



ernepaddlers.org.uk
A canoe and kayak club based in Enniskillen

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Erne Paddlers Trustee Annual Report:

Year End Dec 31st 2023



Table of Contents

Erne Paddlers Trustee Annual Report:	1
Year End Dec 31st 2023	1
Table of Contents	2
1. Dates	3
2. Main Activities relating to the Public Benefit	3
2.1. Summary of Main Activities	3
2.2. Achievements and Performance	4
2.3. Meeting the Programme	7
2.4. Outreach	8
2.5. Membership for the Year 2023	8
2.6. In Summary	9
Trustees Statement on Public Benefit requirements	9
2.6.1. Charitable Objectives	9
2.6.2. Public Benefit Statement	9
3. Review of Year End Financial Position	10
3.1. Income, Expenditure and Balance	10
3.2. Funds materially in deficit	10
3.3. Risks	10
3.4. Other Assets	11
4. Governance	11
4.1. Charity Name	11
4.2. Charity Number	11
4.3. Principal Address	11
4.4. Trustees as of 31st Dec 2023	11
4.4.1. Other Trustees in the year	11
4.5. Governing Document and Constitution	12
4.6. Trustee Selection and Management	12
4.7. Structure, Governance, and Management	12
4.7.1. Governing Document and Constitution	12
4.7.2. Trustee Selection and Management	12
4.7.3. Meetings	12
5. Trustee Signatures	13

1. Dates

This report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023

2. Main Activities relating to the Public Benefit

2.1. Summary of Main Activities

Erne Paddlers (EP) is an award-winning paddlesports club with multiple award winning coaches, especially in the area of Inclusive / Disability Paddlesports. The National Governing Body, Paddle NI, recognise us as their flagship club and Sport NI consider us as to be a role model organisation. EP facilitates workshops for Paddle NI's other clubs on best practices in quality of delivery, inclusive paddling and sustainability. We are a community organisation promoting health and wellbeing using the "Take 5" method through social, recreational outdoor experience, learning and challenge via paddlesport. We are a provider on the Social Prescription scheme, a registered not-for-profit charity and local community run organisation.

Erne Paddlers known here as "the club" operates mainly in the Fermanagh Omagh area with equipment stored in a compound at a local school and at the local leisure centre. Trailers enable mobile activities and the use of various venues in the area and nationally.

The club delivers a comprehensive weekly paddlesports programme throughout the year to both members and non-members with a strong focus on development, on and off the water, of members and non-members in paddlesport - we aim to increase our coaching resources and in training these individuals build capacity for future members and paddlesport activities.

We aim to increase access, for all abilities, to the water as an under-used but valuable local resource while also increasing public awareness of the risks and safety measures necessary around the waterways through education and leading by example and running education courses to raise safety awareness. In conjunction we also upskill members in personal performance, safety, instructing, leading and coaching to empower each individual to inspire others. We promote excellence in coaching, leading and water safety through a dedicated programme of skilled mentoring.

We provide a service to families, community groups and individuals in terms of provision of educational outdoor experience, especially in terms of personal development and health and wellbeing following the "5 Steps" principles. Adopting the 5 steps into our core aims has allowed us to implement this in sessions at all levels - "everyone is a volunteer" at their own ability level, coaching is aimed at lifelong learning. We coach inclusively so everyone can get exercise and learn skills and regularly see the benefits of a pause for mindfulness on our sessions which are naturally social and relaxed.

The club continues to have a strong focus on development for our members and as a community organisation through the continuous improvement of our aims, ethos, systems and governance. In early 2023 the club commenced a comprehensive review of our systems, policies and governance. While the club has always had good governance some of the policies needed to be updated and reviewed. As a significant part of this we looked in depth at our risk management statement and risk assessments. The senior coaching team continues to promote situationally aware dynamic risk assessors in our qualified and volunteer staff due to working in a changing environment. We have even encouraged situational awareness among group members from our youngest right to develop



independent safe paddlers from a first principles level - children are asked to spot hazards or suggest boundaries during the initial briefing and this is used in an appropriate way at all levels. The club sees its-self as more than just a paddlesport club and aims to promote better lives through paddlesport teaching transferable life-skills through water activity.

