



SEACHT



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM

74-76 Sráid na nGall, Ard Mhacha, BT61 7LG

Chair of Trustees Annual Report to AGM – December 2023

Réamhrá / Introduction

Like so many other small charities and organisations within our sector, times are challenging for our own cultural arts and community development company. Many organisations are under immense pressure trying to control costs and generate income to simply survive. This is especially difficult for social enterprise organisations like SEACHT that do not receive core funding for staff and running costs. The seemingly interminable ‘cost of living’ crisis (cost of inequality crisis?) challenges the social economy on two fronts – (i) difficulty in generating sales and services revenue due to restrictions on demand, and (ii) growing pressures from within communities to increase services to meet additional needs.

This two-way pressure on the social economy is not aided by the existential crisis in the structures of government which prohibit remedial actions and strategic planning to rescue smaller charities and address the wider challenges facing our society and local community.

Sin ráite, we are currently in a reasonably good place and there have been many significant and positive developments for our organisation in the last year. We remain debt free and solvent! While we haven’t yet been able to rebuild a financial reserves fund, we estimate that we’ll be on target by financial year end 2024/25 to show a modest reserve fund. We’ve attracted new volunteers to develop our arts and events output and new enterprise models are currently being examined for their potential to grow revenue in the coming year.

Issues of Note in 2023

Events Licence

Printing & Personalising Expansion

Consultancy Services

Caifé Mhacha

Areas For Improvement and Development

Heritage & Tourism Services

Subscription & Management

Events and Conferences

Donations

Social Media and Website Development

In the coming period, the Directors of the social enterprise will also be focusing our attention on financial sustainability, membership subscription, online learning platform, sponsorship, donations, monetising services, conference & meetings, heritage tours and development of the media suite.

The SEACHT business model continues to focus primarily on income generation from our core activities – printing, personalisation, gift shop and consultancy services, project grant income and sponsorship / fundraising.

We require strong trading from the café and gift shop and printing to ensure the company's survival and to deliver the benefits as set out in our original business case.

Manager's Report

A brief description of some of the research, meetings, training and work carried out over the last few months would include:

- I met with Connell McBride who had the original idea for the project to discuss in detail with him what he envisaged the project would look like.
- Meeting with CWC to discuss the elements required for the online platform. Name has been decided and the domain has been bought. Many of the names discussed had their domain bought and were unable to be used. If the name changes, we can look again at getting the domain but for now, there is one secured.
- In terms of partnerships for the project, I've met with Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta who had a very positive reaction to the project and were more than happy to support it with courses being made available and a trip to the Gaeltacht to be organised. As well as this, we very recently engaged in talks with Ulster University to discuss the possibility of hosting their diploma on the premises as well as them also showing support for the development of the online platform.
- With help from CWC, I've set up an online PayPal system to allow for donations from either a QR code or by going online to donate through the website. The QR code is also

visible on all the tables in the café through the small card as well as the new 'Give Irish a Go' cards which I designed and were printed thanks to Instant Prints.

- I've met with various organisations to establish links again that may have been lost due to lockdown, COVID etc. I'm in talks with Raidió Fáilte to provide radio training courses for young people in the area and to see the possibility of having a satellite station in Ard Mhacha.

Next Steps

In 2023/24, we hope to see the project really coming together and taking flight. We are working on a plan to deal with all elements of what is involved with the project as well as carrying out market research to ensure the needs and expectations of our stakeholders are met.

I hope to work closely with the universities we have connected with recently to gather a better idea of the courses they'd like to provide us with and to arrange dates for the university to visit Aonach Mhacha to speak with the public about trips, diplomas etc.

I will also be focusing on different campaigns to generate income for SEACHT and a greater focus will be placed on our social enterprise projects.

We will be in further talks with Raidió Fáilte as well as other organisations to establish links around the the north of Ireland and beyond.

Poiblíocht agus Margaíocht

Enormous strides in this area. New professional approach to marketing/sales initiated. Game-changer! Puts us on a par with other Cultúrlanna and arts providers.

Also Péig.ie now publicising all our events

Nuachtlitir Ráithiúil & ease of online purchase for tickets and events – a great leap forward.

Dúshláin Mhóra Amach Romhainn

SEACHT venture in Aonach Mhacha - not sustainable long term without a variety of community activities each week in the Cultúrlann – currently engine of the ground floor and the public facing aspect of Aonach Mhacha.

Café Mhacha - SEACHT is no longer willing to continue investing on a loss-making business. Implications of potential loss of tenant to the Cultúrlan in 2024 to finances, community development, event catering and community feel of ground floor. Community library, soft play area and vending machines on ground floor?

Conclusion

Our social enterprise, despite all the external challenges, continues to grow as we collectively strive to restore and strengthen our community services and commercial activities and give expression to all the rich heritage and culture on our doorstep here in Armagh. SEACHT cannot do this without proper resourcing and thankfully some significant progress has been made in this regard since last year's AGM.

SEACHT is grateful to our committed volunteers, customers, funders and to the local community for their continued support and assistance.

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