

ERNE PADDLERS TRUSTEES' ANNUAL CHARITY REPORT

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC103723)



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1. Executive Summary

1.1. What We Achieved

- 1.1.1. 2024 was another full and rewarding year for Erne Paddlers - a year focused on strengthening governance while maintaining our high-quality paddlesport programme and community impact.
- 1.1.2. We completed a full governance review, ran strategic development days, conducted a member survey, and began work on our new five-year Strategic Plan. Our board and volunteer teams received updated training in safeguarding, event management, and policy implementation, ensuring we remain a leading example of good governance in the paddlesport sector.
- 1.1.3. At the same time, we continued to rebuild post-pandemic momentum, especially for groups that had taken longer to return to activity. Our focus on inclusion, quality coaching, and social connection helped more people get active on the water and experience the benefits of outdoor recreation.
- 1.1.4. We remained proud to be recognised as Paddle NI's Flagship Club, reflecting both the strength of our volunteer leadership and the quality of our outcomes.
- 1.1.5. Through our events, sessions, and trips, we helped people of all ages and backgrounds to be active, connect with others, build confidence, and enjoy the beautiful waterways of Fermanagh and beyond.
- 1.1.6. In 2024, we delivered more than 5,000 participant sessions, from recreational paddles and taster events to skills training, safety and leadership qualifications, and major trips such as our first Dee River Expedition.
- 1.1.7. Our programme highlights included:
 - 1.1.7.1. Regular river training and coaching, leading up to our first ever Dee River expedition.



- 1.1.7.2. Sea kayaking trips across Northern Ireland's and Donegal's coasts (including Strangford, Muckcross, Rossbeg, Donegal Bay, Doe Castle and Dunfanaghy).



- 1.1.7.3. Love to Paddle programme, running weekly from March to September (and monthly all year round), helping beginners progress and build confidence, strength and fitness.



- 1.1.7.4. Pool sessions in Enniskillen, Fivemiletown and Omagh for kayak skills, rolling and inclusive training.



- 1.1.7.5. After-school and Family Fun Fridays, which remained among our most popular programmes.



- 1.1.7.6. Inclusive Thursdays, ensuring people of all abilities could take part safely and confidently and allowing families a unique way to experience sport and skilled coaching with all abilities catered for. Many participants from this course progress to joining our regular club sessions and trips.



- 1.1.7.7. Four new Junior Leaders qualified as Paddlesport Instructors with 18 volunteers in total qualifying this year.



- 1.1.7.8. Volunteer training in First Aid, Paddlesport Safety and Rescue and Safeguarding, along with our annual Strategy Day, AGM paddle and Christmas celebration.



1.1.7.9. Filming with the BBC for Operation Ouch



1.2. Outreach and Community Sessions

- 1.2.1. Collaboration continues to be at the heart of our work. In 2024 we:
 - 1.2.1.1. Delivered inclusive sessions with Willowbridge School, Camphill Community, and Strule Community Group.
 - 1.2.1.2. Supported Camp Erne, JUST US Sports Day, and FEARmanagh, providing safety cover and volunteer training.
 - 1.2.1.3. Partnered with the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership (LELP) on heritage paddles and environmental events.
 - 1.2.1.4. Worked with primary schools, Waterways Ireland, and local volunteers on litter-pick paddles, supported by the Fermanagh Trust Youth Leaders Programme and LELP.
 - 1.2.1.5. Welcomed paddlers from Belfast Kayak Club, Mullingar Canoe Club, Sligo Kayak Club, and the NorthWest Canoe Club, strengthening regional connections.
 - 1.2.1.6. Delivered Paddle NI Junior Club Hubs, a series of inter-club white-water kayak trips for young paddlers from across Northern Ireland.
- 1.2.2. These activities demonstrate how paddlesport brings people together across abilities, backgrounds, and generations for shared experiences that improve health, confidence, and community wellbeing.

1.3. Our People

- 1.3.1. Our volunteers remain the heart of Erne Paddlers.
- 1.3.2. In 2024, over 60 volunteers contributed to club activities, giving more than 3,000 hours of service. Trustees, coaches, and helpers gave their time, skills, and energy to ensure that every participant experienced paddlesport in a safe, welcoming, and inspiring environment.
- 1.3.3. The trustees also completed a full governance review, improving communication, policy consistency, and volunteer support across the club.

