

Newry Felons Association

Community Garden  
Doran's Hill  
Barcroft Park  
Newry, County Down  
BT35 8EJ

W J Johnston & Company

Certified Public Accountants  
190 Duncairn gardens  
Belfast BT15 2GN

Newry Felons Association

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# Newry Felons Association



## Cumann na Meirleach An Lúir

**Annual Trustees Report to NI Charity Commission for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

Newry Felons / Cumann na Meirleach An Lúir was established in the Newry, County Down area as a support group for ex-prisoners from the Newry and Mourne area.

After the Good Friday Agreement and the release of political prisoners, there was an obvious need for an organisation/group to help assist these men and women to re-integrate into the community in a meaningful way and to help them re-adjust to their new lives.

They found themselves unable to gain meaningful employment, some were unable to return to their families and there was a feeling of disconnect after long periods away from society. This resulted in some, a deterioration in their mental health and the danger of them falling into poverty and the consequences of that.

We started out with the intention of improving the lives of these ex-prisoners in any way we could and our service has developed according to their needs whilst still meeting the Public Benefit requirements and our aims and purposes.

## Public Benefit

Our organisation meets the public benefit requirement by having the following purposes:

- **To relieve poverty among ex-prisoners and their families (our principle beneficiary target group) by providing free welfare rights advice and assistance in Newry and surrounding areas.**

The direct benefits flowing from relief of poverty include:

- a) Potential income increase by providing accurate current information on benefits and entitlements to ensure that all available benefits have been received.
- b) To give assistance to access those benefits.
- c) Improvement of living standards and quality of life
- d) Reduced stress and worry and improved outlook

This is on-going and assistance is provided as and when required through advisors.

- **Advance education through the provision of free training and educational courses and development programmes for ex-prisoners and their families.**

The direct benefits flowing from providing free training and educational courses and development programmes include:

- a) Enhanced education and understanding to enhance employment capacity
- b) Increased skills and knowledge base
- c) Improved and/or enhanced employability and economic prospects through the advancement of career and employment opportunities
- d) Reduced stress and worry and improved outlook
- e) Increased levels of employment

We have run programmes on gardening and workshops on mental health and well-being. These are always well-attended and although many of our clients are now of retirement age, some are doing part-time jobs, not through necessity but because they choose to, to maintain their mental health and well-being.

- **Improve quality of health of the republican ex-prisoner community and their families by providing or assist in providing counselling and emotional support services and the provision of free programmes, events and activities.**

The direct benefits flowing from the provision of programmes, events and activities are:

- a) Improved mental health and emotional well-being
- b) Reduced anxieties and a reduced sense of social isolation and disconnection
- c) Increased awareness of health issues and healthy living
- d) Enhanced confidence, self-esteem and improved outlook
- e) Enhanced personal development
- f) Increased skills and knowledge

Having regard to the Commission's Public Benefit requirement, Newry Felons have developed over the years and their provision of services and activities have developed also. We were gifted a large piece of community ground at Barcroft which is now a vibrant Men's Shed. Our targeted group was originally ex-prisoners and by extension their families. The community garden which is open daily is run mainly by ex-prisoners and their families but has also attracted retired men who find companionship and comradeship in the garden.



We have everything from growing vegetables to hens and chickens running around. It is a little piece of the countryside in the city and has become very popular with visitors to the nearby Community Centre dropping by.

We have also developed a workshop where we make things from wood, including benches and tables and houses for wheelie bins.

Lately we made 'Donation Boxes for Caring Coins' which will be left in local shops by the Caring Coins group to collect donations or vouchers for those less fortunate.

We have made mud kitchens for schools which have proved very popular for younger children and wooden painted barrels for adults.



We have made great connections with schools in the local area who visit our garden as 'school visits'. This year we grew pumpkins and a local school brought a class to the garden to pick pumpkins which were then carved in the nearby Community Centre.

In the Spring time we do up hanging baskets and make little wishing wells which are in great demand. That keeps the men busy during that season but they are made with love and care.

The trips we provide to the ex-prisoners and their families alleviate the mundane routine of normal life. We have had a few this year and usually with an educational element to them. For example, we took 30 participants to the play "The Man Who Swallowed a Dictionary" in the Lyric Theatre (story of David Ervine, Loyalist and PUP Leader). Many of those present had been incarcerated at the time and remember only too well the efforts of David Ervine and others during the peace negotiations. Although it has been 25 years since the GFA, healing and coming to terms with the past is still a challenge for some and healing is still taking place.

## Accounts

Our Receipts and Payments account showed a deficit this year of £ 9,091 compared with a surplus last year of £ 2,028.

We received substantial donation in the 2020 year from Stephen's Green Trust (£ 17,594) but because of Covid we were unable to spend it at the time and as we have prepared an Receipts and Payments account, the spending of these funds will appear as a deficit although cannot be classed as an 'overspend'. There will be and is no adverse effect on the Charity delivering on its objectives.

We have no debts or creditors.

Our four trustees have been the same and have served throughout the year. They are:

1. Frank Johnston (Chair)
2. Kevin Henry
3. Eamon Murphy
4. Lewis Watson

This Report was compiled and approved on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



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Frank Johnston (Chair)

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Eamon Murphy

## **Independent Examiner's report to the charity trustees of Newry Felons Association**

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, which are set out on pages 9-10

### **Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner**

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **Basis of Independent Examiner's report**

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

### **Independent Examiner's Statement**

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters 1-4 listed above and, in connection with following the directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention

*W J Johnston & Co*

W J Johnston & Company  
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Belfast BT15 2GG  
25<sup>th</sup> November 2023



# Newry Felons Association

## Income & Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

2022

### Receipts

Garden Income	4,330	6,357
Newry & Mourne	600	0
Donations	0	386
SSGT ( <i>St Stephen's Green Trust</i> )	0	12,694
Dev Health	0	3,440
Rural Network	0	300
Confed.	0	700
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	4,930	23,877

### Payments

Garden Materials	6,670	5,066
Garden Insurance	746	746
Garden Container Block	0	1,200
Repairs & Renewals (tools)	468	1,130
Repairs & Renewals (other)	0	610
Printing & Stationary	0	159
Sponsorship & Donations	100	790
Events & Classes	3,528	7,211
Travel	1,749	1,170
Light & Heat	579	2,314
Telephone & Internet	0	168
Wreaths etc	0	225
Sundries	100	960
Bank Charges	81	100
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	14,021	21,849
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<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)for Year</b>	<b>(9,091)</b>	<b>2,028</b>
	=====	=====

# Newry Felons Association

## Balance Sheet as 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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		<u><b>2022</b></u>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Ulster Bank	12,629	21,720
Cash in Hand	20	20
	-----	-----
	12,649	21,740
	=====	=====
Represented By:		
<b>Accumulated Fund</b>		
Opening Balance at 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2020	21,740	19,712
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	(9 091)	2,028
	-----	-----
	12,649	21,740
	=====	=====