



# Exploding Dice

Charity Number 108201

## Trustees Report for Year ending 29th February 2024

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. This is for the benefit of residents of Bangor, North Down and surrounding areas. Our objective is to positively impact mental health and improve 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 our 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.

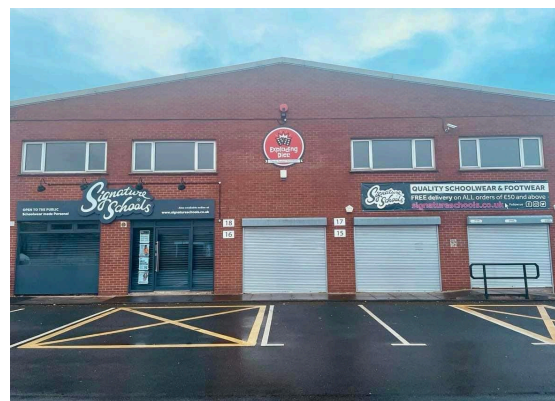


## Relocation

As the year began we found ourselves in a period of upheaval as we relocated from High Street in Bangor to a newly leased unit in Balloo Industrial Estate. We received keys for the new premises in the first week of March and immediately began the building, decorating and cleaning work required to prepare the space for our needs. All of the work was undertaken by volunteers within our membership, who very generously donated their time and expertise to keep costs down.

While that endeavour was underway the club continued to operate in High Street so as not to leave a gap in our services. Once Balloo was ready we enlisted an army of volunteers to move all of our furniture and equipment across town and into the new building.

The new location opened for the first time on 25th April 2023. In addition to a more spacious gaming area the larger unit meant we could add a large dedicated club room for socialisation, a private room for meetings and a small kitchen area.



## **Objectives and Activities**

The main aim for the committee this year was to consolidate on our previous years work and ensure the club is in a stable financial position after the commitment of our new lease and the expense of moving. As such there were no plans for significant expansion of our terrain or game collections and we wanted to increase our cash on hand so we would be able to cover any unexpected expenses or interruption of our activities.

We recognised the growth in club attendance that flowed from the previous year's successful programme of "organised play". By running and hosting regular formal events we created more opportunities for attendees to make new connections and widen their circle of friends. This in turn increased the number of casual games being played on open club nights.

An objective was set to maintain the momentum in this area. As such our week to week activities would focus on attempts to increase the frequency and variety of leagues and events on offer.

While the club now has the extra space and improved facilities needed to host a larger volume of events, we recognised that the biggest limiting resource was the free time our organisers had to volunteer.

A secondary objective therefore became identifying more experienced members that would have the skills and knowledge to run events, encourage them to become volunteers and offer them the support and information they would need.

## **Performance and Achievements**

This year, across multiple game systems, we organised:

- 5 Gaming leagues
- 45 Tournaments and campaign event days
- 6 demonstration days
- 14 casual/new player evenings

Weekend events continue to be well attended and as a result of this programme of activities there was another marked rise in attendance of mid week club nights this year. As of the end of year we now have approximately 70 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.

A large part of this success has been down to club members stepping into volunteer roles as "system champions". In this capacity they helped to promote and administer our leagues and events therefore allowing us to expand our organised play programme.



The new building has been a great success and well received by everyone attending. There is more space around the gaming tables and lighting is improved. Both insulation and ventilation are better so conditions are considerably more comfortable in both summer and winter. Having the new club room area has led to members staying in the club longer after games finish to chat and relax. We also have more people just dropping in to hang out and there is an increasing sense of community within the club.

Consideration has been given to extending opening times to include an extra evening every week. While there has been interest expressed in this by members it would obviously come with increased strain on volunteer hours. The decision has therefore been taken to maintain our current schedule and we will reassess at a later date.

## Testimonials

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 some examples:



*"We are incredibly lucky to have Exploding Dice in our community. It has become a regular safe haven and hangout for so many in the local hobby scene. The team makes an effort every year to improve the facilities and as such continues to have an incredible impact on people like myself who want a safe and friendly environment."*

Connor Glover

*"My enjoyment of the hobby has been accelerated tenfold thanks to the guys that run the club. They provide a great venue and outstanding support to new and old players alike. Relaxing and meeting new friends is what this hobby is all about and thanks to Exploding Dice we have that opportunity every week "*

Stefan Colhoun



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*"I had heard good things about the club and organisers, and seen the website but nothing prepared me for how great it was. I flew over from England to take part in an AOS event and was made to feel welcome in the group straight away. The facilities are some of the best I've seen and wish I had a club like this where I lived. This is a real community asset and long may it continue."*

Peter Brizio

*"I've been going to Exploding Dice at least once a month this year and it's been nothing short of a great place to be. As someone who has struggled with social anxiety the community of people there have been good to have in my life"*

Stevie McCrystal

*"Exploding Dice has been my go to place to meet my friends and play games. I travel down from Larne and I've never regretted the trip. It offers an amazing place to escape from everyday stresses for just a few hours and have some fun gaming."*

Gareth Moore

*"As a veteran with PTSD, the club has been the perfect place to socialise with friends and like minded hobbyists, to relax and take my mind off everyday problems."*

Richard Eddon



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## **Fundraising**

Our total gross income for the financial year was £32,599

The primary source of income continues to be via club memberships, table booking fees and tickets for events. A significant increase in attendance this year has meant that we have been able to shoulder the expense of relocating the club and still increase the amount of cash we have on hand. We now have enough funds in reserve to cover 4 to 5 months of our fixed overheads should any unforeseen circumstances stop us from opening.

Affordability and access to our services is important to us and is reflected in our pricing policy. We did not increase our prices this year and 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.

The Halifax Foundation (<https://www.halifaxfoundationni.org>) Matched Giving Scheme continues to be an additional source of funding for us. They provide grants based on staff members who volunteer their time to charitable organisations. In this financial year we received a total of £2035 from them 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 £24,488

The largest source of expenditure for the organisation continues to be property rental plus the associated service charges. These have risen from last year having moved to the new larger unit. Insurance costs for the new premises are higher but marginally so. The costs for heating and lighting are however significantly reduced. Better insulation, gas central heating instead of Economy 7 and LED lighting have all had a positive impact.

The Balloo premises was reassessed by Land and Property Services to take into consideration our charity status. However there was a 3 month crossover period in which we saw out the end of our old lease while operating in the new building. For this period we were required to pay rates on the old space for a total of £1471.



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

Some of the larger purchases for the club included new furniture and building supplies needed to make the most of our new larger space. Sofas and a pool table were acquired for the new club room, new tables for board gaming and new chairs for the gaming room.

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 events, 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 9th December 2024 and signed on their behalf.



Peter Pratt  
Treasurer

