



# Exploding Dice

Charity Number 108201

## Trustees Report for Year ending 28th February 2023

Stephen Surgenor (Chairperson)

Peter Pratt (Treasurer)

Sharon Surgenor (Secretary)

Connie Munnis

Robert Wright

## **Introduction**

The trustees of Exploding Dice are pleased to present this report, along with independently verified accounts, to meet our annual monitoring requirements. This document aims to provide information on our activities and achievements as they relate to our purpose and the public benefits attained.

## **Purpose and Benefit Statement**

As a charitable organisation Exploding Dice aims to provide quality facilities for the learning and playing of tabletop games for the benefit of residents of Bangor, North Down and surrounding areas with the object of positively impacting mental health and improving conditions of life.

The direct public benefits which flow from this purpose include improved mental wellbeing, reduced levels of stress/anxiety and a reduction of social isolation through a sense of community.

Exploding Dice has no employees. Management and direction of the organisation is facilitated by a committee of volunteer trustees who have a duty to follow the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that all of our activities and decisions help to achieve the charity's purpose and provide a benefit to our beneficiaries.

Day to day operation of the organisation is further facilitated by a small but dedicated group of volunteers overseen by the trustees.

## **Beneficiaries**

The intended beneficiaries of our organisation are members of the public who enjoy, or are curious about, tabletop games but:

- Don't have the space, equipment or experience necessary
- Don't know any other people to play with

We meet our purpose firstly by providing a permanent facility, with a high standard of equipment, for people to use. Secondly we help them to arrange games and organise events in the club space where patrons can socialise and enjoy refreshments with other people with a shared interest.

Our beneficiaries come from a wide range of backgrounds and we are an inclusive organisation. However our core demographic tends to be male and between 20 to 50 years of age.



## **Objectives and Activities**

Emerging from several years of Covid restrictions the committee recognised that it would be more important than ever for people to leave their homes and socialise to tackle the issues of isolation and anxiety. To facilitate this we ran open club nights several times a week and organised events across multiple weekends per month.

To play tabletop games you need opponents and/or teammates. Reaching out to people you don't know to arrange these games is something many are reluctant to do due to anxiety, shyness and nervousness. It was determined that there were two key actions we could take to address this:

- Increase both the frequency and variety of "organised play" events
- Provide a means for people to meet and communicate with others

Tournaments and campaign days run on weekends have always proven to be popular. For these events participants don't need to reach out to strangers by themselves to organise anything. By signing up to an event you are guaranteed a set number of games where the club will provide opponents for you and you get to meet new people.

Running more organised events, including during our midweek club nights, became our primary focus for the year. These would give more opportunity for mixing within our membership and help to foster new connections and friendships. This year, across multiple game systems, we organised:

- 3 long term gaming leagues
- 22 tournaments
- 11 free demonstration days
- 10 casual/new player evenings

In addition to this we created a Discord server to supplement our existing social media platforms. This gave people a place to keep in touch with those they would meet at events. On the server they could chat about the gaming hobby and arrange further games amongst themselves.

## **Performance and Achievements**

As a result of our programme of activities through the year we have observed a marked rise in attendance of club nights, more socialising between members and an increased sense of community within the club.

As of the end of February 2023 we have grown to approximately 50 people who attend midweek club nights regularly (3+ times per month). The majority of those are from the Ards



and North Down area but a significant number travel from the Greater Belfast area or further afield. In addition there are a further 20 or 30 people who have regularly travelled from all across Northern Ireland to participate in our weekend events across the year.

At the start of the year our midweek club nights took place on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. However, with the success of our various organised play projects, attendance had grown high enough that all of our gaming tables were often fully booked. This meant that by the end of May we needed to expand our opening hours to include a third club night on Tuesdays to accommodate the growing numbers.

Throughout the year we asked for and received feedback from people on what they think of the services we provide and what effect it has on their lives. Below are examples from just some of the many positive comments we received:

*"Exploding Dice has been a lifeline for my mental health before covid and since. Suffering from a chronic pain condition it is easy to get wrapped up in the pain and lose touch with the outside world but this club and the people involved have been a godsend."*

Kevin Harrington

*"During Covid lockdown, I, like many, became a bit of a hermit, and was happy to just sit at home watching TV or playing video games. When Exploding Dice offered a free beginner's night to learn how to play Middle Earth (MESBG), I decided to give it a try, and as it was free of charge, and I thought if I learned it play it I might actually put effort every now and again to play it. Fast forward less than a year, and I am regularly out playing MESBG, usually at ED, with some new friends I met through that beginner's evening. I am also part of a very active social media group made up of local players, where we all chat every day. I can guarantee that had I not gone to that event in ED, I would still be sat at home every night doing nothing socially, which long term would have been detrimental to my mental wellbeing for sure."*

Chris Baird

*"The Club utilises its excellent facilities to promote a wholesome and supportive atmosphere. The excellent community spirit that Exploding Dice fosters has really benefited my mental health, and I don't believe I'm alone in that sentiment. It provides a place where I can feel I fit in, am surrounded by good and caring people, and can expand my social circles by meeting people face to face at the club who share similar gaming and hobby tastes."*

Michael Bradford



Exploding Dice NIC:108201

## Lease of Premises

The lease agreement for our premises at 69A High Street, Bangor was set to expire at the end of July 2023. The landlord required a notice period of 6 months which placed a deadline of end of January 2023 for a decision on whether to renew or seek an alternative location.

