

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 31st March 2024

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, 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.

We have 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'. Having proved popular last year, we grew pumpkins and local schools brought classes to the garden to pick pumpkins which were then carved in the nearby Community Centre.



In the Spring time we do 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 40 participants to the play “The Murder of Michael Collins” in Tí Chulainn Cultural Centre (story giving an alternative narrative around the assassination of a leading figure in early Irish politics).

Accounts

Our Receipts and Payments account showed a deficit this year of £ 353 compared with a deficit last year of £ 9,091.

We received substantial donation in the 2024 year from Stephen’s Green Trust (£ 17,594). 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 18th December 2024.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:



Frank Johnston (Chair)

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 31st March 2024, 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

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18th December 2024

Newry Felons Association

Income & Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31st March 2024

2023

Receipts

Garden Income	2,010	4,330
Newry & Mourne	0	600
Donations	100	0
SSGT (<i>St Stephen's Green Trust</i>)	12,694	0
DFD	480	0
SHSCT	345	0
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	15,629	4,930

Payments

Garden Materials	6,474	6,670
Garden Insurance	521	746
Repairs & Renewals (tools)	1,000	468
Repairs & Renewals (other)	145	0
Equipment & Equip Hire	1,207	0
Sponsorship & Donations	100	100
Events & Classes	4,278	3,528
Travel	2,093	1,749
Light & Heat	0	579
Sundries	100	100
Bank Charges	81	
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	15,982	14,021
	-----	-----
Net Surplus/(Deficit)for Year	(353)	(9,091)
	=====	=====

Newry Felons Association

Balance Sheet as 31st March 2024

		<u>2023</u>
Current Assets		
Ulster Bank	10,110	12,629
Cash in Hand	2,186	20
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	12,296	12,649
	=====	=====
Represented By:		
Accumulated Fund		
Opening Balance at 1 st April 2023	12,649	21,740
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	(353)	(9 091)
	-----	-----
	12,296	12,649
	=====	=====