In order to ensure the club represents all members views and aspirations a comprehensive survey was designed and released to the public late this year for review, analysis and action next year. This is something the club has aspired to complete for some time and is a result of engaged board members dedicating time and energy to make this happen.

2.2. Achievements and Performance

The club continued its partnership agreement with LELP until September 2022 - providing significant funding to the club which was matched by club expenditure (41% LELP). Funding from this paid a percentage of the salary for our Club and Workforce Office and in return Erne Paddlers invested in new fleets of boats and soft kit (buoyancy aids, paddles, air bags, paddles, helmets etc) to develop activities through our partnership programme known as "Paddle the Lough". This continued to be an exciting opportunity to develop the club alongside another organisation dedicated to developing the water resource on our doorstep. The networking and expertise provided by this partnership added great value to our programme and the club provided participation statistics and programme achievements to LELP in return far surpassing our agreed targets. The legacy of this funding continues to support the club throughout 2023 and beyond.

The club continues to work in partnership with public body groups such as Waterways Ireland and Fermanagh Omagh District Council to provide taster paddling sessions to local schools, scouts, community and special needs groups. Fees are charged for these services to cover the costs of coaches and volunteer travel expenses and we pride ourselves in the professional, coordinated, efficient and experienced service we provide to these events.

Having the Erne system on our doorstep gives us access to one of the best recreational paddling environments anywhere with countless access points and beautiful scenery to paddle in. It also allows us to have a waterfront presence via trailers and banners at slipways.

In 2023 we continued to run our very successful branded courses, examples of this included our "Learn to Paddle" (previously called Club Induction), "Love to Paddle" (previously Recreational Paddle) Our "Inclusive Course" grew in numbers and momentum following a tentative restart last year after 2 years of our participants in this course isolating in order to protect their health this has been a challenging session to increase engagement with but we continue to reach out to people of all abilities. We look forward to continuing to regenerate this important strand of the club each year.

We operate within NGB guidelines for ratios of coach : participant, with all courses pre-booking and paying online - holding a waiting list for those over booked. Detailed pre-course emails go out to all participants with information such as timings, directions, venue details, changing and toilet facilities. This information is a vital part of our inclusive ethos allowing participants to understand if the venue and activities will meet their needs. We carry out risk assessments for all activities and plan according to individual, group and staff needs as well as craft and venue considerations.

In keeping with the club's ethos, striving to keep a safe environment for the coaches as well as those paddling, Paul Harrington (General Manager) and the senior coaching team ran another successful



coach and volunteer training and mentoring programme to offer professional review and development to our staff team. A range of coach education courses were provided both in-house and through the Canoe Association NI, Tollymore National Outdoor Centre and other course providers. For example, seven club Paddlesport Instructors attended a Coach Award Core Training at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre in 2022. In 2023 the club continued to mentor and develop these opportunities for coaches and leaders.

With a focus on club paddler and coach development the club continued training for our new cohort of Junior Leaders - since this intake are all young we focused on increased paddling enjoyment and gaining skills with a soft approach to leadership and qualifications. This course will gradually develop strong leaders and competent decision makers from our young paddlers. We continue to offer reimbursement of coach training and assessment fees in return for volunteering.

The club intends to continue to facilitate children and adults with special needs through work with local charitable groups, the Camphill Community, Willowbridge Special School and other groups. This is a valued regular activity for their participants, residents and pupils respectively. Our two qualified Paddleability Tutors continued to provide training, mentorship and leadership to our coaching team and new trainees.

In 2022 we ran a practical course for promotion of inclusive paddling nationally with a demo group of seasoned and new paddlers with extra physical and learning needs. Eight other clubs and CANI attended to observe the session and then a lively question and answer session followed - observers left with more confidence to take inclusive paddling back to their own organisations and with the offer of mentoring through our club coaches. In 2023 we continued to provide mentoring to the other clubs and increase inclusion in all the sessions we run.

