

EastSide Greenways

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	EastSide Greenways
Charity registration number	NIC 100544
Company registration number	NI615294
Principal office and registered office	Avalon House 278/280 Newtownards Road Belfast Co. Antrim BT4 1HE
The trustees	M Gibson A McMurray (Resigned 15 May 2023) E White R Hunter A Hassard J E Hennessey L Osborne C Purdy
Company secretary	T Wilson
Auditor	Finegan Gibson Ltd Chartered accountants & statutory auditor Causeway Tower 9 James Street South Belfast BT2 8DN
Bankers	AIB 11-15 Donegall Square North Belfast BT1 5GB
Solicitors	Hewitt and Gilpin 8 High Street Holywood Co. Down BT18 9AZ

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Structure, governance and management

Governing Document

EastSide Greenways is a company limited by guarantee and is a charity recognised by the Charity Commission for NI. It is a not for profit organisation.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

Appointment of trustees

The Chairperson and the trustees recommend new trustees as needed. New trustees are recruited on the relevance of their skills, and their potential to be able to make a helpful contribution to the governance of the charity. As part of this process they are made aware of a trustee's legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the decision-making processes, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity.

Once the potential new trustee has agreed to be considered for appointment they can be co-opted by the directors until formal voting by members occurs at the next Annual General Meeting.

Trustee induction and training

A trustee induction process is in place for all group companies.

Organisation structure and how charity makes decisions

EastSide Greenways is governed by the board of directors. The company is managed on a day to day basis by a senior management team as appointed by the board of directors.

The board of directors meets quarterly, and is appointed by the members at the AGM.

A senior management team manages the day to day activities of the company, and reports on company performance to all board meetings.

Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The directors consider the board of directors, who are the charity's trustees, and the senior management team comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis. All directors give of their time freely and no director received remuneration in the year. Details of directors' expenses and related party transactions are disclosed in note 13 and note 20 to the accounts.

The pay of the senior staff is set by reference to NICVA guidance and utilisation of NJC pay scales. In view of the nature of the charity, the directors benchmark against pay levels in other similar size charities run on a voluntary basis when appointing new members of key management.

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Structure, governance and management *(continued)*

Relationships with related parties

None of our trustees receive remuneration or other benefit from their work with the charity.

Risk management

The company aims to mitigate the major risks it faces by implementation of the following procedures:-

- Significant external risks to funding have led to the development of a strategic plan which clearly identifies funding requirements going forward; and
- Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions with a financial implication.

Directors

The directors serving during the year were as follows:-

M Gibson
A Hassard
A McMurray
E White
R Hunter
J E Hennessey
L Osborne
C Purdy

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Objectives and activities

The Vision of EastSide Greenways is to support the development and use of the Connswater Community Greenway (CCG) as,

'An inspirational living landmark that is well used, vibrant, dynamic and sustainable. An attractive destination of outstanding quality for everyone to enjoy.'

The key to achieving this will be the ability for people to live healthier lifestyles in an improved physical environment, and enjoy the benefits of a safer, cleaner, greener area valued by all residents and one that is attractive to visitors.

EastSide Greenways supports the positive use of the CCG as a catalyst for the ongoing regeneration of the area making east Belfast greener, safer, cleaner, whilst connecting people and places and making it attractive to visitors. EastSide Greenways will optimise available resources, opportunities, expertise and influence.

The role of EastSide Greenways is to provide leadership, vision and coordination, and in partnership with Belfast City Council and others to provide funding to deliver Belfast's/ NI's leading greenway. EastSide Greenways is committed to ensuring that Connswater Community Greenway is of a World Class standard and to maximise the opportunities it can bring to the city.

Working with other key partners, EastSide Greenways works to maximize the social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes, improving the quality of life for thousands of local people, ensuring the ongoing animation and sustainability of the CCG.

EastSide Greenways does this by;

- Delivering programmes and projects on the CCG;
- Facilitating and initiating further development of the Greenway;
- Coordinating and connecting various stakeholders and partners on the CCG;
- Encouraging others to develop and provide services on the CCG; and
- Advocating for influence and investment.

In its establishment as a charity, EastSide Greenways recognises the potential to build on the success and lessons learned from the Connswater Community Greenway by defining its object;

'To promote the use and sheer enjoyment of green open spaces, parks, gardens, rivers and off - road transport routes in East Belfast and its environs and the sustainable planning, design, management, maintenance and improvement of them for the benefit of the public.'

