

The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note note,note01 to the accounts and comply with the Charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated on 7 March 1995, the Companies Act 2006 and "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)" (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2016)

### **Objectives, activities and public benefit test**

The charity's objects and principal activities are to offer a suite of accredited and non-accredited training and development initiatives in a response to a need to legitimise the social economy sector and set standards of professionalism with the aim of developing individual and organisational entrepreneurial capacity.

### **The School's main objectives and activities for the year were to promote the following purposes for the public benefit:**

- greater knowledge of the nature, role and potential of the social economy to decision-makers and influencers in the public and private sectors
- the advancement of education, training and skills of actual and potential employees in the social economy and of persons seeking to work in support of the sector
- such other exclusively charitable purpose according to the law of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as the Trustees may from time to time decide.

### **School policies and procedures:**

The School uses funds donated by the Flax Trust (and other sponsors/donors) to:

- provide discretionary (according to ability to pay) scholarships to meet the cost of personal and organisational development programmes designed to meet the needs of participating individuals
- organise and deliver Masterclasses, roadshows, information sessions and other means of communicating with its target market
- provide such other learning activities as are deemed relevant to improved performance of the social economy

### **Eligibility to apply for a Flax Trust scholarship:**

To be eligible to apply for an award students must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a registered student of the School or organisation delivering the programme of learning;
- Have met all the assessment and financial responsibilities related to the course;
- Be at least 18 years old by the application closing date;
- Be an EU citizen and/or hold legal residency status;
- Obtain a written endorsement for proposed activity from course tutor; and
- Sign an agreement with the School related to scholarship activities.

### **Public benefit:**

The School Board believes that it has made the advancement of students' education and development possible by offering and part-funding the Advanced Diploma in Social Enterprise (ADSE) delivered on its behalf by Ulster University Business School and awarding bursaries to students based on the criteria listed above as well as current and/or future job role and previous experience. The objective is to advance the education, training and skills of participating students and the sustainability of their employing organisations through the Advanced Diploma on Social Enterprise.

The School in recent years has delivered a series of Master Classes aimed at improving the understanding and knowledge of social economy organisations and the effectiveness of persons working in, for or associated with the sector. These Masterclasses bring examples of best practice in the sector to decision-makers and influencers in the public and private sectors as well as to the social economy/third sector itself. Although temporarily suspended during covid the masterclass approach was reintroduced with an event entitled ON-PURPOSE

The ON-PURPOSE Masterclass event was designed to Inspire and Showcase social enterprise as a means of creating and growing social business to make an impact in their communities or in their area of business. The four key themes were around homelessness and social housing (**Alice Thompson**), children's services (**Pamela Hughes**), e-commerce (**Rónán Ó Dálaigh**) and sourcing loan finance to grow (**Phelim Sharvin**). The event was attended by over 100 participants from social businesses, community organisations, support services and representative bodies. The venue itself was chosen to highlight the potential of repurposing old buildings for social impact. Templemore Baths was a Victorian public swimming pool built in 1883 used by the local community and now recently refurbished to be run by the GLL (Better)organisation which in itself is a social enterprise.

The TRANSFORM participants and alumni were invited to take as well as provided with the opportunity to join in with on-line seminars and conferences being run by the Management & Leadership Network.

### **Achievements and performance**

The School has been the vehicle for recruiting participants for a flagship programme of learning for the past 18 years normally operating as The Advanced Diploma in Social Enterprise (ADSE). In 2018 this programme underwent an extensive review and remodelling which rebranded to become The TRANSFORM Social Business and Community Development Programme.

Emerging from the Covid period, in the autumn of 2021, a recruitment campaign was launched to select a further 18 participants to commence the 2022 TRANSFORM programme which commenced in January 2022. Due to specific individual circumstances 16 students participated on the Advanced Diploma through six modular workshops being delivered in a hybrid version (both in person and on-line) of the programme which ran on into the 2022 2023 period.

Due to a number of factors in the social economy sector such as Brexit and funding uncertainty, the impact of covid, a level of uncertainty around employment and a drive to create stability it was deemed necessary to re-evaluate the market need for the ADSE in its current form. In addition there was a significant increase in University fees in the region of 100% with limited opportunity to increase the bursaries available. This resulted in a period of re-evaluation for the TRANSFORM programme. The original purpose was considered to be robust and therefore retained i.e. TRANSFORM is a highly focused and interactive programme designed to enable individuals to gain

the knowledge and skills required to start or build social enterprise activities as a means of social regeneration, community development and financial sustainability.

