the Board against agreed targets and benchmarks;
- Risk assessments, carried out before all activities are undertaken, regularly checked by line managers;
- Scaled authority levels and appropriate segregation of duties; and
- Continual identification and management of risk.
- A new policy and procedure is in place to ensure we meet the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations.

The Board has a rolling programme to review its Governance Documents and has set up an organisational risk register which allows identified risks to be rated according to the severity, likelihood and impact of the risk occurring.

OBJECTS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CHARITY

In accordance with the Articles of Association the objects for which the Charity is established are to advance the education of the public in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in economic and social studies as they relate to individuals, communities, society at large and the planet as a whole, with special reference to their inter-relationship with ecology, the natural world, health, technology, agriculture, sustainable development (being development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs), philosophy and psychology and the matter of protection and conservation of the natural resources, animal and plant life of Northern Ireland and elsewhere with particular emphasis on sustainable development.

Our mission is:

To inspire, influence and inform government and others to build a sustainable and resilient society.

Our strategic aim is to achieve this through a combination of campaigns, programmes, surveys, research and a variety of projects, detailed below.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE DUTY TO HAVE REGARD TO THE CHARITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S GUIDANCE ON PUBLIC BENEFIT

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the Directors/Trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the Charity's purpose and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries. No harm and no private benefit flowed from the purposes of the charity.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Sustainable Northern Ireland continues to monitor its Board membership to ensure that it can effectively deliver its mission.

Deliverables this year:

- 2 business audits
- 4 consultation responses
- 1,745 people trained
- 4 strategies and action plans
- 26 workshops or events
- 18 learning resources

Goals

Our purpose is to promote a more sustainable way of living and working to protect the planet and its resources, for the benefit of society, now and in the future. We deliver this objective through four strategic goals:

1. INFORM

Create positive environmental and social change through education and awareness.

2. REFORM

Advocate for regulatory and legislative change to advance climate action.

3. TRANSFORM

Provide practical support to help organisations achieve their sustainability goals.

4. IMPROVE

Ensure excellent standards and continuous improvement to provide the best service to our members and clients.

Education and Awareness

We work to create positive environmental and social change through our education and awareness activities. In 2023-24 these included:

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

We used a variety of platforms to inform and influence including:

- Bimonthly digital newsletter (reaching 600+ people)
- Social media (reaching 3700+ people)
- Website (reaching 9,700+ people)

Resources developed this year:

- Cloughjordan Ecovillage Case Study - a model for sustainability and community resilience
- Killeavy Castle Case Study - an example of sustainable tourism and hospitality
- Lámh Dhearg GAA Case Study - a Green Sports Club
- Springfield Meadows Case Study - a Net Zero Passivhaus Development
- 12 Blogs/Articles for the website
- Briefing note on the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 for Elected Members

Talks and presentations this year:

- Launch of Competition & Markets Authority Net Zero Forum
- C03 conference
- QUB Centre for Sustainability – Exhibition & Event on the folklore of peatlands.
- Killeavy Castle Restoration Project launch
- Habitat for Humanity One World Festival.
- QUB Just Transition, Fair Energy Future Workshop
- Belfast Climate Commission Roundtable on Priority Workstreams
- SOLACE/Co-Operation Ireland Conference - Responding to a Disrupted World
- Roundtable with Julie Harrison Permanent Secretary NI Office
- CCEA Climate Group - Embedding climate education in the curriculum
- Friends of the Earth Event on Understanding the Power of Big Agriculture in Ireland
- Environmental Justice Network Ireland Launch of Strategic Litigation
- C03 Leadership Framework Launch
- Mott MacDonald Talk – SSN and SNI opportunities for collaboration
- Local Authorities Needs Analysis Workshop
- MUDC Elected Members Presentation
- Ulster University Solar Powered Community Gardens
- Chamber of Commerce Festival of Business
- NI Polymers Association Quarterly Meeting
- Northern Ireland Sports and Human Rights Forum
- QUB Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre
- Translink Active Travel Awards
- Linen Quarter Sustainable Business Event

PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY AND DIVERSE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

We developed the following training courses this year:

- Sustainable Design & Construction for Capital Projects (received by Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon District Council)
- How to become a Sustainable Business (received by businesses in Ards and North Down)
- How to develop a Climate Action Plan (received by Mid Ulster and Mid and East Antrim Borough Councils)
- Circet Ireland Graduate Workshop
- BBC Northern Ireland Climate Change Training

PROVIDING THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUM

The mission of the Forum is to co-ordinate and support local government and public bodies to lead transformative change and measurable climate action across the region.

