

Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership

(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Trustees' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Trustees' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the trustees of Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 31 March 2024.

The company is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and, although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice (Charities SORP effective January 2015), the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

Mission, Objectives and Strategy

Aims & Objectives

Down Armagh Rural Transport (DART) provides affordable, accessible, community transport services in response to the needs of people living in the Craigavon and Banbridge area. DART secures grants and donations to support provision of subsidized transport for beneficiaries. DART deliver services using community minibuses and volunteer's cars.

DART provides information and advice to enable people to avail of various means of travel to enable access to local services. DART works in partnership with other transport providers to ensure alternatives and linkages to other transport services are available for individuals and community organisations.

Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

Governing Document

Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. In the event of the charity being wound up, the liability in the respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The company is under the control of the directors who are, therefore, acting trustees for the charity.

Appointment of acting Trustees / Directors

As described in the Articles of Association a new director may be eligible for appointment if 21 days before the annual general meeting, written notice is deposited with the registered office of the intended proposal, signed by a member and signed by the person being proposed, so as to indicate his/ her willingness to be elected.

Trustee Induction and Training

New trustees are briefed on their legal obligation under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Board and decision-making processes and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees are encouraged to view the Charities Commission website so as to gain a full understanding of trustee roles and responsibilities.

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance

The accounting year has once again been marked by ongoing uncertainty surrounding the stability of public finances, leading to a precarious situation that has put the continuance of publicly funded community transport at risk across Northern Ireland. This environment of short-term and discretionary public funding cycles continues to negatively impact community transport services for vulnerable users through a policy of managed decline, characterized by a discretionary approach to services and the perpetual salami slicing of budgets.

Since 2018, DART has experienced a 35% real-term reduction in funding. Despite this decline, there has been an increase in demand, accompanied by significant rises in business and operational costs for providing services to users of Dial-A-Lift (DAL) and Disability Action Transport Service (DATS). In response to these pressures, DART has focused on cost reduction and accelerating the digitalization of services to reduce back-office expenses. During the last accounting period, DART completed approximately 25,000 trips, despite significant operational reductions in

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services due to annual DFI cuts.

In the 2023/ 2024 period, DART has prioritized non-DFI services as a strategic imperative to de-risk the organization and transition towards a community development hub model for future sustainability. The Motability-funded Access Plus project had a successful first year, delivering 1,288 highly specialized individual trips for disabled children, enabling greater participation in school extracurricular activities and broader access to health and social events for disabled individuals.

The accounting year has also seen significant planning for future projects, with major applications and partnerships in the pipeline for 2025. A preview of the direction of travel for DART's future services was evident in the successful launch of DART's 'Drive to Thrive' project, an innovative employability and volunteering scheme providing professional D1 training in exchange for 100 hours of volunteering time. Volunteers drive a social car for individuals with limited access to essential services.

DART's commitment to innovation is further demonstrated through its ongoing investment in digital infrastructure. By embracing modern technology, DART aims to streamline operations, enhance service delivery, and improve user experience. This digital transformation is not only about reducing costs but also about making services more accessible and user-friendly, thereby meeting the evolving needs of the community.

Moreover, DART has been actively seeking collaborations with local stakeholders in health and education and other non-profit organizations to diversify funding sources and expand service offerings. These partnerships are crucial for creating a resilient operational model that can withstand financial uncertainties and continue to provide essential services to those in need.

As DART reflects on another successful year of project delivery, it is clear that innovation, flexibility, and change will remain constants moving into 2024/ 2025. The organization's ability to adapt and evolve in response to challenges is a testament to its resilience and dedication to serving the community. After all, the best way to predict the future is to create it.

Financial Review

The results for the financial year are set out on page 1 and additional notes are provided showing income and expenditure in greater detail.

Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the company has assets of £652,371 (2023 - £779,923) and liabilities of £18,268 (2023 - £245,590). The net assets of the company have increased by £99,770.

Reserves Policy

The Reserves policy was updated in the prior year and has been kept the same in the current year by the trustees. A new free reserves target of £232,000, equivalent to six months running costs, has been agreed. The capital replacement reserve target is still £280,000, which the trustees feel would be sufficient for the replacement of fleet vehicles and accessible equipment as they reach the end of their natural life cycle. The contingency reserve was increased to £70,000, which trustees feel would be sufficient to cover their regular expenditure in the event of an unexpected event.

The Trustees feel that these levels of reserves are essential to enable the Charity to continue to provide its activities for the foreseeable future. The Reserves Policy is an integral part of the charity's planning, budget and forecasts.

Trustees

The trustees who served throughout the financial year, except as noted, were as follows:

John Spiers
John Magennis
Robert John Verner
John Kane
Alan Gilmore

In accordance with the Articles of Association, the directors retire by rotation and being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

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Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards

The company engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Down Armagh Rural Transport Partnership subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2006
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

Public Benefit

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped achieve the charity purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

Down Armagh Rural Transport (DART) Partnership exists to develop, deliver and maintain not-for-profit accessible community transport options for the public benefit of our members.

Our public benefit provided through our transport services reduces social isolation and social exclusion by reaching the hard to reach and providing access to essential services and connections to the wider community.

Our services improve the quality of life and health and well-being for our users by enabling access to health and medical facilities.

DART's services also target social need by facilitating access to training and employment opportunities for our members.

Our organisation is committed to community development principles and we work in close partnership with other organisations and charities engaged in promoting the relief of persons who are in need through the provision of appropriate services.

Other direct benefits include the promotion of volunteering and training which provides public benefit to groups and communities and the provision of accredited driver training which enhances the skills and personal development of community volunteers.

Certification Statement

We confirm that the DFI grant has been used solely for the purposes intended and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant

The Auditors

The auditors, Daly Park & Company Ltd, (Chartered Accountants) have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 26th June 2024 and signed on its behalf by:


John Spiers
Director


John Magennis
Director