Our regular programme of Sea Paddles and River trips continued our development of our moderate water leaders and coaches with venues further afield being explored. Our river leadership/coaching team travelled to Wales to scout the River Dee - much excitement had built up before the trip and our coaches had a great time exploring the river and area whilst gathering information for the clubs first big trip away with members - Planned for March 2024.

In 2023 we reached out to more local charities and organisations and one successful example was an inclusive 6 week course for a local cancer charity - SWELL. We ran a multi-craft beginners course for local men and women affected by cancer over 6 weeks in the Autumn and with excellent feedback we hope to run more of these courses.

We also ran the following courses:

- Skills After School (aimed at 8 to 11yr olds)
- Beginners and Improvers touring, river kayaks, rolling, family fun, open canoe, SUP
- Willowbridge School Inclusive group - (Post Primary)
- Camphill Community Inclusive Sessions
- WHSCT Disability team sessions
- WHSCT 16+ Team referrals
- Fermanagh Downs Syndrome group
- School group sessions to celebrate the coronation of the King
- Local church group taster session
- Local scouts Open Canoe Skills

- 6 months of 8 pool sessions a week in 2 pools
- Outdoor spring and summer courses between 6 and 11 a week
- Moderate water beginner and intermediate sea kayak trips
- Moderate water beginner and intermediate river trips
- Easter 1 week 2 sessions a day
- Summer camps 6 weeks 2 sessions a day
- LELP litter pick
- Crom Castle camp and paddle weekend
- Love to Paddle lake trips
- Paddlesport Safety and Rescue Training
- Team Challenge Paddlesports day
- Safety support for Omagh fireworks display
- Advanced Sea Kayak Navigation course at Tollymore
- Access NI and safeguarding updates
- Volunteer training and mentorship
- Volunteer rewards and a Christmas BBQ party
- Attended the Waterways Ireland 10yr plan launch
- Facilitated kit hire for a junior international Polo team
- Coach education for other clubs and providers

Erne Paddlers has always had a strong cohort of dedicated and skilled coaches and an exemplary ethos of mentoring for both personal and coaching development. We have a dedicated and motivated team of coach educators to develop and mentor individuals through this process - having more than one coach educator is unusual in paddlesport clubs and is a resource we highly value. In order to maintain currency and excellence in delivery in the awards provided our coach educators attended online and face-to-face CPD events and orientations.

Extremely positive participant feedback on our first post-lockdown trips and courses in 2020 greatly reinforced our focus on health and well-being through paddlesport as the right aims and ethos for the club to operate on. This positive feedback greatly helped to re-engage our volunteering and staff teams post-Covid, with direct thanks from many people providing a fantastic reward for our instructors and leaders. We now have a comprehensive archive of feedback and testimonials evidencing the important role of the club as a community organisation. In 2023 we continued to build on this strong foundation.

Erne Paddlers was Awarded club of the Year 2016-2017 by the Canoe Association Northern Ireland in recognition of the club's activity in developing paddling, running the competitions and events throughout the year.

Erne Paddlers coaches were nominated for several awards in 2018 and 2019 - club coach and Chair Chloe Hamilton attained CANI Club Coach of the Year, Fermanagh Omagh District Council Awards Disability Sports Coach of the Year and the Outstanding Achievement Award for work with Lakeland Special Olympics athletes in the run up to the Ireland Games in Dublin in June 2018. In 2019 Chloe was nominated for the British Canoeing Geoff Good Award for club coach recognition. The club continues to strive to provide the highest quality coaching in paddlesport. In 2022 we had a coach (Philippa Bennett) awarded the Fermanagh Omagh District Council Disability Sport Coach of the Year Award - an online ceremony took place due to COVID19 restrictions. This year our Chairperson Chloe



Hamilton was nominated for a Federation for Irish Sport Volunteering in Sport Award and was awarded the county winner for Fermanagh.

2.3. Meeting the Programme

We restarted our taster sessions in 2022 in light of huge demand for local outdoor sport - a huge taster day ran with over 60 participants signing up for one or more of our discipline tasters in kayak, touring kayak, canoe and stand up paddleboard. We continue to run taster sessions and beginner courses.

