

ST PATRICK VISITOR CENTRE LIMITED

Report of the Trustees FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

The main objective of the company is to provide a focal point for tourists, pilgrims and the local community to learn more about the story of Patrick and his continuing relevance in modern Ireland and around the World. The Centre aims to regenerate the local tourist economy after many years of the 'troubles' in Mid Down and bring communities together - particularly children through our Cross Community Education Programme. This Programme is developing links not just between schools from different faiths and traditions in Northern Ireland but also building bridges across the border, which is one of the main objectives.

The strategies employed to assist the company to meet those objectives include the following:-

- monitoring of service and standards of customer contact to ensure that standards are kept;
- the Centre tailors service to the appropriate target audience; local history groups and interested parties, for example being met by the Director or Heritage Officer or another knowledgeable person;
- detailed planning on how to handle all manner of questions and emergencies which may arise;
- opening and closing times should always be what has been advertised and reflect standard tourism times;
- implementation of a customer care ethos.

Public benefit

The Trustees are confident that the charitable aims of St Patrick Visitor Centre Limited satisfy the principles of public benefit as defined in the Charities Act. They have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives and in planning its future activities.

The Saint Patrick Centre enhances public understanding of and access to Irish history by providing the only permanent exhibition in the World about Saint Patrick in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland. This has a direct benefit to the people of Mid Down and a wider benefit to the people of County Down. The Centre was one of five 'Signature Projects' for Northern Ireland selected by the government to bring increased prosperity and tourism revenue to future generations here. As a result the Saint Patrick Centre primarily claims charitable status under the Charities Act as an organisation by providing public benefit through the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science. The Saint Patrick Centre has a cross community schools programme promoting a greater understanding of Saint Patrick for children and provides a shared community space. It advances community development and reconciliation through its ethos of promoting Saint Patrick as a figure who can be understood and celebrated by all of the peoples of Northern Ireland as a result of its work with community groups and schools. What better role model to do this in modern Northern Ireland than someone from Britain who became the Patron Saint of Ireland? This has a direct benefit to the community groups and schools who participate, an indirect benefit within their communities as well as a wider benefit throughout Northern Ireland. As a result, the Saint Patrick Centre also claims Charitable Status by providing public benefit through the advancement of education, as well as having the wider benefit of the advancement of citizenship or community development.

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ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Charitable activities

The Centre is a private charitable organisation which typically attracts increasing numbers of local and international visitors every year. This year has been very different but we have still supported as far as was possible our Cross Community Education Programme and hosted cross community art exhibitions in its Art Gallery, hosts the Churches Together Organisation, Downpatrick Citizens Advice, U3A workshops and many other charitable activities. The Centre has also developed a new guiding walking trail called Saint Patrick's Way - the Camino of Ireland in association with Tourism NI and provides guided walking experiences which supports local transport operators, local cafés and hotels. During the Christmas season the Centre provides a Giving Tree and collects presents for disadvantaged children through social services.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Principal funding sources

Beyond trading activities, which accounts for the majority of income, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council provide a grant of £131,000 and the other funding income comes from The Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Ancient Order of Hibernians in America and the Heritage Recovery Fund.

Investment policy and objectives

Aside from retaining a prudent amount in reserves each year most of the charity's funds are to be spent in the short term so there are few funds for long term investment. All funding is Grants received in advance are to be invested in replenishing the exhibition.

Reserves policy

The Management Committee has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. A policy has been established whereby unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible assets held by the charity should be 6 months of the annual budgeted expenditure.

Budgeted unrestricted expenditure for the 24/25 is approximately £696,000 and therefore the target is £350,000 of general unrestricted funds. The reserves are required to meet the working capital requirements of the charity.

The actual reserves at 31 March 2024 amount to £106,513 which is below the target figure of £350,000. In calculating unrestricted reserves the trustees have excluded funds already spent on tangible fixed assets of £3,969,076

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FUTURE PLANS

The company plans continuing most of the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years and to develop the following strategic objectives of the future:-

1. To deliver a successful, efficient and effective commercial operation within the constraints of budget annually provided by Newry Mourne and Down Council and other funding agencies.
3. To maximise visitor numbers to the Centre through effective product marketing.
4. To work in cooperation with those whose primary responsibility is to do so promote the facility to the Domestic, ROI and GB markets.
5. To develop international interest within the US and European markets in cooperation with those whose primary responsibility is to do this.
6. To develop international Educational and Special Interest Markets.
7. To develop key partnerships within the public and private sectors so that there is a cohesive marketing approach for the St Patrick Visitor Centre.
8. To develop new experiences including Saint Patrick's Camino as an activity-based guided walk.
9. To develop cafe facilities of excellence which provides income by attracting a local audience and can accommodate coach and Fly Drive business as well as conference business.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document, a deed of trust, and constitutes a limited company, limited by guarantee, as defined by the Companies Act 2006.

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Saint Patrick Visitor Centre was set up in July 1996 as a company limited by guarantee to:

- benefit the people of Downpatrick and the District of Down without distinction of sex, race, political, religious or other opinion of a Visitor Centre with exhibits and collections, drama and displays in relation to the history of St. Patrick and the area of benefit.

- provide for the advancement of public education in Downpatrick and the District of Down without distinction of sex, race, political, religious or other opinion of a Visitor Centre with exhibits and collections."

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

Saint Patrick Centre is governed by a Memorandum of Association. During 2022, 7 Trustees served on the Board of Saint Patrick Centre. New Members are elected at the Annual General Meeting.

The Board provides a range of expertise and skills, including project management, accountancy and planning. The Board have a close working relationship with the Director and in this respect the Board has a good understanding of the project and is able to exercise appropriate levels of control.

The Board meets monthly apart from during summer months. The minutes for each meeting are recorded and circulated prior to the next meeting for agreement. In terms of membership and organisational processes, the Board represents a wide spectrum of the local community and operate in such a way as to provide monitoring and support for the Director.

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STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Organisational structure

The company have a Board of Directors who meet monthly and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the company.

All staff report to the Director who in turn is accountable to the Saint Patrick Centre Board. Given the scale of operation, these reporting lines are entirely appropriate.

The Director has appropriate delegation rights from the Board, while control is monitored through monthly reports to the Board including reports on operational and financial status of the project.

Induction and training of new trustees

Induction and training of new Trustees

On-going training is provided in-house by either the Director, the Administrative Manager or where necessary from external providers. In particular:

- A substantial induction pack has been prepared for New Trustees. Staff induction packs includes exhibition content.
- Duty Managers include Director, Shop Manager, Front of House Manager and Finance and Administration Manager

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Company number

NI031122 (Northern Ireland)

Registered Charity number

HMRC XR13983

Registered office

53a Market Street
Downpatrick
Co. Down
BT30 6LZ

Trustees

M Crichton Newspaper Editor
E McGrady Chartered Accountant
Ms E O'Neill Solicitor
Dr J Harper
V Mac Nabb
B A King
Fr J McManus

Company Secretary

T Campbell

Auditors

M.B.Mc Grady & Co
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditors
Rathmore House
52 St Patricks Avenue
Downpatrick
Co. Down
BT30 6DS

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STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of St Patrick Visitor Centre Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

AUDITORS

The auditors, M.B.Mc Grady & Co, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 19 November 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



Ms E O'Neill - Trustee