

West Armagh Consortium Annual Trustees Report

11th January 2024

CHARITABLE PURPOSE OF THE CONSORTIUM

The Consortium is established to promote and develop a new spirit of co-operation between community and voluntary groups in west of Armagh city in order that they may work collectively, jointly or separately to guarantee the dignity, equality and religion, language, disability, sexuality, political affiliation or age in order to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of life of the residents of the city of Armagh, in particular the west of the city.

CONSORTIUM DETAILS.

The West Armagh Consortium is a community-based umbrella group incorporating six community groups in Armagh that aims to provide advice and assistance on range of social, economic and cultural issues. Through the provision of education, cultural and sporting initiatives we aim to enhance local community groups thereby enhancing the community as a whole to address the social and economic marginalisation that is prevalent to the community in West Armagh. The community in which we are based is located in Armagh city west. The area suffers from a variety of social problems common to many disadvantaged areas throughout Ireland. Few job opportunities, poor educational attainment, ill health and high levels of economic inactivity are exacerbated by dereliction of the local environment and resignation and apathy among many. We have established a forum with which to address some of these problems. The services provided by our group are available to the whole community including members of the migrant communities who now form part of the social fabric of life in Armagh. Our focus on education and training is a response to local community-based groups who have identified this as a shortcoming in the future development of the community. In providing this service WAC employ the skills of people and organisations within the local community. By providing work and training opportunities WAC hopes to widen that base

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The benefits flowing from the purpose of the West Armagh Consortium (WAC) are as follows 1. Provision of affordable venue for community-based groups in and around Armagh which enables them to continue to operate efficiently. Fostering of better relations between community and statutory bodies that provide the relevant services 2. Fostering of

better relations between community groups and statutory bodies that provide the relevant services.

3. Promotion of the community to live free from the externalised fear of crime, oppression, intimidation and discrimination by providing community-based initiatives empowering local communities to better address these issues. This is specifically demonstrated within our member groups increased willingness to address such issues through intervention programmes. 4. The improvement of peoples' health through education and advice on improvements on lifestyle. 5. An increase in community harmony. A breaking down of stereotypical misconceptions that can lead to division within the community. 6. The provision of education, training and learning opportunities and resources in the heart of the community enabling the community to avail of this service within

their own locale either via the community houses or the consortiums' premises. 7. The increased provision of advice to community groups in West Armagh. This is evidenced through an increased co-operation between community groups and services providers. 8. The provision of our premises to community-based groups for recreational and leisure opportunities benefiting community-based groups with an accessible and affordable venue and further promoting healthy lifestyles. 9. Creation of e employment opportunities through social economy projects. 10. Provision of a range of anti-social programmes aimed at both young people and adults in Armagh. Another benefit is the increase in capacity building of community groups whose volunteers will deliver such programmes. 11. An increase in the awareness of the diversity of cultures that make up the community in West Armagh and the city as a whole creating a better understanding of the diversity within the community. These benefits are demonstrated through feedback from our service users, member community groups and community houses. Further evidence is available through increased employment through community social enterprises that employ persons, albeit on a part-time basis. The beneficiaries of our purposes are the Community groups themselves and the communities they represent. It's the whole community in Armagh not just West Armagh where WAC is based but in particular vulnerable sections of the community more susceptible to lifestyle issues. A private benefit to WAC may arise from income from rent and rental revenue but this is necessary to provide the service to our beneficiaries. A private benefit to trustee/volunteer may arise from such training through which transferrable skills may be learned but this is offset by providing this service to the beneficiaries (the community). Any inability to provide these services would adversely affect the community's ability to avail of our stated purposes. In turn it would restrict its access to advice and hamper the promotion of understanding and harmony within the community as a whole. There is no harm flowing from the purposes

Our last AGM was held on 11th January 2024

Catherine Rafferty from NRPB facilitated the election of the new committee. The election was as follows. The following people were elected to the following positions.

Chairperson- Fiona Kelly was proposed by Sinead McCartney and seconded by Nora Quigley. There were no other nominees and Fiona accepted the post.

Secretary – Sinead McCartney was proposed by Valentina Stefanova and seconded by Orlagh Dougan. David Wilson was proposed by Stephen McCleary and seconded by Blaine McCartney. A vote was taken, and Sinead McCartney was elected by a majority of 8 to 4.