The High Street building, while suitable in the early days of the organisation, came to present several issues which made us hesitant to renew:

- Thermal insulation was very poor and the building got very cold and damp.
- Heating was provided by Economy 7 storage heaters that were both expensive to run yet ineffective at heating the space properly.
- There were recurring leaks in the flat roof of the property.
- The layout of the unit was awkward and restricted the usable space which stunted our potential to grow.
- The stairway into the unit was unsuitable for the installation of a wheelchair lift and improving accessibility is a long term goal for the committee.

Taking all of that into account the committee decided it would be in the best interests of the organisation and to the benefit of our users if we found a better location. After a short search a suitable unit was found in Dunlop Industrial Units on Balloo Drive, Bangor.

This unit is almost double the size of the High Street unit with gas central heating, insulated roof and double glazed windows with the option to add LED lighting throughout the building. In addition there is plentiful car parking and a wide staircase and large bathrooms which could be easily adapted for wheelchair accessibility when funds become available.

While the rent and service charges represented a 30% increase on those of the High Street unit the committee agreed that there would be significant savings on energy bills that would offset that and was within budget. Some minor building work would be required to create a partition wall and install lighting but it was judged that this would fall within our means.

A contract was negotiated for Unit 17-18 Dunlop Industrial Units and the decision was taken to sign a lease for 3 years starting on 1st March 2023. A 5 month rent free period was included that would let us complete our lease on High Street, undertake any necessary work and transition operations of the organisation to the new location. A deposit of £2400 was paid to secure the lease.

The required notice was given to the High Street landlord at the end of January 2023 and the committee looks forward to the improved environment and facilities we can provide in our new space moving into next year.



## **Fundraising**

Our total gross income for the financial year was £21,018

As an organisation our primary source of income continues to be via club memberships, table booking fees and tickets for events. Affordability and access to our services is important to us and is reflected in our pricing policy. Our event tickets continue to be 30% to 40% less expensive than those for similar events in other parts of the country. On club nights concession rates are available for those in full time education and on benefits. In addition the monthly membership option provides a substantial saving of almost 50% for those who attend the club every week.

In evaluating public benefit the trustees note that our services should be open to all and that poverty should not be a barrier to benefiting from our purpose. In accordance with this we offer further concessions and free memberships to those in unfortunate circumstances. In addition we have a collection of books, games, and gaming equipment available for use free of charge.

A further source of fundraising has become available to us this year through the Halifax Foundation (<https://www.halifaxfoundationni.org>). Their Matched Giving Scheme encourages Halifax/Lloyds employees to get involved in the voluntary sector and to help fundraise through personal participation in events and giving their time freely to support the work of charities. They will match every pound an employee fundraises or donate £8 per hour of voluntary time given (to a maximum of £500 for fundraising events and /or £500 for voluntary time given)

In this financial year we received a total of £2220 from the Halifax Foundation thanks to the time and efforts of committee member Mr Robby Wright and volunteer Mr Michael Brough.

## **Expenditure**

Our total gross expenditure for the financial year was £14,372

The largest source of expenditure for the organisation continues to be property rental plus the associated charges and utilities. During the year the High Street property was reassessed by Land and Property Services to take into consideration our charity status. During the assessment period we were required to pay rates instalments but those payments were reimbursed once the assessment was completed.

Other regular expenditure comes in the form of:

- Purchasing trophies and prizes for our tournament events
- Purchasing cleaning supplies



- Purchasing office/IT supplies
- Purchasing supplies for our tuck shop
- Maintenance of club equipment

There was relatively little expenditure this year on adding to the equipment and assets of the club as we focussed on building up funds for moving to a new premises. The few purchases made were:

- A new vacuum cleaner £280
- 4 new tables of warhammer terrain to facilitate the running of tournaments £364.80
- New stronger storage boxes for terrain £266

No payments were made to any volunteer or trustee except for reimbursement of out of pocket expenses incurred in the process of carrying out club business or purchasing supplies for the club.

## **Risk of Harm**

All committee members and volunteers are instructed on health and safety policies and procedures. Locations of fire extinguishers and exits are clearly marked and a roll of attendance is kept to track who is in the building in case of evacuation. Any damaged furniture or equipment is either replaced or repaired promptly so as to avoid accidents or injury,

By following the above the committee judges that there is no risk of harm directly flowing from the activities we undertake in meeting our purpose.

## **Private Benefits**

The club has good working relationships with several local suppliers. They provide us with discounts and sponsorship by way of donated event prize support. In doing so there is often cross promotion via social media.

As such there may be small private benefit to those businesses however it is purely incidental to the purposes of our work and we believe any relationships with them are ultimately to the benefit of our members.



## Summary

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees gave careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

These benefits are evidenced through engagement with our beneficiaries, positive feedback from evaluation forms, comments posted on our social media and high demand for club services.

Financial accounts have been independently verified by:

*PMB Chartered Accountants  
7 The Square  
Comber  
Newtownards  
BT23 5DX*

This report was approved by all the trustees during a meeting on 19th December 2023 and signed on their behalf.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Pratt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Pratt  
Treasurer