1.4. What We Learned

- 1.4.1. Key to our success:
 - 1.4.1.1. Our focus on inclusion, wellbeing, and high-quality coaching has earned national recognition and strengthened our reputation as a trusted community organisation.
 - 1.4.1.2. Welcoming, participant-centred coaching and a strong volunteer mentoring programme remain core to our growth.
 - 1.4.1.3. Support from partners such as Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, including future provision for use of the Round O during the Lakeland Forum redevelopment, is vital in maintaining operations.
 - 1.4.1.4. Our sense of community - friendship, teamwork, and belonging - continues to make Erne Paddlers special.
- 1.4.2. Where we can do better:
 - 1.4.2.1. We remain dependent on a small number of key staff and volunteers whose expertise is essential to day-to-day operations.
 - 1.4.2.2. Our capacity for grant applications is limited, and the funding landscape is becoming more competitive.
 - 1.4.2.3. Reliance on low-cost activities and short-term funding makes it harder to build long-term financial resilience.
 - 1.4.2.4. Current operational reserves are sufficient for short-term stability but not yet for major projects such as relocation or capital investment.
 - 1.4.2.5. Our website and booking system need improvement to simplify user experience and prevent lost bookings.

- 1.4.2.6. Our programme occasionally underserves some groups - for example, intermediate or competitive paddlers in certain seasons.

1.5. Looking Ahead

- 1.5.1. In 2025, we will:
 - 1.5.1.1. Maintain our Flagship Club status with Paddle NI.
 - 1.5.1.2. Finalise and begin implementing our Five-Year Strategic Plan.
 - 1.5.1.3. Continue developing our programme, adding more challenge and competitive opportunities while keeping our inclusive focus.
 - 1.5.1.4. Strengthen staff and volunteer capacity to reduce reliance on key individuals.
 - 1.5.1.5. Expand youth leadership and mentoring pathways.
 - 1.5.1.6. Work with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on relocation to the Round O during the Lakeland Forum redevelopment.
 - 1.5.1.7. Improve marketing and communications to share our achievements more widely.
 - 1.5.1.8. Establish a dedicated Funding Working Group and diversify revenue through fundraising and sponsorship events celebrating our 15th anniversary.
 - 1.5.1.9. Build reserves and update our Reserves Policy.
 - 1.5.1.10. Grow our environmental and heritage programmes through *Leave No Trace* education and community clean-ups.
- 1.5.2. Erne Paddlers continues to demonstrate that paddlesport is about far more than sport — it is about wellbeing, inclusion, community, and care for the natural environment. 2024 showed what's possible when people come together on the water, and we are proud and excited for the next chapter of Better Lives Through Paddlesport.

2. About Us

2.1. Charity Name and Details

- 2.1.1. Name: Erne Paddlers
- 2.1.2. Registered Charity Number: NIC103723
- 2.1.3. Principal Address: Erne Paddlers
8 Farnamullan Road
Mullybritt
Lisbellaw
Enniskillen
BT94 5BL
- 2.1.4. Email: email@ernepaddlers.org.uk
- 2.1.5. Phone: 07808 649173 - Club Manager
07468 911398 - Office Administrator

2.2. Who We Are

- 2.2.1. Erne Paddlers is an award-winning community paddlesports charity based in County Fermanagh.
We are recognised by Paddle Northern Ireland as their flagship club and by Sport NI as a role-model organisation for governance, inclusion and quality coaching.
- 2.2.2. Our mission is to be "More Than Just a Club" by helping people live "Better Lives Through Paddlesport", by providing "Access to All" to the proven benefits to health and well-being of social, outdoor experience and exercise through a community organisation.
- 2.2.3. We are a registered, not-for-profit, member-led organisation, run by trustees and volunteers. All money raised is reinvested into the club to make paddlesport more accessible, inclusive and sustainable across our community.

2.3. Our Ethos

- 2.3.1. We embed the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing into everything we do.
- 2.3.2. Through community run paddlesport we provide:
 - 2.3.2.1. Connection - friendships and belonging through social and shared bluespace experience.
 - 2.3.2.2. Be Active - accessible outdoor physical activity for the local community.
 - 2.3.2.3. Take Notice - of our beautiful natural environment and heritage and be mindful with time on the water to pause and recharge - an alternative sensory experience.
 - 2.3.2.4. Keep Learning - new skills, confidence, decision making and leadership.
 - 2.3.2.5. Giving Back - simply by paddling with us, a community not-for-profit, or by volunteering and supporting a worthy local charity.

2.4. What We Do

- 2.4.1. Erne Paddlers operates mainly across Fermanagh and Omagh, using Lough Erne and local waterways as outdoor classrooms and wellbeing spaces. We also run trips and courses around the Irish coastline and further afield. We use the outdoors not as a curriculum but as the medium for learning and development of many transferable skills.
- 2.4.2. Our core programmes include:
 - 2.4.2.1. Weekly paddlesport sessions year-round open to all.
 - 2.4.2.2. Inclusive and Disability Paddling programmes with individuals, schools, charities and community groups leading to full club integration in their own time.