In January and February we continued to train our staff so they can remain current and safe - January was Open Water Navigation and Tidal Planning at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre and our mentoring programme continued Sea kayaking is a growing part of the club activity.

Qualified sea leaders and competent signed-off Sea Leader assistants alongside our qualified Sea Kayak Coaches developed sessions along the coastline running multi-trip days for beginners starting with skills in the harbour and building to rock hopping and coastal exploring - this side of the club continues to grow. Our leaders facilitated trips for our experienced sea paddling volunteers to moderate water venues including many first experiences for our intermediate paddlers such as paddling around headlands, navigating islands and tides and trip planning on a bigger scale than previously. Travelling to coastal venues allows our paddlers to test their skills in tougher (Moderate Water) conditions under the watchful eyes of experienced leaders and coaches. All sea kayak trips are planned with our volunteers and information is shared in our communication groups to upskill everyone we paddle with to become increasingly proficient and independent safe paddlers. We have developed a comprehensive planning resource for these and future trips. Detailed group briefings allow us to share this information with beginner and intermediate paddlers so they can start to make safe decisions and are aware of the detailed planning process that leads to our relaxed and enjoyable sessions on the day.

As in previous years we ran a white water rivers course allowing a different outlet for our members to test the skills honed in our regular flat-water skills coaching sessions. In 2023 our Development Officer mentored aspirant and qualified river leaders to develop improved lead and coached sessions with the focus on quality of experience at all levels. This year the rivers course has increased in attendance and paddler skill development and we hope this continues to grow going forward.

This year we continued the peer paddling sessions where experienced club paddlers could organise trips for a small contribution towards the use of club kit and have the security of an experienced mentor checking trip plans and group members experience.

Paddleboard sessions, Learn to Kayak/Canoe, Progress Your Paddling and Friday Family Fun sessions ran weekly during the season with journeys involving short coaching sessions forming enjoyable trips for both coaches and members. All our sessions are progressive and are pitched to the skill of the individuals and coached inclusively. We run a mixture of technical skills sessions, journeying and Games With Aims sessions to facilitate enjoyable learning for all. As possibly the busiest multi-craft club in NI we continued to run multiple sessions up to 6 days a week. The club couldn't exist without our dedicated team of skilled volunteer coaches and we remain dedicated to rewarding and training towards continued personal development and club sustainability.

2.4. Outreach

The club has well established links with the local schools, community groups, Fermanagh Omagh District Council, and Waterways Ireland who look after the navigation on the Erne System, as well as Outdoor Recreation NI and Sport NI. We continue to engage these groups in our post-covid regeneration.

Our strategy of offering general open access Learn to Paddle skills courses branded as Skills after School allowing young people from multiple schools to mix and learn together has again proven more successful than running courses for individual schools. This successful course saw a lively group of 7 to 11yr olds engage in a progressive programme in May, June and September this year.

In a new venture the club has now run several successful one-to-one coaching sessions to address specific individual needs.

In June of 2022 we took on a large project with Green Spaces Dark skies - a company funded to make videos of fantastic natural landscapes across the UK. We coordinated and planned to run a beginner session in rafted open canoes for adults with extra needs from the local area and also brought together a large group of kayakers to form a darkness display on the small lough with each boat having remotely choreographed lights attached to the decks. The resulting video was edited and published online.

The club ran 2 days of Camp Erne for the local council with participants aged from 7 to 14 yrs as well as our own club Summer Scheme PaddlePower programme. The club also facilitated a series of canoeing sessions in partnership with the local currach rowing club - Row the Erne. We frequently work with Scouts, charities, church groups, birthday parties and corporate groups. Testimonials and feedback are sought regularly within club sessions and coaches love to hear how our participants enjoyed the sessions. All suggestions for improvement are engaged with, in coach discussions and planning for future programmes - we actively seek all forms of feedback to enable us to grow and develop to meet the needs of our members.

The club continues to work with the FEARmanagh event organisers to coordinate the kayak event and provide safety cover for this section - this event returned this year and showcased all the hard work our volunteer team have put into skill development with our development officer. The event was very successful and we hope to see it grow in future years.