It is EastSide Greenway's ambition to build on the success of the Connswater Community Greenway by promoting and facilitating the delivery of a network of greenways across east Belfast, that will integrate in to city and regional networks known as the 'EastSide Greenways' concept plan.

EastSide Greenways works in partnership with Belfast City Council to deliver the CCG underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and a legal agreement which was confirmed in 2020.

The company employed 4 full time members of staff during the course of the year, and managed a team of 6 Greenway Leaders and volunteers.

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Achievements and performance

The CCG is a £40m project which has been constructed in phases. Phase 1 of the project (Orangefield and Victoria Park) was completed in 2014 with Phase 2 completing in April 2017. The project was officially launched in September 2017.

The project is now in a new phase of delivery, making the most of its potential to deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes for long term sustainability.

Public benefit report

The work of EastSide Greenways was delivered under the below workstreams / themes to achieve the Trust's ambition.

Community and stakeholder engagement, promoting community development, community cohesion and volunteering

ESG continue to attend stakeholder and community forums in east in order to engage with the community widely. ESG continue to attend; Youth Practitioners Forum, Community Development Café, Street Work forum, Health Forum and Dementia Friendly East Belfast.

The annual animation programme was delivered to support the positive use of the Connswater Community Greenway and support the strategic aims of the project.

Throughout the year we delivered;

- Schools engagement programme - X1 steering group meetings with local educators
- Schools engagement - hosted X2 school visit/activities to CCG
- We supported a careers day in a local primary school focusing on environmental careers
- Spring activities - Duck race, community race and Easter Fayre
- Delivered X3 Pilates Taster sessions, X3 Baby Boogie sessions and X3 Fitness Freddy sessions on CCG
- Hosted X4 community engagement sessions
- Delivered X6 targeted family activity sessions at Flora St Play Park
- Supported ESL Summer Scheme programme
- Delivered 'Living the Green Way' Fayre
- Supported X1 community event at C.S. Lewis Square
- Supported the July Weekender events
- Supported X3 events as a part of the annual C.S. Lewis Festival
- Delivered the annual Bird Day event
- Delivered Parkfest
- Supported monthly bird watching group

Weekly Walk Wednesday group continued and our Gentle Walk programme for older people and people with mobility issues became weekly rather than twice monthly.

Our Adopt a Spot residents carried out 4 community clean ups on the Greenway and we facilitated 2 business clean up sessions

We have developed a new partnership with RSPBNI and are one of 18 community based organisations across NI included in a Nature Neighbourhoods cohort which feeds into the Peoples Plan for Nature.

We have developed a new partnership with National Trust Belfast to co-develop and deliver s create programme on CCG inspired by Blossom and including community engagement.

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Achievements and performance *(continued)*

Advancing education to create Training and Development opportunities, protect and enhance open and green spaces

7 Greenway Leaders continue to support the project at events and activities as well as carrying out an 'Out and About' role. The 'Out and About' role includes engagement with users, observing and reporting any issues and carrying out a litter pick. Approx. 3 Greenway Leader Out and About sessions take place each week now supported by our volunteers. Monthly volunteer task days on CCG take place.

Monthly Kick Sampling sessions continue take place, led by our Greenway Leaders with data input through the Riverfly Partnership. This allows us to gather data on the quality of the water in the river along the Greenway, 3 public sessions were held which allows people to join in and learn about this work.

We continued to deliver the new Legacy Project, youth development programme working with young people aged 16-25 from East Belfast, not currently in full time education or employment. We have a full time and part time staff member dedicated to this and have recruited X15 young people who have gained accredited and non accredited training, volunteering, personal development and career development support.

Economic regeneration through Tours, Heritage, Trails Development and improving public access to the arts

The annual EastSide Arts Festival took place including in person events. The Greenway was well utilised for outdoor events throughout the festival.

The annual C.S. Lewis Festival took place with activity now focused on C.S. Lewis Square as a venue

The Urban Market takes place seasonally to link in with our own programme so; Easter, September (back to school), Halloween and Christmas.

We supported the Belfast International Arts Festival performance in C.S. Lewis Square

We supported the July Weekender at C.S. Lewis Square and art workshops on the Greenway

Promoting use of the Greenway through marketing and communications, events, information sharing and awareness

We hosted visits and presentations on CCG to a variety of organisations including University of Cranfield, University of Ulster, QUB students and more. We also launched Belfast Healthy Cities Green Map and supported the launch of the UK Tree Equity Score which took place at C.S.Lewis Square. We also spoke to 6 different PDH and Master students using CCG as a case study on dissertations and were asked to speak at multiple webinars including Outdoor Partnership NI on community engagement in developing green spaces, FOSS on community engagement and National Trust on adapting for Climate Change.

