

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT
CHARITIES COMMISSION

Reporting year:

April 2022 – March 2023

Project year:

September 2022 – August 2023

Organisation address:

Mid Armagh Community Network
27b Main Street
Markethill
County Armagh
BT60 1PH

Charity number:

NIC103742

Company Registration Number:

NI054732

Governance:

Mid Armagh Community Network is governed and constituted by its Articles of Association 2016 revision.

Trustees:

C. Clarke
H. Singleton
L. Harrison
S. McKelvey
D. Alexander

The Trustees have served for many years and bring particular skills and life experience to the role. They each give volunteer time weekly to facilitate the project, meet face to face and use other communication means as required to deliver on project targets throughout the year. In addition to their management roles they have responsibilities around but not limited to;

C. Clarke – Music and drama.
H. Singleton – Dance co-ordinator
L. Harrison - Cleaning
S. McKelvey – Dance co-ordinator
D. Alexander – Maintenance advisor.

Continuity / succession planning contacts;

C. Clarke cjhclarke@hotmail.co.uk
H. Singleton hilary-singleton@hotmail.co.uk
L. Harrison lynn.harrison171@hotmail.co.uk
S. McKelvey sharon_mckelvey@hotmail.co.uk
D. Alexander daalexander@live.co.uk

Foreward and year outline summary:

Weekly classes commenced in September 2022 following an online registration process for returning students and face to face with prospective enrollees to explain the project to students and parents, familiarise them with our organisation, our aims and objectives and make them aware of our safeguarding policy.

All classes started the project year as face to face.

Dance classes continued to take place in rented premises at Markethill Courthouse.

Fiddle tuition and orchestra practice continued in our own hall until building work commenced.

Drama continued to use rented premises at Kilcluney Hall.

Choir continued practice in our own hall until building work commenced.

Having placed an application with the Department for Communities, we set about finalising details with an architect, contacting builders, obtaining quotes and initiated a February start for significant internal building work within our hall to remove old stairs and install a new set which were identified as giving safer access and egress for those using our hall. We also created extra space within the project to facilitate increased use and create additional storage space. Work was completed on time and on budget.

We hosted the Ulster Scots Community Network as they engaged with the local wider community to sample views on an expert advisory panel paper.

Significant planning took place in tandem to deliver our annual Flowers of Edinburgh in Armagh Theatre in April 2023

Public Benefit Report:

Purposes;

Mid Armagh Community Network is an Ulster Scots themed cultural community group set up to build on the rich cultural history in and around the town of Markethill. Our purposes; To promote and preserve Ulster Scots heritage, cultural traditions and arts to the benefits of those individuals and the wider public who access our facilities and services and who self-identify as Ulster Scots.

Activity in support of purposes;

All our classes take place within Markethill in a safe and welcoming environment consistent with our purposes. Our activities are in line with the objects/purposes and geographical area as represented in our governing document.

Our public activity supports our objectives and included within the activity category outlined below

In furtherance of these purposes our Trustees planned and created the structure of the program, applied for funding, advertised classes, took enrolments and employed tutors to teach;

Fiddle – Classes to include Orchestra are held weekly - 55 students

Whilst we had a number of older students who were unable to return this year due to furthering higher education we picked up a number of new students.

The fiddle classes continued weekly and structured towards participation in LCM exams.

The fiddle orchestra planned and held a Carol service in December 2022 with Santa as a special guest and had 250-300 people from the wider community in attendance. The orchestra members led the service by playing the Christmas Carols and were supported by our younger dancers, dancing to pre recorded Christmas music. The evening ended with a community supper supplied by orchestra members, parents and friends.

The fiddle tuition year ended in June 2022 when 49 students took their LCM exams with the LCM arranging once again supplying a Scottish Examiner to conduct the exams.

Exam certificates were awarded in January 23 as part of our Burns night and combined Jubilee celebrations.

Other dates as part of our cultural outreach and promotion consistent with our objects and purposes saw the orchestra members performing at,

Newtownstewart District Orange Carol Service

Hartford Community Association

Masonic Hall Armagh

Armagh Orange Hall in aid of Aghavilly Band

Mavemacullen Band Coronation celebrations.

Highland Theatre and Country Dance – Classes are held weekly - 31 students

For this year's activities rented premises where the recommended spacing of dancers could be maintained was continued.

Highland dance tuition was delivered in three classes- Junior, Intermediate and Advanced- according to ability. Classes covered tuition towards UK Dance Alliance Examinations, both physical and theoretical, and included dancers learning Scottish Traditional dances, such as the Fling and Sword Dance, and also the more balletic National dances, such as the Flora. The tutor also taught dancers a range of specially choreographed dances, based on Highland steps and set to contemporary Scottish music.

All dance forms were enjoyed by the pupils who were also taught the history of each dance and were provided with an overview of the history of Scottish Highland Dancing. Dancers were entered for UK Dance Alliance examinations in a range of grades appropriate to their ability with a 100% success rate for our dance school.

In addition to weekly tuition, dancers performed at a range of events. These included performances by dancers at;

- Coronation Event attended by the King and hosted by ABC Council at Marketplace Theatre, Armagh
- Cultural Night at Marketplace Theatre hosted by ABC Council
- Strictly Come Dancing event for charity in Seagoe Hotel, Portadown
- Flowers of Edinburgh Concert, Armagh Theatre
- Mavemacullen Coronation Concert
- Fusion Event, ABC Council

- Coronation Charity Event at Tandragee Golf Club

It is very much worth mentioning the volunteer support we have been given at weekly classes. Having come up through the ranks of dancing within MACN themselves and progressed through the grades to attain teacher level, 3-4 of our senior dancers are now giving encouragement to younger dancers as they progress. This is particularly significant as these young teachers who could be off doing something else are choosing to help, support and impart cultural traditions to the next generation.

Drama – Classes are held weekly – 25 students

The numbers returning for this class in its second year was encouraging to us following bringing on board a qualified Drama teacher to lead this class. Following on from the previous year learning the basics of stagecraft, the members of this class presented a pantomime based on Peter Pan but with an Ulster Scots twist in December 2022 to family and friends. Drama students participated in our concert in April 2022. At our planned annual Flowers of Edinburgh concert for April 2023 the drama students felt confident enough to write and perform in a sketch based around the Royal Jubilee.

Accordion Class – Classes are held weekly - 5 students

This class has seen a modest growth in numbers. Attendees have been keen to upskill and fine tune the capabilities they already have under the mentoring process by our degree qualified tutor. 3 members from this class have supported our fiddle orchestra at both practice and public events. They have also planned to support the orchestra on stage at our annual Flowers of Edinburgh concert.

Choir – Classes are held weekly - 15 participants

After introducing this popular class as a pilot in our previous years project it has now been established within our project starting this year. With a growing songbook the choir has been asked to participate within the wider community and invited to appear at Bessbrook Orange Hall, Markethill District Enterprise and partnered with Markethill Past Defenders Museum whilst our building work took place.

Statement and summary in support of the Public Benefit statement submitted:

We believe, given the above that we have fulfilled our outlined public benefit in terms of

1. To promote to the benefit of the inhabitants
2. To advance education
3. To promote and preserve Ulster Scots heritage, cultural traditions and arts

4. To provide facilities in the interests of.

Private Benefit;

There was no private benefit flowing inconsistent to our purposes.

Difficulties;

Having funding for just one year and only 75% maximum funding available from the Ulster Scots Agency.

Without funding secured for 2022-2023 from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland our project would have closed in August 2022. Having applied for 10k but only receiving 8k meant we had to review our costs as we wanted to avoid putting up class fees.

Structural red tape putting increased responsibility on maintaining volunteer support.