We ran multiple pool sessions in both local pools weekly allowing our members to maintain and develop skills in the bright warm, blue watered pool environment - safe from the weather conditions outside. These sessions allow over the winter skill maintenance and are perfect for developing boat control, paddle awareness and rescues/rolling.

We reached out to Now Group - a charity set up to develop skills for employment locally for those with extra needs and we hope to develop a programme to introduce their members to paddlesport next year.

2.5. Membership for the Year 2023

Erne Paddlers Club Membership breakdown - for the year 2023

Members - 189 (151 in 2022, 204 pre lockdown and progressing back towards that)



Females - 85

Males - 104

Girls - 42

Boys - 40

2.6. In Summary

To sum up club activity at the end of another busy year - we continued to work to train and develop our volunteer team and this year continued to see the benefit of this development programme. We have a fantastic, hardworking, motivated and engaged volunteer team who benefit from our volunteer rewards and report loving the coaching/leading/assisting they do.

Having had several years of Covid restrictions the club returned to normal activities this year and all the volunteer engagement we carried out initially online then outdoors and finally back to normal has paid off. Our staff team are confident, skilled and expertly mentored.

Erne Paddlers is one of the biggest Paddlesport Clubs in NI having had over 200 members, prior to COVID19, a large proportion of whom were active club members on a weekly basis for either pool or outdoor paddling programmes. We have returned to pre-covid activity with a stronger staff team than ever. We continue to develop our governance and operational procedures to remain in line with Club Mark standards and increase efficiency. We have developed and implemented a strong and effective ethos of access for all and providing the developmental, health and well-being benefits of social outdoor exercise and experience through paddlesport.

Our outreach activities have gained momentum and we continue to run individualised programmes to coach to the needs of these groups.

With our volunteer team continuing to be nominated and receiving awards the club effort towards volunteer skill and leadership development is paying off.

We will continue to run both indoor and outdoor activities for the coming years providing improved access to the water for all levels of ability and health and wellbeing through paddlesport.

Trustees Statement on Public Benefit requirements

2.6.1. Charitable Objectives

The object of the club as set out in our Constitution is to promote amateur paddle sport to all interested people of Fermanagh and beyond, through offering opportunities for participation and skill development, and providing resources and access to the water. The club meets this aim by providing high quality coaching at all levels and employing the 5 steps to health and well-being as a core principle.

2.6.2. Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Erne Paddlers Club confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the

Club in the year to December 31st, 2022. In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that membership of the Club is open to all who share an interest in paddle sport. Whilst we would encourage those with interest to join our club we also strive to make our services and facilities available to non-members and ensure that restrictions placed on that availability are both necessary and reasonable. Being a paddlesport club and affiliated to the CANI the NGB, and it is important to note that any sport that takes place in the natural environment inevitably involves genuine risks along with the extensive personal and social benefits.

These benefits include participants having enjoyable and rewarding experiences that can improve self-esteem, build confidence, develop a sense of teamwork and belonging, improve health and developmental well-being. Water sports make both physical and mental demands on those who participate and the rewards from overcoming the challenges of paddling in a very dynamic natural environment are significant. The risks associated are mitigated by having experienced qualified coaches and leaders, risk assessed sessions and ongoing training. It offers access to all regardless of personal circumstances, race, gender, faith or ability.

3. Review of Year End Financial Position

3.1. Income, Expenditure and Balance

- 3.1.1. Income: £ 66,898
- 3.1.2. Expenditure: £ 71,251
- 3.1.3. Net receipts over payments: -£4,353
- 3.1.4. Note: This loss was anticipated and balances out with excess revenue generated in previous years.

3.2. Funds materially in deficit

As of Dec 31st 2022 the Erne Paddlers club had no funds materially in deficit.

3.3. Risks

Risks posed to the club's financial security are; the lack of a permanent waterside base reducing development potential and capacity, competition from increasing numbers of local providers, reliance on key individual employees and volunteers, reliance on grant funding. The potential Lakeland Forum rebuild project poses a new threat to our activities - the club will take an active role in all consultations.