Membership is exclusive to the public sector. As a member, public bodies have year-round access to an annual programme of meetings, webinars and policy briefings. They also benefit from expert insights from a dedicated Sustainable NI advisor, who coordinates the Forum. The Chair is currently Emma Adair from Ards and North Down Borough Council.

This year four meetings of the Forum were held:

- 15 June 2023 (Bangor Castle)
- 20 September 2023 (Ecos Hub, Ballymena)
- 23 November 2023 (Cookstown)
- 13 December 2023 (Virtual)
- 6 March 2023 (Virtual)

We led a Needs Analysis Workshop on 23 November in the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre bringing sustainability officers from across Northern Ireland together to understand what is needed strategically

for local authorities to fully integrate sustainability and climate action into governance, management and delivery at the local level. The session highlighted policy and skills gaps and how Sustainable NI can better support councils going forward.

Policy & Advocacy

We advocate for ambitious legislative and regulatory change in support of our mission through our policy and advocacy work. In 2023-24 this included:

ACTIVELY ENGAGING IN POLICY FORMULATION, APPRAISAL AND LOBBYING

As political appetite for the green economy continues to grow, knowledge needs to be cultivated and shared to ensure we make the correct policy choices to achieve net zero by 2050. This year we fed into several policies that will be critical to Northern Ireland meeting its net zero aspirations, including:

- Climate Change Reporting by Specified Public Bodies
- Review of SPPS on the Issue of Climate Change
- Northern Ireland Carbon Budget (2030 - 2040)
- Circular Economy Strategy

In addition to providing written consultation responses, we participated in government forums and committees which shape policy and investment in energy and environment:

- NI Affairs Committee Inquiry into Investment in Northern Ireland (Sustainable and gender-equitable investment)
- NI Advisory Group on non-household recycling provisions

We also promoted our manifesto for the Northern Ireland Assembly. In the document, we highlighted five key issues that must be addressed to put the economy on a more sustainable footing whilst simultaneously tackling the climate emergency.

PROVIDING THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE ALL-PARTY GROUP ON CLIMATE ACTION

The All-Party Group on Climate Action is a forum for discussion between politicians, NGOs, business leaders and academics, to advance climate action through legislative and regulatory change in the Assembly and Executive.

Sustainable NI provides the secretariat for the group. Membership is cross-party and includes representatives from the NI Assembly and NI councils. At the AGM in October 2023, Danny Donnelly MLA took over from Kate Nicholl MLA as Chair of the APG.

For the 300+ observers, it is a great way to keep abreast of climate and environmental policy and legislation and influence policymakers at the highest level in Northern Ireland.

The APG met five times in 2023/24, including:

- 12 May 2023
- 6 October 2023 (AGM)
- 3 November 2023
- 1 December 2023
- 1 March 2024

A range of issues, projects and campaigns were discussed, from examples of local authority climate action to strengthening energy efficiency through changes to building regulations. Attendance remains excellent, with 11 elected members and 41 observers on average attending each meeting.

Advisory Services

We provide practical support to help organisations achieve their sustainability goals. Our advisory services include strategy development, reporting, training, workshops and communications support.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

Sustainability has become increasingly critical for organisations to remain relevant and competitive. Like digital transformation, driving sustainability requires organisations to transform every business division, making sustainability an integral part of corporate strategy. This year, we helped four organisations develop their sustainability and climate plans, each one tailored to the individual client's support needs:

- Apex Housing Association
- Mid Ulster District Council
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

The organisations received workshops as well as consultancy support to co-design the strategies with staff and decision-makers.

