

Annual Report 2024

Trustees' Report

1. The company

Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company Ltd is a company limited by guarantee registered in Northern Ireland no. NI 635831 and a charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland no. NIC 105987.

2. Reporting year

The company's reporting year is the calendar year, in this case the year ending 31st December 2024.

3. Directors and Trustees

The Directors of the Company and Trustees of the Charity in this financial year were as follows:

Alan Couser (Chair)
Wesley Martin (Vice Chair)
Kit Chivers (Company Secretary)
Patricia Burgess (Treasurer)
Stephen Cairns (from June 2024)
Shirley Cochrane
Noel Johnston (to March 2024)
Murdo Murray (to May 2024)
Quinton Nelson
Dawn Petrie (from April 2024)
Steve Rafferty (from April 2024)
Anthony Skeats (to March 2024)

4. The purpose of the company

In accordance with its Memorandum of Association, the company seeks to advance education and promote heritage and culture in Donaghadee and the surrounding area ('the area of benefit'), and in particular to:

- a. Acquire, protect, restore, preserve promote and exhibit for the public benefit the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly and other boats, forms of transport, historical artefacts, ancillary equipment and property of historical and educational interest;
- b. Establish, maintain and manage a museum and educational resource centre for the acquisition, restoration, preservation, archiving and public display of artefacts and documents of educational, historical and cultural interest and other items illustrating the history and heritage of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly and associated memorabilia;
- c. Advance education and encourage appreciation within the area of benefit on all matters relating to Donaghadee and the history of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly

through exhibitions, workshops, lectures and other forms of educational medium.

5. The activities of the company in 2024

- a. Throughout the year work continued on the conservation of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly, moving on from the restoration of the exterior of the boat to work on the interior, which is continuing.
- b. A commemoration service for those lost in the MV Princess Victoria in 1953 was held at the end of January, accompanied by an exhibition in Donaghadee Community Centre.
- c. In September 2023, a grant of £90,000 over two years was received from the Heritage Fund (National Lottery). The grant began to be spent from the start of 2024. An Outreach Worker was recruited and started work in January, and in the same month a new fence was erected round the compound. In February a new temporary building was constructed to serve as an Exhibition Room. Work on fitting out the 'cabin' continued through the year: varnishing and furnishing the inside, installing the electrics and then painting the outside and fitting gutters. The wheelchair ramp in front of the cabin was funded by a grant from the Co-op Community Fund.
- d. The Centre was open to visitors from the end of March to the end of the year. In the summer months it was open from 2pm to 5pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and from 6pm to 8pm on Thursdays. In October the opening hours were shortened to 2pm to 4pm and Thursday evening opening was discontinued.
- e. The number of individual visitors between March and December was xxxx. In addition, there were xx group visits, bringing a further xxx visitors to the Centre. The groups included primary schoolchildren and a variety of community and special interest groups.
- f. The Exhibition Room has been used to carry a series of temporary exhibitions on themes that go wider than the story of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly, including the history of Donaghadee's harbour, the Belfast and County Down Railway, the experience of Donaghadee in the two World Wars, the sporting clubs of Donaghadee and a collection of historic postcards from the days when Donaghadee was a seaside resort.
- g. The Outreach Worker has established contact with the schools in the area and with other community organisations. She has facilitated visits to the Centre and made xx visits to schools, bringing the story of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly and the MV Princess Victoria disaster to them. She has also visited local care homes and has met with a warm response from their residents.
- h. The Outreach Worker, assisted by retired videographer John Rodgers, has made six short video films which can be viewed on YouTube and which are also shown (when the interest is there) to visitors to the Centre. In September we welcomed the family of the late poet Roy McFadden, whose 'Elegy to the Dead of the Princess Victoria' was the subject of one of those films.

- i. A meeting was held in September with representatives of Tourism NI, who confirmed their interest in the potential of the Centre as a tourist destination once its facilities can be improved.
- j. The Board of the company has continued to develop plans for a permanent Visitor and Heritage Centre in Donaghadee, which can provide a suitable long-term home for the Lifeboat. Discussions with the Council about the appropriate site and the length of the required lease are ongoing.
- k. In November, the company was honoured to receive a visit from HRH the Duke of Gloucester, who dedicated a plaque to the heroic crews of the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly and the other vessels that took part in the rescue of survivors from the MV Princess Victoria. HRH was accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff of Down, the Mayor of Ards and North Down and other elected representatives.

6. Statutory declarations

a. Public benefit

The Trustees have complied with the duty to have regard to the guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Charity Commission under Section 4(b) of the Charities Order (the Public Benefit Requirement statutory guidance). The company has provided significant public benefit through its educational involvement with schools as well as providing a venue for visitors interested in the history and heritage of the town. It continues to pursue its long-term objective of creating a Visitor and Heritage Centre for Donaghadee, centred around the RNLB Sir Samuel Kelly, which will offer educational, cultural and economic benefits to Donaghadee and the surrounding area.

b. Any harm caused by the company

So far as the Trustees are aware, no harm has resulted from the activities of the company in the year.

c. Any private benefit resulting from the company's activities

So far as the Trustees are aware, no private person or body corporate has obtained any benefit from the activities of the company in the year.

On behalf of Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company Ltd,

Signed:

Kit Chivers, Company Secretary Date: