

### **Chairperson's Report Jan - Dec 2023.**

I would like to personally welcome you all to this year's AGM.

2023 was a busy year for us. In March, some of our members completed their Social Enterprise OCN Level 2 with Supporting Communities. As part of this, we visited Millburn, a social enterprise based in a Housing Executive area in Coleraine and got to view their Men's Shed, café and community facilities. This gave us great inspiration of what can be achieved by a small group of people wanting to make a big difference in their area.

We had the grand opening of Hillside Men's Shed in May where we were joined by men from other Sheds as well as local councillors and representatives from community organisations. It was great to welcome so many people to view our new premises and thank them for their support.

We have continued to work with Newry Street Unite to provide events for the whole community. We were successful in securing funding from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Community Cinema and Summer Party which was well attended across the two days. At Halloween, we put on a firework display which was enjoyed by the local community after the Boo Bash disco. The Shed was then magically transformed into the North Pole Post Office and Santa's Grotto at Christmas time as part of our Santa Sunday family event. We look forward to working with NSU to put on these events again in 2024.

In September, some of our committee took part in County Down Rural Community Network's Cross Border Project which involved visits to Sheds and local attractions in Donegal and Leitrim. In return, we then welcomed the men we visited to South Down and joined them for a celebration event in the Carrickdale Hotel. We have also organised trips to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museums, Hollywood Men's Shed, Bangor and Crumlin Road Gaol.

We have been able to secure funding to provide workshops for the public to attend such as woodturning, mobile phone photography and health and safety tools training. These have been well attended and enjoyed by many, it was great to welcome new faces to the Shed.

Our “Let’s Grow” project funded by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has allowed us to purchase a polycarbonate greenhouse to be used for community growing. We also purchased kids gardening sets for use by the After School Clubs as well as planting lots of vegetables for them to enjoy.

Alongside Newry Street Unite, in October we joined with the Confederation of Community Groups in Newry to create a hub for Good Morning Calls. The hub is situated in the Men’s Shed office which is used to both make calls to those experiencing loneliness and isolation as well as being a training hub for new volunteers.

As we look forward to the year ahead, we hope to continue to meet our aim of promoting better health and wellbeing amongst men and be a safe place for them to meet and connect with others.

Thank you for your support of Hillside Men’s Shed and we look forward to seeing what the next year brings.