

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 1 October 2024

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts For year to 31 August 2024

Charity No. NIC104814

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Antrim Castle Grounds And Clotworthy House, Randalstown Road, Antrim BT41 4LH



The Trustees' Annual Report - Year Ending 31 August 2024

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 August 2024.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a voluntary association. It is governed by a constitution and managed by a Management Committee, who are also the charity's Trustees.

The Trustees have had regard to guidance issued by the Charities Commission of Northern Ireland on public benefit in carrying out their statutory duties in the governance of the charity. The Trustees govern the activities of the charity in line with the objectives set out in the charity's constitution.

The Trustees

The Trustees who served the charity throughout the period are:

Chairperson – Anne McAuley

Vice Chair – Subhash Treon until April 2024,

Vice Chair - Irwin McLaughlin from April 2024

Secretary and Fundraiser – Marie Bradley

Vice Secretary and Coordinator – Rodney Gillen

Treasurer – Diane Greenwood

Vice Treasurer – Irwin McLaughlin

Coordinator - Steve Humphrey

Events Coordinator - Eileen Black

Donation Hub Coordinator - Irene Moran

Scarecrow Planner - Gary McMullan

Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

They are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.

They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy at all times, the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the law. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Management Committee

The Committee carries out its governance role throughout the year by way of monthly meetings. These meetings enable review of the performance of the charity and make decisions regarding the charity's financial and operational matters.

The charity is registered with HMRC for tax purposes.

Objectives and activities

The objectives of the charity are:

- To advance education in horticulture and gardening; and
- To promote conservation and protection of the environment of Antrim Castle Gardens for the public benefit in Antrim and surrounding districts.

The charity carries out its activities on a 'not for profit' basis.

The strategies employed to assist the charity to meet these objectives include the following:

1. Encouraging, fostering and creating an interest in horticulture, good gardening, horticulture heritage, conservation and other related areas through maintenance of the courtyard gardens within Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House.
2. Providing an opportunity for members of the charity and the public to participate in organised visits to other gardens, enhancing their knowledge of horticulture and providing an opportunity to foster friendships.

An overview of the Charity's activities from September 2023 to August 2024

Volunteers

A massive thanks to all our volunteers for their hard work and dedication

- In September 2023 there were 25 volunteers
- 10 new volunteers joined
- 6 left
- Currently have 29 volunteers

Jean, Maureen, Jean and William 'graduated'

During volunteer week, Steve and Eileen were recognised for their role as volunteers

Diane took part in a promotional video for Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. This will be shared in the USA and through the Council's social media platforms

Sessions held and Volunteer hours

- 4 sessions per week, Mon – Thurs 9:30 – 12:30
- Held 318 sessions
- Each session - managed by a Coordinator
- Saturday watering rota started in May

A total of 4,439 hours which included: gardening, administration and events as listed below.

Gardening activities

- Cleaned the greenhouse, the shed, the potting shed, the production area
- Created new alpine beds
- Revamped and renamed the Swap Hub – now the Donation Hub
- Erected a comment/suggestion box for the public
- Redesigned the sculpture bed with new plants, grasses, stones, bark and oiled the sculpture
- Created a fairy garden
- Weeded continually
- Shifted loads of soil, grit and stones
- Dug large and deep holes
- Painted the shed, the Donation Hub, the fence around the scarecrows
- Tested the soil
- Revamped the cottage garden with beech trees, honeysuckle and cottage plants
- Recovered and refloored the polytunnel
- Erected a trophy cabinet and Green flags
- Maintained flower beds by feeding, planting, weeding, adding bark, grit, pebbles and logs
- Planted and harvested onions, tomatoes, garlic, carrots, potatoes, courgettes, beetroot, cucumbers, strawberries and grapes
- Dressed the scarecrows – Halloween, Christmas, Valentine, Easter and Abba
- Erected new signage throughout the garden and on plants

Administration activities

- Held 10 Management Committee meetings and 3 Planning meetings
- Charity Commission and HRMC returns, Insurance renewals,
- Recording of minutes
- Accounting

- Applications forms, Induction packs, Graduation certificates.
- Posters, Notices, Signage
- Volunteer survey, WhatsApp communication, Volunteer forms renewals
- Funding applications
- Event organisation
- Social media updates and Website design. An increase in Facebook following was noted.

Total hours

A grand total of **4,439 hours**

Awards received

- At Garden Show Ireland our miniature garden received 'Highly Commended'
- We achieved the Green Flag Community Award

Funding received - £11,817

Thank you to all our sponsors:

Enaklon Foundation, Tesco, Dunsilly Hotel, National Lottery Community Fund, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Radius Housing.

Fundraising income - £3,454.95

Donations received - £1,238.06

Purchases and expenditure

- Rainwear, name badges
- Trophy cabinet
- Tools, stones, paints
- Plants, vegetables
- Stationery, labels
- Gazebo, bunting, pop up stand
- Heat pads, covering for vegetables
- Fridge and refreshments
- Scarecrow clothing and lighting
- Uniforms
- Insurance
- NICVA
- Mobile phone
- Laptop security

- Microsoft office package
- Outings/transport
- Catering
- Invited speakers

Links with other organisations

- Women's Aid
- The Men's Shed
- The Ladies at The Shed, Antrim
- The Bridge Association
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- Tesco Antrim
- Enkalon Foundation
- Dunsilly Hotel
- Live Here, Love Here
- Radius Housing
- Mann's Café
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust – Day Opportunities
- Action Mental Health
- Colemans Garden Centre
- Antrim Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Devine Design
- CLG Naomh Comhghall, Antrim GAA

Future plans

- Increase sustainability through propagation, recycling and waste reduction
- Create an environment which encourages wildlife and pollinators
- Encourage volunteers to participate in courses which will enhance skills and knowledge
- Increase our involvement at Garden Show Ireland and other relevant events
- Continue to recruit new volunteers and increase sessions
- Continue to seek funding and hold fundraising events
- Invite inspirational speakers and visit other gardens
- Increase our social media coverage
- Work closely with other voluntary/statutory organisations

The Committee will continue to govern the charity in line with the constitution to achieve the objectives listed above.

The Trustees are satisfied that the performance of the charity during the year, in terms of both financial matters and operational activities, is in line with the charity's constitution and key objectives.

Financial review

The net income for the year is detailed in X1 and X2. The surplus for the year will be added to capital reserves brought forward.

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The accounts have been prepared on an Income and Expenditure basis.

Signed by order of the Committee on their behalf

Diane Greenwood Treasurer

Dated 1 October 2024