

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS HERITAGE TRUST LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The members, who are also directors of the Charity for the purposes of the Companies Act present their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts and comply with the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)".

Objectives and activities

The charity's objects are specifically restricted to promotion for the benefit of the public of the advancement of education, the promotion of sustainable development and biological diversity, the advancement of rural regeneration and the conservation, maintenance, improvement and protection of the physical, natural and built environment of the Causeway Coast and Glens. The policies adopted in furtherance of these objects are as follows and there has been no change in these during the year.

- to advance the education of the public or any local or statutory authority in the principles and practice of conservation, and the conservation and protection of wildlife and marine life in an effort to encourage conservation;
- to advance, promote, preserve and further the conservation maintenance and protection of features of the landscape in the area of benefit with geographical, historic, physiographical or amenity value and to enhance their contribution to existing environmental amenities in the area of benefit for the public benefit;
- to advance the education of the public in subjects relating to sustainable development and the protection, management, enhancement and rehabilitation of the environment and to encourage and promote study and research in such subjects provided that the useful results of such study are disseminated to the general public;
- to advance any other exclusively charitable purpose as the directors, may from time to time, decide in accordance with the law of charity.

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

The direct benefits that flow from CCGHT's purposes are:

- Habitat protection and enhancement through measures including establishing habitat management plans, controlling invasive species and addressing the risk of wild fires.
- Protection of native species such as the red squirrel and native woodlands.
- Improved public access to the area and mitigation of the impact of increased visitor numbers through engagement with landowners and the building, maintenance and promotion of paths.
- Restoration of the built heritage through the repair of the historic stonewalls and other historic structures and monuments in the area.
- Securing of the living heritage of the area for future generations through the collection and collation of heritage material.
- Sharing of the heritage of the area for the education and enjoyment of the public through events, publications, exhibitions, training courses and volunteering opportunities.

The above will lead to protection of cultural values, heritage and the environment for future generations; enhanced appreciation and enjoyment of the area; increased social and economic well-being of local communities; conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Causeway Coast and Glens for current and future generations; development of outdoor skills and active lifestyles.

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Our activities are designed to enhance and protect the environment and contribute to well-being. Any potential harms are outweighed by the benefits and alleviated through respecting the rights of all stakeholders, managing access, reducing wildfires and controlling invasive species.

The beneficiaries of the work of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust are:

- The local population in terms of improved access, heritage events and interpretation and development of outdoor skills and active lifestyles.
- The general public including out of state visitors in terms of the conservation of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as a public asset, improved access to enjoy the area and enhanced appreciation and enjoyment of the area through providing information on the living heritage, flora and fauna.
- Local landowners through the control of unwanted access and the safeguarding of boundaries and livestock through the building and repair of paths, stiles and bridges. Local landowners receive a private benefit through the control of unwanted access and the safeguarding of boundaries and livestock.

There are no private benefits to any other individuals connected with the organisation other than the payment of salaries to staff which is a necessary requirement in order to provide our services and therefore incidental to the carrying out of our purpose.

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Achievements and performance

2023-24 has proven to be a successful year for Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. For the first time its income levels have exceeded £1m leaving the organisation in a sound financial position. With cash, monies owed and assets in the region of £500k this leaves the Trust well within the sustainability parameters set out by the Charity Commission.

CCGHT continues to work closely with its key partners in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Tourism Northern Ireland delivering a wide range of activities and projects that ensure the sound and sustainable management of some of Northern Ireland's most important protected areas, promote sustainable and regenerative tourism and rural diversification.

This year CCGHT's core activities have been primarily funded by NIEA supported by CCGBC and TNI. 2023-24 was the first year of the new 5-year strategic support programme under NIEA's Environment Fund. Due to an increase in funds available from the Carrier Bag Levy, funding levels increased from £175k to £320k per annum. This has allowed CCGHT to engage in more strategic activity and has provided real security for the organisation over the medium term. It has resulted in staff gaining more confidence in the stability of their own posts resulting in significant benefits for the organisation.

NIEA funding has meant that CCGHT has been able to provide greater focus on the development and delivery of management and action plans for the areas 3 AONBs: Antrim Coast and Glens, Binevenagh and Causeway Coast and also the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site. Through the Environment Fund CCGHT has taken on a renewed role in Marine and Coastal protection. This has resulted in the appointment of Geoff Nuttall as the new Marine and Coastal Manager. Key to this role will be delivery of CCGHT's responsibility for a rejuvenated Rathlin Island Environmental Forum.