SUSTAINABILITY AUDITS AND REPORTS

Our Sustainability Audit analyses and measures sustainability in a company's day-to-day operations and its overall business model. It identifies opportunities to rethink and improve upon product and service design, operations, and business models to maximise social and environmental impact. This year, we carried out sustainability audits for two businesses:

- Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast
- Castle Mall, Antrim

The output was a clear sustainability roadmap to guide the companies on how to embed sustainability within the core of the business.

PARTNERSHIPS

The power of partnership working cannot be understated. Partnerships build momentum, coordinating action between organisations and allowing opportunities to exchange views, supporting innovation and providing additional momentum to get things done. Sustainable NI's partnerships include:

- Sustainable Development Forum
- Circular Economy Coalition
- Northern Ireland EV Consortium
- Climate Coalition NI
- Environmental Justice Network Ireland

PROJECTS

We were involved in several projects this year, including:

GREEN CLUBS PROGRAMME

Led by the GAA, the programme was designed to promote sustainability awareness and action in sports clubs and communities. Enabled through by a grant from LFT Charitable Trust, the programme aimed to build environmental awareness and action across the operations and activities of Gaelic clubs and their communities across Northern Ireland. We assisted with the recruitment of clubs and engaged councils and other expert organisations to support clubs. We facilitated staff training and provided advice and signposting to help clubs identify and deliver green actions. The programme was been hugely successful, supporting 32 clubs, training 128 people in green skills, delivering 64 green actions and indirectly changing the behaviour of 6,080 people. Green Clubs is an excellent model of citizen-led sustainability and hope to see it transferred to all sports clubs. Case studies available at:

<https://learning.gaa.ie/GreenClub/CaseStudies>

DERRY AND STRABANE – NET ZERO – FROM AMBITION TO ACTION

Sustainable NI was a delivery partner on an Innovate UK-funded project to realise the ambition of a net zero climate resilient City and District by 2045 through transformational systems including SMART climate action plans underpinned by place-based insights, collaboration and capacity building. We are providing expertise and guidance on sustainable procurement and measuring scope 3 emissions.

CCEA EXPERT GROUP

Sustainable NI alongside other expert groups supported CCEA to review a Northern Ireland Key Stage 2 curriculum objective on sustainable development.

Governance & Improving standards

We are continually striving to ensure excellent standards and continuous improvement to provide the best service to our members and clients.

ENSURING GOOD GOVERNANCE

This year we said goodbye to one board member, Ian Garner, who resigned on 12 December 2023. All Trustees received governance training and completed a skills assessment when they joined the organisation.

Four board meetings took place this year, including:

- 13 June 2023
- 19 September 2023
- 12 December 2023 (AGM)
- 12 March 2024

SUPPORTING THE WORKFORCE

Our staff are our primary asset and investing in the workforce is a key priority. This year we recruited two additional staff members including Clare Bailey, Interim Director and Oisín Fleming, who joined in October as a Project Support Officer for an Innovate UK funded project that Sustainable NI is delivering with Derry City and Strabane District Council to assist the authority in understanding and managing Scope 3 emissions.

Staff training was provided throughout the year in support of skills development. This included:

- Training for Trustees in the Third Sector, CO3
- Interim Executive Training, CO3
- Managing Staff Training, NICVA
- ILM Level 3 Award in Leadership and Management, NW Regional College
- Carbon Literacy Facilitator Training

GROWING RESILIENCE

Dormant Accounts NI funding received in year has helped to strengthen financial resilience in the organisation. The project aims were to strengthen the business plan, increase memberships and identify new revenue streams through a review of branding, and the development of new tools and services.

Working with marketing experts we updated our logo and brand identity. We also developed a new website. As well as a brand review, we reviewed key services and developed a suite of training courses to strengthen our consultancy offering and attract new clients. We also trained our staff in Carbon Literacy, meaning we are now licenced to facilitate Carbon Literacy Training under the Carbon Literacy Project.

Dormant Accounts NI funding was also used to support the development of an exciting new digital tool to help public bodies screen their projects and investment decisions for environmental impacts.

The tool will help public bodies take a preventative approach to complying with Public Body Reporting Duties introduced as part of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. To assist us with the tool's development, we received mentoring and support through the Digital Surge Programme which supports businesses deemed to have digital transformation potential. A web-based app has now been designed and will be launched early next year. We believe the tool will help Sustainable NI grow its membership and help retain existing members.

FINANCIAL REVIEW AND RESULTS FOR THE YEAR

The Statement of Financial Activities on page 11 is designed to reflect all incoming resources receivable and expenditure incurred during the year irrespective of when income is actually received and payments made. Total incoming resources for the year amounted to £153,958 (2023: £154,606). Total resources expended of £184,302 (2023: £150,526) resulted in a net deficit (2023: surplus) of resources for the year of £30,343 (2023: surplus of £4,080). There was no balance on restricted funds at 31st March 2024 (2023: no balance) and the balance on unrestricted funds at the year-end was £45,629 (2023: £75,973) which is free and represents the reserves available to the Director / Trustees to help fulfil current and future plans. Breakdowns of the amounts recorded for incoming resources and resources expended are given in notes 3 and 4 to the accounts.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Sustainable Northern Ireland acknowledges that without the strong ongoing commitment and support of many organisations it would not be possible to work effectively towards our vision. We want to thank the organisations that fund the charity including Local Councils, the NI Assembly and the NI Housing Executive.

We also want to thank the many volunteers who freely give their time to help the charity.

RESERVES POLICY

The Directors/Trustees believe that the Company should hold financial reserves because:

- It has no endowment funding and is currently dependent for income upon Local Government funding from year to year which is subject to review;
- It requires protection against and the ability to continue operating despite unforeseen setbacks; and

- It requires the ability to be able to take advantage of change and opportunities to further its objectives.

The Directors/Trustees believe that the level of unrestricted reserves should be the equivalent of between three and preferably nine months' operating costs calculated and reviewed annually. Reserves should be built up to the desired level in stages consistent with the charity's overall financial position and its need to maintain and develop its charitable activities.

The level of total unrestricted reserves stands at £45,629 (2023: £75,973). With operating costs (on unrestricted funds) currently amounting to approximately £185,000 (2023: £150,500) per year, this would mean a target reserve balance of between £46,075 and £138,226 (2023: between £37,625 and £112,875). The current level of reserves therefore is below the lower target of the Reserves Policy. The Trustees consider that the deficit is marginal and expect that reserves held will be in line with the requirements of the Reserves Policy in future years.

Details of the Company's funds are shown in Note 16. An analysis of the Company's net assets between the funds is given in Note 14. The Directors/Trustees consider that sufficient resources are held in an appropriate form to enable each fund to be applied in accordance with any restriction imposed.

EMPLOYEES

The Company aims to be an organisation for which employees enjoy working and where they feel supported and developed. Employees are kept fully informed about its strategy and objectives, as well as day to day news and events. Regular information about the organisation is available through meetings and e-mails. All employees are encouraged to give their views and suggestions on performance and strategy. The Company supports equal opportunity.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES

The following held office during the year:

Andrew Benfield, Jacqueline Callan, Robert Clements, Aoife Foley (resigned 05/09/2023), Ian Garner (resigned 12/12/2023), Alan McVicker, Keith Patterson, Susann Power and Rachael Singleton.

The principal officers for 2023/2024 were:

Chair	Treasurer	Company Secretary
Rachael Singleton	Keith Patterson	Nichola Hoehn

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

Diamond & Skillen were appointed as the charitable company's independent examiners during the year and are deemed to be re-appointed in accordance with Section 487(2) of the Companies Act 2006.

These financial statements and this report have been prepared in accordance with the 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 Ireland (FRS102) (effective from 1st January 2015) and in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

This report was approved by the Board of Directors on 10th December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Nichola Hoehn

Nichola Hoehn
Secretary