The TRANSFORM programme is specifically designed for Individuals engaged in one or more of the following activities:

Community development and regeneration e.g. Housing Associations

Social entrepreneurs

Members engaged in existing Social Enterprises

Board members of Social Enterprises engaged in economic development through Social Enterprise

Charitable organisations looking to develop Social Enterprise activities

Individuals who are self-employed or unemployed, who wish to pursue social enterprise activities are also considered.

As a result of the revaluation the design team have identified a number of innovations. The most significant being the fusion of 'environmental' considerations with social enterprise. The other amendments will be the introduction of a professional development programme to run alongside the academic inputs.

The programme content and approach continues to be designed to provide knowledge and practical applications that will enable participants to develop and grow through a blend of; Theory, Best Practice, Case Studies, Site Visits and presentations from Exemplars & Practitioners. By the end of the programme participants will have the knowledge to start or grow a sustainable social enterprise which can lead to real transformation within their community and beyond.

The TRANSFORM programme continues to be delivered by the Ulster University on behalf of SSEI and remains fully accredited through the achievement of the Advanced Certificate in Social Enterprise to commence in 2024.

### **Financial review**

Turnover for the year to March 2023 was £NIL. There was a net negative movement in funds of £631 and reserves at the year end were £547, all unrestricted. (Note: Fees/bursaries were paid directly to Ulster University and not via SSEI).

### **Investment policy**

The Trustees have the power to invest in such assets as they see fit.

### **Reserves policy and going concern**

The Trust's current policy is not to embark on activities/initiatives without the working capital in its current bank account to meet the value of awards and any costs incurred for the year. The Trust remains in the process of developing a plan to increase income and extend its bursary and awards to students. Reserves are adequate and the School does not have any employees, working instead through third parties and volunteers.

The Trustees have reviewed the financial statements and have reviewed future projections and are confident that the charity has sufficient funds to be signed off as a going concern.

## **Risk management**

The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Trust. The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information; administrative procedures; and a system of delegation and accountability and is designed to provide reasonable assurance that:

- the School is operating efficiently and effectively;
- its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition;
- proper records are maintained and financial information used within the company or for publication is reliable;
- the School complies with relevant laws and regulations; and
- the School's systems of financial control are designed to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance against material mis-statement or loss.

The major risks to which the School is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, have been reviewed and systems have been established to mitigate those risks.

## **Plans for future periods**

The Trust's objectives are noted above under Objectives, activities and public benefit and may be summarised as:

'To advance the understanding knowledge, training and skills of persons in or related to the social economy sector with a view to enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of the sector'

The School will achieve this mainly by providing funding and assisting in the provision of facilities, educators, trainers, speakers, role models and other expertise as well as bursaries.

Its strategic targets are:

- to raise the profile of the School locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- to expand the School's range of activities and reach thereof through, inter alia, fundraising activity;
- to use the School to add value and enhance the quality of management and collaboration in and by social enterprises.
- to assist the attainment of the above targets by working closely with past students to facilitate the formation of an alumni association if they feel it will add value to their activities, ambitions and organisations.

It will therefore work to:

- increase its public profile and public awareness and will actively market its activities;
- seek the support of past students and staff and business community to attract donations to increase its funds;
- maintain its support to students in 2018/19;
- work closely with other organisations involved in supporting the sector to avoid overlap or wasteful competition.

## **Structure, governance and management**

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association incorporated on 7 March 1995.

Trustees are currently members of the Trust. Current Trustees were appointed by The Flax Trust and Ulster University (Ulster Business School) – the School in its present form having been created as a strategic alliance between both organisations. All trustees are guarantors of the Trust with a maximum liability of £1. The trustees of the company who were in office during the year and up to the date of signing the financial statements are set out below:

Rev. Myles Kavanagh

Mr Robert McNeill

Professor Kenneth O'Neill

Mr John Patterson

Sr Mary Turley

Mr Jonathan McAlpin

The Trustees manage all business decisions and meet on a regular basis. The School was registered as a charity by The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 23 January 2015

The School ensures that appropriate induction and training is given to all Trustees. The Trust ensures Trustees are aware of their responsibilities on Corporate Governance. Trustees have attended governance training.

#### **Statement of Trustees' responsibilities**

The Trustees, who are also the directors of The School for Social Enterprises in Ireland Ltd for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report 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 Charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and enable them to ensure that the

financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

**Small companies' exemption**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions relating to small companies within Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

**Independent Examiner**

The Independent Examiner, Moore (N.I.) LLP, have indicated their willingness to continue in office, and a resolution concerning their reappointment will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

*Ken O'Neill .*

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Professor Kenneth O'Neill

Trustee

Dated: .....2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2024.....