The 5-year funding package has allowed CCGHT to refocus its operational structure in line with its strategic direction. In addition to marine matters Geoff Nuttall will assume responsibility for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. Nikki Maguire will focus on the Causeway Coast AONB and the WHS as well as taking the lead in Geopark development. Andrew Bratten will retain responsibility for the Binevenagh Landscape Partnership Scheme and AONB.

In 2023-24 it was agreed by all stakeholders that CCGHT would establish a new Dark Hedges Management Forum taking over responsibility from the existing Dark Hedges Preservation Trust. While the new body is in the process of being established, CCGHT has, in good faith, taken on responsibility for maintenance of the Bregagh Road avenue and undertaken vital tree maintenance activity as well as respond to the aftermath of Storm Isha. In total nine trees were removed. While it is understood that the Dark Hedges has a finite life cycle it is expected that with proper management and co-operation the life span can be extended ensuring a continuation of the Dark Hedges experience and the use of the site as an important tourist destination. In 2024-25 it is expected that a strategic masterplan will be developed for the site which will include a tree management plan for the avenue itself.

CCGHT's biggest ever single project has been acting as the lead partner in the Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme. The scheme funded by Heritage Lottery, the Woodland Trust, National Trust, CCGBC and others entered the third of its 5 years of delivery in 2023. Following a slow start due to COVID, activities have picked up pace particularly in the areas of natural heritage and cultural heritage where the primary focus has been defence heritage. During the year The Moors at Castlerock and the Tails and Trails projects in the village have been completed. Significant progress has been made regarding the repurposing of the Limavady WWII Trainer Dome and the Magilligan Anti-Aircraft Battery.

On the downside circumstances have resulted in changes to a number of Outdoor Recreation projects. Unfortunately, following agreement with all private landowners, we have been unable to complete the development of the Myroe Trail, due to a change in interpretation in policy by officials in DAERA.

The outstanding success of the LPS has been the development of the Magilligan Tree Nursery. CCGHT, in partnership with HMP Magilligan, has developed a tree nursery in the grounds of the prison. As part of their rehabilitation process prisoners have been learning horticultural techniques assisting in the growing and bringing on of a wide range of native tree species. CCGHT is grateful to DAERA and the Dormont Accounts Fund administered by Charities Lottery for support in this project.

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The impending work at Dark Hedges and the existing work in Magilligan have resulted in CCGHT beginning the process of establishing a trading company. It is hoped that the two locations will soon become self-sustaining allowing for surpluses to be used to support the on-going work of the Trust.

A significant amount of the day-to-day activity of CCGHT staff has involved working in partnership with others in the development of new and refreshed projects. The Trust has been central to the development of several partnership applications into the Peace+ funding stream which will hopefully come to fruition in 2024-25. Additionally, the Trust has been instrumental in the rejuvenation of the Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network which is being refocussed under the new umbrella of Landscapes NI.

A small pot of funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Arts & Older People Programme allowed CCGHT to work with the more mature members of our area through the Culturally Creative Communities project. Additionally, the Trust has been an active partner in the Northern Ireland Environment Link led Heritage for Health project. Both programmes focussed on making our heritage more accessible to more members of our community.

CCGHT continues to adopt an active role in the field of sustainable and regenerative tourism. Without funding from any major source, the Trust continues to oversee, manage, co-ordinate and promote the Economussee network which currently has eleven members throughout its area of operation. Plans to host an International Conference in the area this year were delayed until 2024-25. The Trust has been actively engaged in developing the concept of community tourism.

2023-24 has been a year of change regarding the people involved with CCGHT. The Trust's Chair, Graham Seymour, and Deputy Chair, Roy Craig, both stood down and were replaced by existing Board members Julie Taylor and George McAuley respectively. The appointments of Professor Joan Condell and Dr Paul Jose were confirmed following their participation in the work of the Trust as Observers. The Trust has also been grateful for the service of Max Bryant, the National Trust's representative, who stood down on his appointment as the new Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Environment Link.