Treasurer- Pauline Quigley agreed to take up this role again. She was proposed by Nora Quigley and seconded by Sean Cullen.

Assistant treasurer. Sean Cullen was proposed by Stephen Fields and seconded by Fiona Kelly.

With the election completed the meeting was handed over to the re-elected chairperson Fiona Kelly.

TRUSTEES

Trustees made up of representatives from six member groups. There are no changes to previous list of trustees.

Mr Sean McGerrigan

Mrs Sinead McCartney

Mr Stephen McCleary

Ms Pauline Quigley

Ms Caroline Rolston

Mrs Nora Quigley

Our Contact details

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Community Development and Support Programme.

- We are almost one year into our three-year funded programme with the Big Lottery. Our first six months of the programme was slow in delivery, but we are progressing well on our agreed targets.
- The programme encourages partnerships in delivery, and we have established a number of new partnerships with other groups.
- We continue to deliver CDSP in line with our agreed action plan with the funder.

Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board.

- We continue to play a full part on the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board.
- The manner in which projects are delivered in the Growing Communities Programme has caused some confusion. There appears to be differing methods of project delivery. We hope to resolve this at the next Action Planning meeting.

Social Prescribing Programme.

- Efforts to reintroduce the project has thus far failed from the time we were reluctantly forced to close the programme when the funding ran out. However, an application currently with Peace IV Plus might well help, assuming that it is successful.
- We are still involved with this larger funding application through our HLCA membership which if successful will include funding a Social Prescribing Programme.

Counselling Service.

- We continued to deliver our free one-to-one counselling service in partnership with the Southern Regional College.
- However, Emma, our trainer counsellor has given notice that she will be stepping down. Efforts are ongoing to find a replacement.
- The SRC can provide more final year students as given the nature of the project we do have an active turnaround in placements. However, we need the trainer counsellor to oversee and the student counsellors.

An Post Fánach.

- There is not much change here. Although operated on a social enterprise model it nonetheless requires additional funding. We regularly apply for small pots of funding as the opportunity arises. Other expenditure not met by this is covered by our other social enterprise project, hall rental income.
- Despite its difficulties it is clear that the project is well received and supported, particularly among senior citizens. This was our main target group and remains so.
- We will have to address the need for a more sustainable source of funding.

Menssheds

- The project is currently funded by a Big Lottery on a five-year programme, valued at £213,000.

- It is now a standalone project to which we only provide admin. This is a service that Armagh Menssheds pay us to deliver, and we employ a part-time worker to deliver as opposed to additional work by our own admin.

West Armagh Community Festival

- We play very little role in the event now. Basically, our contribution has been financial support. The event itself has been greatly reduced and the committee will look at the level of financial support that will be given this year.

Finance

- Annual audit of accounts for 2023-24 has been carried out as per our constitutional obligations support the project financially and have done since the committee was reformed.
- As of 31st March 2024, WAC had £77,681.40p in its account.
- As of 31st March 2023 An Post Fánach had £6,249.29p in its account
- A full breakdown is available to all trustees and has been provided already.

In conclusion

- At the end of the financial year 2023-24 our finances were in a healthier state than the previous audit. However, it should be noted that this is primarily due to our successful application with the Big Lottery Community Fund. That money is ring-fenced for the programme delivery and not at the disposal of the consortium outside the programme delivery.
- That second application was successful and will stop the need for accrued funds being used to deliver this programme.

Looking Forward/Challenges

- Delivery of our action plan as contained primarily in the CDSP will continue. The CDSP is based on our previously agreed action plan.
- Several groups have expressed an interest in joining our group and this will be assessed in the coming months.
- Restarting the Social Prescribing Project, assuming that the funding application currently being sought by Healthy Living Centre Alliance is successful. We are paid up members of the Alliance and best placed to deliver the project locally.
- Counselling service. This remains a challenge
- Premises. As agreed, we upgraded our function hall. Unlike previous upgrades the cost of this was met by WAC alone. We are still awaiting proposed changes to our lease agreement. Council has not provided any updates since our meeting with them in early 2023.