- 2.4.2.3. Volunteer development including Junior Leader Programme - developing young coaches/leaders and future volunteers with tailored development plans to meet individual needs and aspirations.
- 2.4.2.4. Skills, Safety and Leadership Training from beginner to advanced levels.
- 2.4.2.5. Outdoor Education and experiences for families, schools, charities, youth/adult and corporate groups.
- 2.4.2.6. Event Safety Support for events such as Fearmanagh
- 2.4.3. We are one of the largest by membership and participation, and by far the most active across the paddlesport disciplines with multiple sessions per week, with skills courses and trips, delivering over 5,000 participant sessions each year and maintaining an inclusive membership spanning all ages, genders and abilities with a payment scale so price should never be a barrier.

2.5. Our Values

- 2.5.1. Access for All
 - 2.5.1.1. Everyone is welcome - regardless of background, age, ability or income.
- 2.5.2. Safety and Quality
 - 2.5.2.1. Striving for excellence in quality and safety.
 - 2.5.2.2. Compliant with Paddle NI Standards for Deployment.
- 2.5.3. Environmental Care
 - 2.5.3.1. We follow Leave No Trace principles and promote stewardship of our waterways - education for local children and litter picks.
- 2.5.4. Volunteer Leadership
 - 2.5.4.1. We empower people through mentoring, training and recognition - leadership at every level.
- 2.5.5. Community Impact
 - 2.5.5.1. Focus on wellbeing, inclusion and partnership with local organisations, to provide a welcoming community space for volunteers, members and the local people. A stronger sense of connection and place run by local people with a passion for community development.

2.6. Our Vision

- 2.6.1. Erne Paddlers aims to be a thriving, healthy community where everyone can enjoy the benefits of paddlesport - health, happiness and connection - on the beautiful waters of Fermanagh, our awesome coastline, rivers, lakes and beyond.
- 2.6.2. Erne Paddlers is more than a paddlesports club; we are a movement for wellbeing, inclusion, personal and community development and environmental advocacy.

2.7. Key Links

- 2.7.1. We have invested time and energy over the years into our local community position and connected with and built long-term relationships with many organisations. Our work with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC), Waterways Ireland, Paddle NI, Lough Erne Landscape Partnership (LELP), Fermanagh Trust, local schools, charities, community groups and many more alongside our diverse volunteer team has allowed Erne Paddlers to continue to grow in strength and reputation.

3. Objectives and Activities

3.1. Charitable Objectives

3.1.1. The purpose of the club is to:

- 3.1.1.1. Promote amateur paddlesport to all interested people of Fermanagh and beyond, through offering opportunities for participation and skill development, and through providing resources.
- 3.1.1.2. In furtherance of the above objectives the Club is committed to treating everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion, disability, or beliefs

3.1.2. The object of Erne Paddlers, as set out in the Constitution (June 2024), is:

3.2. Core Aims

3.2.1. Paddlesport is an enjoyable and safe outdoor adventure activity with something to suit everyone; open canoe, kayak, SUP, sea, surf, river and more. It can be anything from social, easy and relaxing to exciting, challenging and competitive, with intrinsic reward to be had at all levels.

3.2.2. The Aims of The Club are:

- 3.2.2.1. To strive to be "more than just a club" by helping people live "Better Lives Through Paddlesport", by promoting the sport and providing "access to all" to the proven benefits to health and well-being of social, outdoor experience and exercise through a community organisation.
- 3.2.2.2. To treat everyone equally regardless of sex, gender identification, age, disability, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or beliefs.
- 3.2.2.3. To employ the "Take Five" methodology of providing opportunities for; connection; exercise; being present; challenge and learning; and service or giving back - all of which integrate naturally into our core activities as a community based outdoor pursuits club.
- 3.2.2.4. To maintain and develop an excellent volunteer team of experienced and qualified assistants, instructors, leaders, coaches and trainers who have a passion for outdoor education as a means for developing individuals and communities through paddlesport.
- 3.2.2.5. To utilise paddlesport as an ideal medium for developing; skill, self-confidence, resilience, mindfulness, problem solving, decision making, playing and working well with others and many more fundamental life skills in a fun, enjoyable and safe way.
- 3.2.2.6. To connect people to their natural environment and heritage, helping foster awareness and environmental good practice through paddlesport and following Leave No Trace guidelines.
- 3.2.2.7. To operate as a not-for-profit community organisation.

3.3. How We Deliver Our Aims

3.3.1. To achieve these objectives, Erne Paddlers operates as a year-round community club and charity.

We deliver a wide-ranging programme that includes:

- 3.3.1.1. Weekly Spring and Summer outdoor paddlesport sessions in kayak, sit-on-top, seakayak, canoe, and stand-up paddleboard for beginners through to advanced paddlers. A busy vibrant indoor pool season in winter.
- 3.3.1.2. Skills development and safety training, including Paddle UK/BCAB/Canoeing Ireland and Paddle NI awards and qualifications.
- 3.3.1.3. Inclusive and disability paddlesport programmes, with local schools, charities and a pathway to integrate into all club sessions.