We hosted meetings with Julie Harrison when she was permanent secretary for DFI and Naomi Long.

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Achievements and performance *(continued)*

In recent years, issues such as climate change and building healthier, resilient and sustainable communities have come to the fore, further highlighted by strategic plans such as Belfast City Council's Resilience Strategy. An international focus on green recovery to rebuild and regenerate communities is being explored across many sectors. ESG has developed a new report; Climate and Nature Action: A Vision for the CCG which has been the focal point of a QUB led webinar and was also presented at the Belfast City Council Resilience Board. CCG has been cited as a case study in the Belfast Climate Action Plan

EastSide Greenways and the Connswater Community Greenway are being highlighted by many organisations as an exemplar project in relation to improving urban green and blue spaces as well as engagement with local communities around the topic of climate change. ESG is a key partner in the

Groundswell Consortium which is led by QUB in Belfast but also includes universities and partners from Edinburgh and Liverpool. This will lead to the development of new academic research, a model of best practice and the next phase of the PARC study, an impact evaluation study of CCG since opening in 2017.

We have continued to support the use of the Greenway for external events, especially C.S. Lewis Square for example; Belfast International Arts Festival, EBCDA Volunteer Event and LINCS Cultural Event. With a focus going forward on income generation, EastSide Greenways has developed a new Go Greenway Campaign which has clarified messaging around income generation for ESG as an organisation and promotes donations, membership models, event booking, business partners and more.

ESG has developed a new report Access and Inclusion on CCG alongside QUB and organisations working in the area of access and inclusion such as Mae Murray Foundation, Disability Sport NI, Age NI, Brain Injury Matters, Orchardville and more.

Promoting the enhancement and improvement of the Greenway routes, physical activity and health

EastSide Greenways continue to facilitate the city wide Greenway Development Group which includes representation from; Belfast Harbour, Sustrans, DFI, Belfast City Council and West Belfast Partnership Board. The group met X3 times this year.

ESG has been communicated with and included in consultations around various developments in CCG including the Sydenham Greenway, Montgomery Road and Island Street.

The land adjacent to Connswater Community Centre including the car park has been identified for an upgrade as part of the CCG capital underspend which would complement C.S. Lewis Square and the wider Hollywood Arches area. This work has stalled, particularly in light of covid and as capital funding becomes stretched, particularly with some of the key partners, it is important that we receive an update from BCC and EA on their decision for this space going forward.

The weekly parkruns at Orangefield and Victoria Park started again in Summer 2021 and have taken place since then. We have built new relationships with Glentoran Social Partnership and Victoria Park Athletics Club.

We have supported the Residents' Association of Cherryvalley, Kensington and Shandon (RACKS) by presenting at an annual meeting re possible greenway development here and connected them in with Gavin Robinson M.P. around their concerns.

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Financial review

The results for the year are set out in detail on pages 16 & 17. The company returned a deficit for the year of (£112,289) (2023: £77,137 deficit)

At 31 March 2024, the total funds of the charity amounted to £635,725, (2023: £748,014), comprising restricted funds of £19,323 (2023: £21,749), unrestricted funds of £49,528 (2023: £36,586) and endowment fund of £566,874 (2023: £689,679).

The unrestricted funds are essential to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise and fulfill the legal obligations of the charity in the event that current levels of income are not maintained.

In February 2020 an award was made by Belfast City Council of endowment funding for the continuance of the work of EastSide Greenways. The funding was agreed by the National Lottery Communities Fund as the remainder of their original award towards the development of the project, and is to be used by the company in pursuit of its strategic objectives for the long term delivery of the Connswater Community Greenway and the EastSide Greenways plan.

Investment powers and policy

The directors, having regard to the liquidity requirements of the organisation and to the reserves policy, will operate a policy of keeping available funds in an interest-bearing deposit account.

Reserves policy and going concern

A policy has been implemented by the company in order to recognise the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed should equate to between 25% and 50% of annual administration overheads. The aim is to provide sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen costs which may arise, as well as allowing for the payment of any liabilities which would arise should the company cease to operate. The company recognises that in its initial years of operation that such targets may remain aspirational.

Plans for future periods

The charity plans continuing the activities outlined above in forthcoming years subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes 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 charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

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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 applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and 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.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 6 December 2024 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



T Wilson
Charity Secretary