Successes;

Managing to get enough grant funding to run our project this year ensuring continuity to those students hoping to build on both what they have learned and exam success from the previous project.

Getting Arts Council funding following a successful application.

Our students learned new skills

Exams gained and new friendships were made

Increased public awareness of the Ulster-Scots tradition through our performances and online presence

We increased our PR activity through our Facebook page.

Obtaining funding from the Department of Communities to enable work to our hall. This work was identified by us as required from a Health and Safety perspective and will benefit those using our hall going forward.

Concert;

The concert in Armagh Marketplace Theatre for April 2022 featuring our students and structured as a variety type concert supported by a compere went ahead this year as planned and is an integral part of our funding applications.

Numbers were down by roughly 25% in terms of audience which was we believe a reluctance on the behalf of people still concerned about going out post Covid.

Figures from the venue also suggested that numbers were down generally over all their promotions. Nonetheless the participants in our program and the audience numbers in attendance had a great evening. Family audience members related to the new drama members who had not previously attended one of our concerts were very impressed with the overall concert experience.

The concert in Armagh Marketplace Theatre for May 2023 will go ahead this year as planned.

For a rural community group this is particularly significant not only in the organisation, variety, background planning and choreography but to have 120 people on stage celebrating Ulster Scots cultural arts is not replicated anywhere else in Northern Ireland.

Mitigation of Harm;

We communicate our Safeguarding policy to students and parents on registration.

We communicate a tutor pack to our tutors to include our safeguarding policy.

Safeguarding refresher training is our primary mechanism in support to mitigation of harm.

Tutors and relevant Trustees are Access NI checked.

We partner with Volunteer Now for our training needs.

We participated in a NICVA meeting supported by the Charities Commission around the principals of good governance and reporting as part of Trustees week.

Summary;

MACN have contributed to the advancement of community confidence in Markethill by those parts of its project outlined. It is part of the community contributing to the quality of life and the reduction of rural social isolation through its many activities.

By contributing a significant proportion of the overall budget from our own resource in real terms highlights the importance MACN place on this project and the difficulty obtaining funding from other sources.

The invitation to participate in other community events shows how the wider community view our professionalism. We have had another very successful year all things considered promoting our music and heritage and encouraging exam success.

Without having funding to maintain a part time project administrator we would not be able to run this project.

In January 2023 we combined a Burns night, a Jubilee event and certificate presentation evening and presented fiddle certificates for LCM exams ranging from Grade 2, Grade 4, Grade 8 and Scottish Traditional Diploma. and Dance Alliance UK certificates and awards for dancers. With supper and entertainment it was a celebration of our students activities and successes.

Financial;

Class fees this year to offset our contribution of the budget.

Adult enrolment - £20 – Single payment

Child enrolment - £15 – Single payment

2nd and subsequent child - £7.50 – Single payment

Class Fee Adult - £5.00 weekly per class

Class Fee Child – £3.50 weekly per class

Thanks to the subsidy funding contributes class fees are able to be kept at a rate which would be considerably less than private tuition to enable a pathway into the arts for those students from a low income background. We were able to maintain class fees at the same level as the previous year.

Project part funded by:

Ulster Scots Agency – 54%

Mid Armagh Community Network – 31%

Arts Council of Northern Ireland – 15%

As of 31-03-2023 the following figures are summarised from the draft unaudited financial statement.

Gross Income - £65,301

Total Expenditure - £59,893

Operating Profit - £5,408

Capital and reserves - £30,341

These figures are a snapshot of the position at 31-03-23 which is when we produce our annual accounts. The project for 2022-2023 continued through to end of August 2023.

Acknowledgement;

The Trustees in preparation of this have had regard to the Commission's Public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

Auditors:

Shriver Price and Company
Newry

Insurers:

Gallagher

Bankers:

Danske Bank

Submitted and Signed by: C.Clarke

Dated: 02-01-2024