- 3.3.1.4. Youth development, through our Junior Leader and Volunteer Mentor Programmes that build confidence and responsibility in young people and provide mentorship for children, teenagers and adults - addressing the issue of drop out at transition ages.
- 3.3.1.5. Community outreach, delivering sessions for individuals, schools, special needs groups, youth organisations, corporate teams and local charities.
- 3.3.1.6. Health and wellbeing programmes, delivered using the "Take 5" model (Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning and Give) with aspects integrated into every session.
- 3.3.1.7. Environmental education, promoting Leave No Trace principles and participation in local clean-up and conservation activities - increasing a sense of place and comfort in the outdoors.
- 3.3.1.8. Event support and partnerships, including kayak safety for regional events such as FEARmanagh.
- 3.3.1.9. Volunteer development including; coach and leadership training and mentoring, safety, first aid and safeguarding courses, and training in good governance, financial and club management.

3.4. Who Benefits

- 3.4.1. Our work benefits people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, including:
 - 3.4.1.1. Local families, children and young people.
 - 3.4.1.2. Adults seeking recreation, exercise or social connection and personal development.
 - 3.4.1.3. People referred through the Social Prescription programme for wellbeing support.
 - 3.4.1.4. Individuals with disabilities or additional learning needs.
 - 3.4.1.5. Volunteers seeking training and leadership experience - we have several coach educators and experienced mentors on our team.
 - 3.4.1.6. Local schools, youth and community organisations.
 - 3.4.1.7. Other clubs, sporting and community groups via Erne Paddlers presenting case studies on our key success and strategies at national events.
- 3.4.2. Membership is open to all who share an interest in paddlesport. Activities are also available to non-members, ensuring that public benefit is not limited by membership status or financial means.

3.5. Public Benefit Statement

- 3.5.1. The trustees confirm that they have complied with their duty under Section 17(5) of the Charities Act (NI) 2008 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.
 - 3.5.1.1. All activities are designed to deliver tangible public benefit by:
 - 3.5.1.1.1. Improving physical and mental wellbeing.
 - 3.5.1.1.2. Reducing isolation and building community connection.
 - 3.5.1.1.3. Providing education, training and leadership opportunities.
 - 3.5.1.1.4. Supporting inclusive access to nature and outdoor recreation.
 - 3.5.1.1.5. Promoting safety, environmental awareness and responsible use of waterways.
 - 3.5.1.1.6. Our public programmes and volunteer pathways ensure that everyone, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to enjoy paddlesport safely, affordably and as part of a supportive community.

4. Achievements and Impact

4.1. Overview

- 4.1.1. 2024 was a year of strong progress for Erne Paddlers - adopting a focus on governance review, programme development with incremental improvements to allow steady sustainable growth, expanding inclusive programmes, and strengthening leadership. We continued to deliver high-quality, affordable paddlesport with a focus on health and wellbeing to the Fermanagh and Omagh community and beyond. Maintaining our reputation as one of Northern Ireland's most active and inclusive clubs and Paddle NI's Flagship Club.
- 4.1.2. The club's impact extended well beyond sport: we supported mental health, social and community connection, encouraged environmental awareness, and created meaningful opportunities for employment, volunteering, and personal growth.
- 4.1.3. We presented at a national workshop for the Outdoor Partnership to help others increase inclusion in their clubs - delivering a live coaching session to showcase inclusive coaching.

4.2. Key Achievements

4.2.1. Participation and Growth

- 4.2.1.1. Over 5000 participant sessions were delivered across kayak, canoe, and stand-up paddleboard activities.
- 4.2.1.2. Membership grew to 200, a return to pre-pandemic levels and a healthy balance of adults (60%) and under-18s (40%) with a balanced ratio of female to male participants.
- 4.2.1.3. 17% of participants declared a disability or additional need, demonstrating continued progress in accessibility and inclusion.

4.2.2. Programmes and Delivery

- 4.2.2.1. Delivered weekly sessions year-round, with up to six sessions per week during the summer/winter seasons.
- 4.2.2.2. Continued our branded pathway courses – *Learn to Paddle*, *Love to Paddle*, and *Progress Your Paddling*, *Inclusive Paddling* – creating clear and enjoyable progression for all abilities.
- 4.2.2.3. Expanded *Skills After School* for 8–11-year-olds, offering positive, structured after-school outdoor activity.
- 4.2.2.4. Ran three inclusive paddling blocks in partnership with local charities and health agencies, supporting over 50 participants with additional needs.
- 4.2.2.5. Delivered Junior Leader and Volunteer Development Programmes, providing formal mentoring and leadership opportunities to 12 young people with the 4 who were over 14yrs achieving Paddlesport Instructor.

