



## **Lislea Men's Shed AGM – Chair report 2024.**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024.**

Once again it is great to record the positive progress the group has made. Now a full year since our new shed has been finished providing an excellent base for a wide variety of activities. These include the following;

- Working with the local youth clubs before Christmas providing a workshop for children to produce and finish wooden Santa's. This was conducted over 3 evenings during November '23.
- In the Springtime providing interactive gardening classes with local children, designed to improve their understanding of nature.
- Organising garden workshops within our Polytunnel for Ladies Gardening groups.
- Supported by Southern Regional College, (SRC) in terms of Gardening classes for our members in Springtime.
- Lislea Men's Shed providing plants for the area around the local community Centre.
- Several of our group provide a "Good morning" telephone service each Monday morning to isolated older people in the community. Currently this is provided from a hub outside the shed, we hope soon to bring this into the shed.

The purpose of the men's Shed is to provide activities and company to support the health and wellbeing of members. During and after the Covid epidemic opportunities were limited for trips away, however in past year we endeavoured to change that and did so with some notable trips.

With the help of Derry tourism we had a very successful visit to the city. This included a guided tour of the walls as well as a visit to the Guildhall. One of our members became Lord Mayor for a few minutes, taking his place in the Lord Mayors chair and appropriately wearing the robes of office.

We also visited the Folk Park at Cultra (Co Down). During that trip several of our group remembered many of the long forgotten tools, methods of farming, building etc. Since the trip many have denied being of that vintage, however the stories were all very believable on the day! On both trips we arranged to have lunch at well know hostelryes, many stories (and possibly lies) were relayed, all helping to make the visits memorable. We also joined with a number of Gardening groups to visit "Bloom", the annual garden show in the Phoenix Park, Dublin. Many ideas have been taken back for discussion and possible development with our gardening group. It is fair to say that there was also some research into the many varieties of Irish whiskies on offer at Bloom!

In the early part of 2023, several of our members visited Sheds in Donegal and Leitrim. Feedback from that trip brought home the comradeship and sense of common purpose that exists between “shedders”.

Reciprocating that visit, Lislea Men’s Shed hosted a visit by shedders from Donegal. This included a tour of our shed, its facilities and activities. Following that lunch was organised at our Local Community Centre. At the lunch we organised a local storyteller, Pat Mc Geeney to entertain the visitors. Such was the success of that, we were asked if Pat would speak at the wider gathering the next morning. At a local hotel a range of exhibitors were in attendance to allow sheds to gain knowledge of a range of activities that may be appropriate for Men’s sheds.

The visits and workshops, which included many local Men’s sheds were organised and sponsored by County Down Rural Community Network. The support of the Rural Community Group has most helpful in their guidance towards possible funding opportunities.

In terms of funding, it is worth pointing out that in Northern Ireland, there is no government support for Men’s Shed, unlike Sheds in the Irish Republic where significant financial support is available to sheds to cover costs of heating and lighting. For our funding we have traditionally organised a plant sale and coffee morning combined in the local community centre. This year we added a raffle with a number of hotel nights which were supported by local hotels. Additional small grants have been successful to support some of our activities. To further help with costs we have secured a grant for Solar Panels which are scheduled to be installed at some time this Autumn.

In order to allow professional bodies to provide presentations to our group we have managed to install internet, this has been used for such training as “Safeguarding Adults”.

Sadly in October 2023 we lost one of our members, Leo Conlon. Our men’s shed provided a guard of Honour at his funeral service. May he rest in peace.

During the year we have added two new members, Gerard Darcy and Felix Mallon. Both are welcome to an already diverse group. Our shed membership is made up of a men bringing a wide range of skills to the group. Interests include, walking, Gardening, Metalwork, carpentry, community work , finance etc.

This has been good for the group helping to widen perspective, promoting respect and value to all. As of the time of this submission, we are looking forward to a range of activities and building for the future good of the Shed.

**Martin Darling.**