Following the 2023 Council elections 5 Councillor Board members stood down. Sandra Hunter and Margaret-Ann McKillop had served two full terms as representatives of CCGBC. Sharon McKillop of CCGBC and Tommy Nichol and Maureen Morrow of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council also stood down. M&EABC had decided not to provide financial support to the Trust for 2023-24 and chose not to appoint new Directors. This decision disappointed greatly the Board of CCGHT who decided that where previously and where possible discretionary spend had been prioritised in both councils this should now be limited to the CCGBC area. The Board was very clear that in the event of funding being reintroduced this policy would be reviewed and that activities funded by other partners (particularly relating to the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB and Causeway Coastal Route) would continue. CCGHT is very grateful for the work and commitment of those who stood down during the year and is particularly pleased to see former Board members continuing to participate in other Trust activities. The Trust has welcomed the appointments of Councillors Bill Kennedy and Richard Stewart onto the Board and Oliver McMullan's appointment for an additional term.

2023-24 has seen staff leaving and joining the Trust as well as some important absences. Aisling Gribbin has seen her post as Tree Nursery Officer confirmed and is now supported by Erin Boyle as tree Nursery Assistant. Rachael Marshall resigned from her position in the Causeway Team and was replaced by Grace McAllister. As a result of Grace moving from the Binevenagh Team her responsibilities have been taken on by Barbara Lynch. This year also saw two additions to the CCGHT family; Nikki Maguire and Laura McAuley both took well deserved maternity leave after we were joined by Emily and Shane.

Financial review

The Charity regularly reviews its policy on risk. The main risks to the Charity are associated with being adequately funded to continue with its main objectives. The Charity is heavily dependent on grants from DAERA each year, with DAERA being the biggest individual funder with a grant of £288,102.

The net deficit for the year to 31 March 2024 was £209,652 (2023: net surplus of £21,592).

The organisation has assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and is satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

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Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee. Causeway Coast and Glens is governed by a memorandum and articles of association. the company is recognised as a charity by HMRC (Charity Number: 106064).

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mrs Julie Ann Taylor	
Mr George McAuley	
Prof Joan Condell	(Appointed 19 September 2023)
Mr Roy Craig	
Cllr Bill Kennedy	(Appointed 30 June 2023)
Dr Paul Jose	(Appointed 27 June 2023)
Mr Andrew McAlister	
Prof Patrick McKeever	
Cllr Oliver McMullan	
Mr Graham Seymour	
Ald Richard Stewart	(Appointed 30 June 2023)
Mr Robert Wilson	
Cllr John Wisener	(Appointed 4 June 2024)
Ms Margaret Anne McKillop	(Resigned 30 June 2023)
Mr Max Bryant	(Resigned 27 June 2023)
Ms Sandra Hunter	(Resigned 30 June 2023)
Ms Sharon McKillop	(Resigned 27 June 2023)
Ms Mary Morrow	(Resigned 30 June 2023)
Mr Thomas Nicholl	(Resigned 27 June 2023)

None of the Trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All of the Trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

CCGHT is a public/private/ voluntary sector partnership set up in 2002 and managed by a Board of 13 Trustees who are familiar with and have knowledge and regard to the Charity Commission NI's Public Benefit requirements. Representation on the Board includes the local councils, voluntary sector bodies, tourism, government, farming and community organisations. With a small core staff and time bound project staff the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust is led by the Chief Executive Officer in the small North Antrim village of Armoy.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) has no statutory powers and as such seeks to influence and work in partnership with a range of statutory and other bodies to achieve its aims, purposes and objectives. In addition to influencing strategic direction, CCGHT secures and distributes funding to assist in the implementation and delivery of its own objectives. It supports the development of strategies and the delivery of programmes and plans, which aim to ensure the long-term benefit of the area and to balance this with current economic development in a sustainable manner.

CCGHT has responsibility for a large area of Northern Ireland covering two council areas – Causeway Coast & Glens and Mid & East Antrim Borough Councils. It includes three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - Binevenagh, Causeway Coast (including the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site) and Antrim Coast and Glens (including Rathlin Island). It also includes several Ramsar sites, which all have international importance for their bird life alongside many Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Areas of Special Scientific Interest.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that IDS Chartered Accountants LLP be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

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Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the Trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Graham Thompson (Secretary)

Dated: 24 September 2024