4.2.3. Health and Wellbeing Impact

- 4.2.3.1. Continued to integrate Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing into all activities - promoting connection, exercise, mindfulness, learning, and giving.
- 4.2.3.2. Participated in the Social Prescription Scheme, with referrals from local health and wellbeing teams.
- 4.2.3.3. We conducted and collated our first ever public survey with over 100 responses, showing high levels of satisfaction from our participants and members.

4.2.4. Volunteer and Coach Development

- 4.2.4.1. Supported a team of **35 core volunteer coaches and leaders**, including 18 new Paddlesport Instructors and one newly qualified Coach Award recipient.

- 4.2.4.2. Delivered First Aid and Paddlesport Safety and Rescue training to maintain safety and best practice.
- 4.2.4.3. Continued internal mentoring and professional review sessions led by senior coach educators.
- 4.2.4.4. Expanded our coach tutor team with Paddle NI Orientations and Standardisation events attended.

4.2.5. Community and Outreach

- 4.2.5.1. Strengthened relationships with Waterways Ireland, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Paddle NI, The Outdoor Partnership, and local schools and charities.
- 4.2.5.2. Delivered safety cover and kayak event coordination for FEARmanagh and other community events.
- 4.2.5.3. Hosted taster sessions for youth groups, Scouts, and special education schools.
- 4.2.5.4. Engaged with Now Group to co-design a new introductory paddling experience for adults with additional needs (launch planned for 2025).
- 4.2.5.5. Collaborated with the BBC to showcase our inclusive paddling programme on Operation Ouch.

4.2.6. Environmental Stewardship

- 4.2.6.1. Continued to promote Leave No Trace principles at sessions.
- 4.2.6.2. Organised community Lough Erne clean-up paddles and supported LELP litter-pick events.
- 4.2.6.3. Incorporated environmental education into youth and family sessions to raise awareness of water quality and local biodiversity.

4.3. Outcomes and Evidence of Impact

4.3.1. Health and Wellbeing

- 4.3.1.1. Via our survey and feedback forms, participants consistently reported increased confidence, relaxation, and connection with others. Feedback highlighted paddlesport as a “lifeline” for mental wellbeing and a positive way to manage stress and anxiety.

4.3.2. Social Inclusion

- 4.3.2.1. Our inclusive courses and partnership sessions reached groups often underrepresented in outdoor activity, including people with physical or learning disabilities, older adults, and those referred for social isolation or recovery. Parents who attended our sessions fed back to say “they were an important part of their families week and they loved the opportunity to exercise with their kids”

4.3.3. Skills and Leadership

- 4.3.3.1. Volunteer pathways provided real-world leadership experience for young people, supporting school, Duke of Edinburgh, and career development goals. Several participants have progressed from beginner to volunteer assistant within a single season, with others logging many recognised volunteering hours strengthening their CVs and gaining paid employment..

4.3.4. Community Connection

- 4.3.4.1. Collaboration with local organisations ensures that paddlesport remains open, affordable, and relevant to community needs.

4.3.5. Environmental Impact

- 4.3.5.1. Active stewardship and education builds a culture of respect for our natural environment and promote activities to protect this valuable local resource such as litter picks and Leave No Trace education. Every participant learns about safety, sustainability, and care for the waterways they paddle on.

Governance and People

4.4. Structure and Governance

- 4.4.1. Erne Paddlers is an unincorporated association governed by a written Constitution adopted in November 2015 and updated and signed in June 2024.
- 4.4.2. The charity is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC103723) and is affiliated to Paddle Northern Ireland (Paddle NI), the recognised National Governing Body for paddlesport.
- 4.4.3. The club is run by a voluntary Board of Trustees elected annually at the AGM. Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, financial management, safeguarding, and compliance of the organisation. Day-to-day delivery is managed by the Club Manager, supported by a part-time administrator and our volunteer team of qualified coaches and assistants. .
- 4.4.4. The club's governance framework is built on openness, accountability and continuous improvement, with policies covering:
 - 4.4.4.1. Financial management and reserves
 - 4.4.4.2. Safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults
 - 4.4.4.3. Equality, diversity and inclusion
 - 4.4.4.4. Volunteer development and reward
 - 4.4.4.5. Environmental responsibility
 - 4.4.4.6. Data protection and risk management
 - 4.4.4.7. Operating procedures and risk assessments
- 4.4.5. In 2024, trustees commenced a governance review to align all policies with the updated Constitution and the Charity Commission's best practice guidance.

