

# **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 2025

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 2025.

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 2025.

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**

Despite continuing fiscal pressure and a 35% real-term reduction in public funding since 2018, DART completed over 26,000 passenger trips across its services. These trips included essential access to medical care, education, employment, and community participation. A major achievement was the continued delivery of the Access Plus program funded by Motability, now in its second year, supporting 2,498 individual specialist trips for children and adults with disabilities, up by 94% on year one figures.

This year marked the completion of a full digital transformation programme, encompassing booking systems, driver scheduling, user communications, and financial operations. These upgrades, supported through capital investment, have significantly reduced back-office costs, improved service efficiency, and enhanced the user experience. DART now operates as a fully digital organisation across all business areas.

As part of its commitment to future-proofing services, DART has continued to diversify beyond DfI core funding. A major milestone was reached in 2024/25 with the planning and development of a DVSA-approved Driver Training Centre, due

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to launch in 2025/26. This new facility will deliver certified D1 driver training and Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) modules, generating earned income to cross-subsidise core community transport services. Critically, four in-house trainers successfully achieved the VRQ qualification, enabling DART to internally deliver CPC D1 courses to a professional standard. This investment in workforce capacity not only supports the new training enterprise but also strengthens DART's long-term sustainability and regional impact.

A key achievement in 2024/25 was the revitalisation of the Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) in Craigavon and Banbridge, driven by the successful implementation of DART's strategic marketing plan. This initiative resulted in a 55.4% increase in passenger numbers during the year. The service now features fully digital and mobile sign-up options and a significantly streamlined customer journey, enabling quicker access from registration to first trip. This transformation has strengthened local engagement and positioned DATS as a more accessible and responsive transport solution for disabled users.



The Drive to Thrive program continued to grow, enabling local volunteers to receive professional driving qualifications in exchange for community service. This innovative model supports both social mobility and transport sustainability while embedding DART deeper within the local community infrastructure.

DART has actively lobbied Minister Liz Kimmons and the Department for Infrastructure to address the precarious funding model for community transport. The organisation has made clear calls for an end to discretionary funding arrangements and a commitment to a multi-year funding settlement, policy clarity, and greater integration of community transport within the transport network in Northern Ireland. Our advocacy efforts are driven by a vision of transport as a foundational service for inclusion, independence, and regional cohesion.



The achievements of 2024/25 demonstrate DART's ongoing resilience, adaptability, and strategic intent in a challenging policy and funding landscape. Through a focus on innovation, digital integration, and the development of sustainable income streams, DART continues to deliver essential services to the communities that rely on them most. DART remains deeply committed to its mission of inclusion and accessibility and enters 2025/26 with a renewed focus on capacity building, partnership working, and long-term impact.

#### Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the company has assets of £694,618 (2024 - £652,371) and liabilities of £15,299 (2024 - £18,268). The net assets of the company have increased by £45,216.

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## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

### **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.

### **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)

### **Reserves Policy**

The Reserves policy has been updated during the course of the current year by the trustees. A new free reserves target of between three to six months' running costs, up to a maximum of £420,000, has been agreed. In addition, 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. No change was made to the contingency reserve.

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

### **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 RTF & ARTS grant has been used solely for the purposes intended and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

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for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

#### 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 23/6/25 and signed on its behalf by:

John Magennis  
Director



Alan Gilmore  
Director