Financial management and reserves policy

The charity 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 current account fund is unrestricted and is used for the day-to-day operation of Erne Paddlers. The savings account is to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.



3.4. Other Assets

The charity owns a wide range of paddlesports equipment purchased new and second hand over the last 11 years; including but not limited to; 24 new general purpose/river kayaks, 26 older general purpose / river kayaks, 18 x touring kayaks, 10 stable / accessible touring kayaks, 8 x 4-seat open canoes, 6 x seakayaks, 2 x double seakayaks, 14 x plastic polo boats, 15 x composite polo boats, 10 x single sit on tops, 1 x double sit on top, 10 x standup paddleboards, 5 x junior racing kayaks, 6 x tandem open canoes, 5 x trailers, 1 powerboat and outboard motor, associated; paddles, spraydecks, helmets, buoyancy aids and safety kit, a container and some gardening equipment, at an original cost of approximately £100,000. The trustees estimate these assets have a current market value of £40,000.

4. Governance

4.1. Charity Name

Erne Paddlers

4.2. Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland NIC 103723

4.3. Principal Address

Erne Paddlers, 8 Farnamullan Road, Lisbellaw BT945BL

4.4. Trustees as of 31st Dec 2023

Chloe Hamilton	Chairperson
Philippa Bennett	Secretary
Jan England	Treasurer
Jon Kelly	Ordinary Member
Vincent Ryan	Ordinary Member
Byron Anderson	Ordinary Member
Patrick Walsh	Ordinary Member
Karen Coulter	Ordinary Member
Timothy Boyd	Ordinary Member
Christopher Waldir	Ordinary Member

4.4.1. Other Trustees in the year

None



4.5. Governing Document and Constitution

The Erne Paddlers club is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted Nov 2015 this is available at our website Erne Paddlers.org.uk. The Club is affiliated to the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) and incorporates its rules and regulations. The Erne Paddlers club is run by its members, who pay an annual membership subscription, via an elected Board of Trustees. The club employs one full-time Development Officer.

4.6. Trustee Selection and Management

The Erne Paddlers club is managed by the Board of Trustees and takes guidance from an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee consists of Chairperson, Honorary Secretary, Treasurer, Safeguarding Officer and other officers as deemed necessary.

At each meeting the Treasurer presents the latest accounts, and these are reviewed against budgets and forecasts; spending is discussed and approved. Officers may authorise some spending, between meetings, within set limits but must ensure such spending is reported at the next meeting. The meetings also offer a forum to review recent activities within our programme and to plan forthcoming events. Correspondence received are considered; in addition, officers report on their areas of responsibility. Further ad hoc meetings are called if required, for example to plan and manage special events or projects. The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees and then presented to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting took place on 22nd March 2022 by Zoom meeting. 35 people were in attendance. Elected to the Trustees were Chloe Hamilton Chairperson, David McGeoghan Honorary Treasurer, Brian Sammon Ordinary Member, Philippa McAleer Safeguarding Officer, Karen Coulter Ordinary Member and Jon Kelly Ordinary Member.

4.7. Structure, Governance, and Management

4.7.1. Governing Document and Constitution

The Erne Paddlers club is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted Nov 2015 this is available from our website at ErnePaddlers.org.uk. The Erne Paddlers club is run entirely by its members who pay an annual membership subscription.

4.7.2. Trustee Selection and Management

The Erne Paddlers club is managed by a General Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. The General Committee consists of Chairperson, Honorary Secretary, Treasurer,, Safeguarding Officer and other officers as deemed necessary. No other body or person can appoint trustees.

4.7.3. Meetings

Board meetings took place quarterly in 2022 via Zoom.



5. Trustee Signatures

Approved and adopted by the board of trustees, 24 Oct 2023

Position: ___Chairperson_____

Name: ___Chloe Hamilton_____

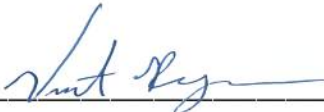
Date: ___24 Oct 2024_____

Signature: _____

Position: ___Secretary_____

Name: ___Vincent Ryan_____

Date: ___24 Oct 2024_____

Signature: _____