4.5. Trustees and Management

- 4.5.1.1. The Board of Trustees during 2024 comprised:
 - 4.5.1.1.1. Chloe Hamilton – Chairperson
 - 4.5.1.1.2. Philippa Bennett – Secretary
 - 4.5.1.1.3. Jan England – Treasurer
 - 4.5.1.1.4. Vincent Ryan – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.5. Byron Anderson – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.6. Patrick Walsh – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.7. Karen Coulter – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.8. Timothy Boyd – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.9. Christopher Waldie – Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.10. Chelsea Stanford - Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.11. Corinna Power - Trustee
 - 4.5.1.1.12. Raymond Wilson - Trustee
- 4.5.2. The trustees bring expertise in outdoor education, special educational needs, corporate leadership, finance, health and safety, volunteering, environmental management, and community development.
- 4.5.3. No trustee received remuneration for their role. Travel and out-of-pocket expenses were reimbursed where appropriate.
- 4.5.4. Trustees meet approximately every 6 weeks, with additional meetings as required to approve funding bids, policy updates and risk reviews. All major decisions are minuted and reported to members at the Annual General Meeting.

4.6. Volunteers and Staff

- 4.6.1. Erne Paddlers depends on the dedication of its volunteers. In 2024:

- 4.6.1.1. Over 60 active volunteers supported sessions, events, and administration.
- 4.6.1.2. 35 qualified coaches and leaders delivered paddlesport sessions across multiple disciplines.
- 4.6.1.3. 12 young people took part in our Junior Leader and Volunteer Mentor Programmes.
- 4.6.1.4. One full-time Club Manager was employed to coordinate programmes, partnerships and training.
- 4.6.1.5. Administrative work delivered by part-time freelance staff.
- 4.6.1.6. Volunteers contributed an estimated 3,000 hours of service during the year. Training, mentoring and recognition continue to be central to sustaining engagement and quality delivery.

4.7. Safeguarding and Equality

- 4.7.1. Safeguarding remains a top priority.
- 4.7.2. All coaches, trustees and regular volunteers hold Access NI checks.
- 4.7.3. Safeguarding refresher training was completed by all active coaches.
- 4.7.4. The club's Safeguarding Officer works closely with Paddle NI to ensure compliance with national guidance.

4.8. Risk Management

- 4.8.1. Key risks identified by the trustees include:
 - 4.8.1.1. Lack of a permanent waterside base reducing growth potential and equipment security.
 - 4.8.1.2. Dependence on key staff and volunteers.
 - 4.8.1.3. Variability in grant funding availability.
 - 4.8.1.4. Safety risks inherent in water-based activity.
- 4.8.2. Mitigation measures include robust financial controls, ongoing succession planning, external training for staff and volunteers, strict risk assessment procedures (recognising the risk-benefit framework of outdoor activities), and active engagement with local partners on infrastructure planning.

4.9. Our People in Focus

- 4.9.1. Our success continues to come from our people - enthusiastic and grateful participants; passionate volunteers; dedicated coaches and staff; and supportive trustees and stakeholders. Their energy, dedication, professionalism, kindness and teamwork ensure that every participant experiences paddlesport in a safe, welcoming and inspiring environment.

5. Financial Review

5.1. Accounting Basis

- 5.1.1. The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis, in accordance with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

5.2. Financial Summary for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

- 5.2.1. Total income:
 - 5.2.1.1. £73,741.27
 - 5.2.1.2. Including membership fees, grants, and programme income
- 5.2.2. Total Expenditure
 - 5.2.2.1. £74,151.44
 - 5.2.2.2. Includes staffing, equipment, insurance, and training
- 5.2.3. Net Receipts / (Payments)
 - 5.2.3.1. -£42.62
 - 5.2.3.2. Small deficit for the year
- 5.2.4. Closing Balance
 - 5.2.4.1. £31,284.47.
 - 5.2.4.2. Unrestricted reserves carried forward
- 5.2.5. All funds are unrestricted unless otherwise stated.

5.3. Income Sources

- 5.4. Income in 2024 came from:
 - 5.4.1. Membership fees and session income
 - 5.4.2. Grant funding from local and regional bodies
 - 5.4.3. Programme contracts with local councils and community groups

5.5. Expenditure

- 5.5.1. Expenditure reflects the direct delivery of charitable activities:
 - 5.5.1.1. Coach and staff wages
 - 5.5.1.2. Volunteer training and development
 - 5.5.1.3. Equipment maintenance and replacement
 - 5.5.1.4. Venue hire, insurance, and transport
 - 5.5.1.5. Administrative and compliance costs
- 5.5.2. All spending supports our charitable purpose of promoting paddlesport for public benefit.

5.6. Reserves Policy

- 5.6.1. Erne Paddlers maintains a prudent level of unrestricted reserves to cover approximately three months of core operating costs.
- 5.6.2. The trustees review the reserves level annually to ensure it provides stability while maximising funds for charitable activities.

5.7. Assets

- 5.7.1. The charity owns a comprehensive fleet of boats and safety equipment, including kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddleboards, trailers, and associated gear. The estimated current market value is approximately **£40,000**, maintained through reinvestment and grant-supported renewal.

5.8. Financial Sustainability

- 5.8.1. Despite rising operational costs, the charity remains in a stable financial position. The trustees are confident that the combination of membership income, funding, continued strong partnerships with plans for increased capacity and diversified revenue generation, along with efficient management will ensure long-term sustainability.

5.9. Independent Examination

- 5.9.1. The accounts will be independently examined in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland by Catherine Crudden Independent examiner Crudden Dolan Limited 23-25 Darling Street Enniskillen Co. Fermanagh BT74 7D

5.10. In Summary

- 5.10.1. Erne Paddlers continues to operate from a position of good governance, sound financial control, and strong community trust.
- 5.10.2. All funds are used effectively to deliver high-quality, inclusive paddlesport and measurable public benefit - ensuring the charity remains a valued and sustainable part of community life in Fermanagh and beyond.

6. Challenges and Lessons Learned

6.1. Operational Challenges

6.1.1. Staffing and Volunteer Capacity

- 6.1.1.1. The club continues to rely on a small core of dedicated volunteers and one full-time Development Officer. Recruiting and retaining volunteers remains a constant challenge, particularly as demand for activities grows.
- 6.1.1.2. Mitigation and Learning:
 - 6.1.1.2.1. Expanded our Junior Leader and Volunteer Mentor programmes to build the next generation of leaders.
 - 6.1.1.2.2. Introduced a new volunteer recognition system, offering clear pathways from participation to leadership.
 - 6.1.1.2.3. Improved coordination between trustees, staff, and volunteers through quarterly planning meetings.

6.1.2. Facilities and Infrastructure

- 6.1.2.1. The lack of a permanent waterside base continues to limit storage, accessibility, and visibility. Temporary storage and mobile operations increase logistics costs and planning time.
- 6.1.2.2. Mitigation and Learning:
 - 6.1.2.2.1. Continued dialogue with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Waterways Ireland to explore long-term solutions.
 - 6.1.2.2.2. Strengthened the case for investment through strong evidence of participation, impact, and partnership delivery.

6.1.3. Funding and Cost Pressures

- 6.1.3.1. Rising operational costs (insurance, transport, fuel, and equipment replacement) placed pressure on budgets. Reliance on project-based funding also creates uncertainty.
 - 6.1.3.1.1. Mitigation and Learning:
 - 6.1.3.1.1.1. Increased self-generated income through course delivery and events.
 - 6.1.3.1.1.2. Small annual price increments.
 - 6.1.3.1.1.3. Developed a five-year funding strategy to diversify income sources.
 - 6.1.3.1.1.4. Strengthened financial monitoring, forecasting, and reporting processes.

6.1.4. Weather and Environmental Conditions

- 6.1.4.1. Poor summer weather and fluctuating water levels affected session scheduling.
- 6.1.4.2. Mitigation and Learning:
 - 6.1.4.2.1. Improved communication and flexibility with participants.
 - 6.1.4.2.2. Developed adaptable session plans and alternative venues to maintain activity continuity.

6.2. Governance and Learning

- 6.2.1. 2024 was also a year of governance strengthening:
 - 6.2.1.1. A comprehensive policy review ensured compliance with the updated 2024 Constitution.
 - 6.2.1.2. Trustees completed training on charity responsibilities, equality and safeguarding.
 - 6.2.1.3. A formal risk management plan was adopted to prioritise operational and strategic risks.

6.3. Key Lessons Learned

- 6.3.1. 2024 was a year of renewal and reflection. While the club achieved many successes, several challenges tested our resilience and adaptability. Each provided valuable learning to strengthen the organisation and improve our future delivery
 - 6.3.1.1. Invest in volunteer development early to sustain future delivery.
 - 6.3.1.2. Build capacity in volunteers, staff and infrastructure.
 - 6.3.1.3. Strengthen local partnerships to share resources and expertise.
 - 6.3.1.4. Diversify revenue streams.
 - 6.3.1.5. Maintain flexibility in programme design to manage external factors.
 - 6.3.1.6. Communicate more regularly with members and stakeholders to build engagement and trust.
 - 6.3.1.7. Plan multi-year funding cycles for sustainability and strategic growth.
 - 6.3.1.8. Through reflection and adaptation, Erne Paddlers remains well positioned to face challenges with creativity and resilience.

7. Future Plans

7.1. Strategic Direction

- 7.1.1. Building on the progress of 2024, Erne Paddlers will focus on strengthening its people, place, and programmes - ensuring that paddlesport continues to make a meaningful contribution to community wellbeing, inclusion, and environmental awareness. Themes for 2024 will include developing the club as a place of social support and care for the environment.

7.2. Priorities for 2025

7.2.1. Access and Inclusion

- 7.2.1.1. Strengthen and develop the Inclusive Paddling Programme in partnership with local disability groups and schools.
- 7.2.1.2. Expand work with the Health and Social Care Trust and Social Prescription providers.
- 7.2.1.3. Develop adaptive equipment and training for coaches to improve accessibility.

7.2.2. Volunteer and Leadership Development

- 7.2.2.1. Extend the Junior Leader Programme to include a Young Coach pathway linked to Paddle NI qualifications.
- 7.2.2.2. Offer leadership mentoring for adult volunteers transitioning to instructor roles.
- 7.2.2.3. Introduce annual volunteer celebration and development days.

7.2.3. Facilities and Sustainability

- 7.2.3.1. Continue engagement with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to secure a temporary base for the duration of the Lakeland Forum Redevelopment and identify a permanent waterside base.
- 7.2.3.2. Develop a phased plan for improved equipment storage, accessible facilities and environmental sustainability.
- 7.2.3.3. Seek capital and partnership funding to support this development.

7.2.4. Health, Wellbeing and Environment

- 7.2.4.1. Increase delivery of wellbeing-focused paddlesport as part of local health strategies.
- 7.2.4.2. Host community *Blue Space* wellbeing paddles celebrating the benefits of water for mental health.
- 7.2.4.3. Continue environmental actions through litter picks, Leave No Trace education and eco-friendly operations.

7.2.5. Financial Stability

- 7.2.5.1. Deliver the new five year fundraising strategy.
- 7.2.5.2. Secure multi-year grants and strengthen partnership agreements.
- 7.2.5.3. Maintain a balanced budget and prudent reserves.

7.2.6. Partnerships and Collaboration

- 7.2.6.1. Continued collaboration with Paddle NI, The Outdoor Partnership, Waterways Ireland and local charities and schools - sharing our expertise in inclusion, safety and community engagement

7.2.7. Vision for the Future

7.2.8. Our long-term goal remains clear:

- 7.2.8.1. To build a sustainable, inclusive and inspiring paddlesports community that helps people live Better Lives Through Paddlesport.
- 7.2.8.2. Through strong governance, partnership, and volunteer leadership, we will continue to deliver public benefit - improving wellbeing, building skills, and caring for our natural environment for generations to come.

Acknowledgements and Call to Action

7.3. Thanks and Appreciation

- 7.3.1. Erne Paddlers' achievements in 2024 were only possible through the generosity, commitment and partnership of many people and organisations.
- 7.3.2. The trustees wish to extend sincere thanks to:
 - 7.3.2.1. Our members, volunteers and families - whose energy, enthusiasm and teamwork make the club what it is. Our dedicated coaches and leaders - for their professionalism, mentoring and the countless hours they give to ensure safe, high-quality delivery.
 - 7.3.2.2. Our Development Officer - for driving forward the club's vision and community impact.
 - 7.3.2.3. Our Admin Officer - for managing and developing our social media, bookings and member support systems
 - 7.3.2.4. The Board of Trustees - for their governance, leadership and care in guiding the charity's strategic direction.
 - 7.3.2.5. Funding partners and supporters, including Paddle Northern Ireland, Sport NI, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Waterways Ireland, the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership, and local charitable trusts, for believing in our mission and investing in community wellbeing through paddlesport.
 - 7.3.2.6. Our partner organisations, schools, health providers and community groups - for working with us to open the water to everyone.
 - 7.3.2.7. We also recognise the individuals and families who provided testimonials, photographs and stories that bring our impact to life.

7.3.3. Community Call to Action

- 7.3.3.1. Erne Paddlers continues to grow as a welcoming community where everyone can experience the benefits of paddlesport - health, happiness and connection on the beautiful waters of Fermanagh.
- 7.3.3.2. You can support our work by
 - 7.3.3.2.1. Choosing EP, a charity and community org, if you want to try or develop in paddlesport
 - 7.3.3.2.2. Joining as a member or volunteer.
 - 7.3.3.2.3. Partnering with us to deliver community programmes.
 - 7.3.3.2.4. Sponsoring a project or donating equipment or funds.
 - 7.3.3.2.5. Sharing your story about EP to inspire others.
- 7.3.3.3. Together, we can create Better Lives Through Paddlesport — ensuring everyone has access to the water, to nature, and to the wellbeing that flows from both.
- 7.3.3.4. **To get involved, contact us at:**
 - www.ernepaddlers.org.uk
 - email@ernepaddlers.org.uk
 - 07808 649173 - Club Manager
 - 07468 911398 - Office Administrator

8. Trustees' Approval and Signatures

8.1. This report, including the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024, has been approved by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.


8.2. It was adopted at a duly convened meeting of the trustees on 22 October 2025.

8.3. Signatures:

8.3.1. Position: Chairperson

Name: Corinna Power


Date: 22 October 2025

Signature:  _____

8.3.2. Position: Secretary

Name: Vincent Ryan

Date: 22 October 2025

Signature:  _____