

# Ashes to Gold Charity

## Trustees' Report

The trustees present the annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

### Objectives and activities

#### *Objects and aims*

As if our economy is set at "Repeat", 2023 saw a similar set of financial challenges unfold for many in our community with economic optimism being in very short supply! Challenges in our healthcare system brought about by the funding constraints have left many individuals feeling uneasy and, in some cases, desperate about their health care and support at a very local level. Again, at Ases to Gold, we see both individuals and statutory healthcare and support providers turning to the charity for help. Help for individuals trying to make ends meet on a very low income with some basic everyday needs like electric or food. Or more long-lasting challenges like poor mental well-being or beating the stronghold of isolation. The stat service providers are also facing many challenges trying to meet an obvious increase in demand with an even more obvious reduction in funding for essential primary care services which leaves them seeking help from the third, or charity & voluntary sector. With these factors in mind, the core aim of the Ashes to Gold charity remains to provide purposeful activities to individuals in the Causeway Coast and Glens area who want to increase their confidence, motivation and self-belief while learning new skills. Across all our projects we focus on supporting people who have special or additional needs, mental health issues, are long-term unemployed or are undertaking community service. We support our clients by teaching them new skills, providing support with mental well-being and empowering them with the ability to make sustainable changes in their lives.

At Oasis, we provide support to people who are living with, or recovering from mental health issues, providing immediate support through our drop-in service, where anyone who is feeling isolated or lacking in confidence can come and meet our friendly staff and volunteers for a chat and a cuppa.

We can provide support through our qualified counsellors along with one-to-one support by providing plans to help an individual achieve their personal goals and progress from dependency to safe and sustainable independency.

Our Grow project focuses on inspiring the community to get physically active, engage with the natural surroundings and produce their own food in a sociable and supportive environment. NBT or Nature Based Therapy through gardening and time spent in the great outdoors has been proven to help increase a person's physical, mental and social well-being.

Ashes to Gold's 'Restore' workshop is set up to provide simple woodworking activities that not only inspire and teach its visitors but re-purpose both materials and people. The activities and support provided can help an individual to gain the confidence and skills required to better engage in community and step towards employment.

Fishing and time in the great outdoors has been proven to be useful, if not essential, in bringing improved mental well being and equipping people with the skills to manage challenges in mental health. The aim of Moorbrook Fishery is to introduce the pastime of fishing to a much wider community audience including children and the elderly and those with physical and mental disabilities with a focus being put on the health and well being benefits of the various activities on offer.

## **Ashes to Gold Charity**

### **Trustees' Report (continued)**

#### ***Public benefit***

Ashes to Gold aims to educate, empower and help those who require assistance to integrate back into society, and to support those who find themselves at an economic or social disadvantage by helping them to gain access to local businesses and services for financial, training or well-being assistance.

The charity also aims to provide facilities and tutors to

- assist with the educational needs of those who do not have access to learning in numeracy or literature,
- assist individuals with mental or physical disabilities to experience life enhancing opportunities,
- assist those experiencing long term unemployment or the elderly, who are suffering from financial hardship by giving advice and assistance in areas of debt management and money advice,
- provide support to people with mental health issues through mentoring and group or one to one counselling.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

## Ashes to Gold Charity

### Trustees' Report (continued)

#### **Achievements and performance**

As with the previous year, the charity found itself responding to a significant increase in community and social need - an increase in anxiety, isolation and other mental well-being challenges, as well as economic difficulties that simply cannot be measured. The main indicator for Ashes to Gold was the number of individuals who we would count as "Direct Beneficiaries" of the services delivered through the various projects, which far exceeded our expectations and especially in the area of crisis intervention. Many individuals simply had no option but to call at our projects and ask for help with energy costs, food, health, mental health or housing as they found themselves in crisis in one or more of these areas. Another key indicator was the increase in requests from local statutory health and support agencies for structured programs of health interventions including mental health and addictions support. With these challenges and requests in mind, the charity trustees agreed on a plan for meeting at least some of this need with sustainability at the forefront of the planning. Funding was sought to enable the delivery of some structured mental well-being programs and various training packages were attended to equip project teams in the fields of addictions/historic trauma support delivery, befriending and community development and support for individuals and families coping with a disability.

During the 2023 year, in excess of 500 people, mainly from local constituencies, received help and support through the Ashes to Gold charity and we can be confident that many more "indirect beneficiaries" felt the impact of this support through an emergency need that was met or an improved and more stable environment at home and/or in the workplace. This growth in service delivery was handled comfortably on the ground by the Ashes to Gold project managers with the support of the board of trustees, but all had to invest energy, time and wisdom in restructuring services and resources to cope with the increase in demand.

As with previous years, Ashes to Gold's Project Managers used existing resources well and performed brilliantly in recruiting more trusted volunteers to assist in the increased facilitation of services. Essential infrastructure such as toilet and welfare facilities were upgraded across several of the charity sites to safely accommodate the sustained increase in demand for counselling provision, horticultural and woodworking therapy sessions, healthy eating & eating on a budget cooking courses, fishing & outdoor activity sessions and other essential services.

The charity also experienced success in securing funding that would lead to developments on the projects which would prove essential in ensuring accessibility for people of all abilities and mobilities. Major upgrade works to the Restore workshop were completed, creating a much more user friendly and accessible space for woodworking and other indoor activities to take place and enabling these activities to extend into the winter months with improved heat retention. An outdoor classroom was constructed close to the disabled angling platform at the Moorbrook project along with a new booking/reception cabin to enhance the visitor experience. And, through the UTV People's Project and the belief the Northern Ireland community has in Ashes to Gold, funding was awarded that saw a brand new kitchen facility created at our Grow Project. Since its completion in late summer, this amazing facility, which was ultimately funded by the National Lottery, by the end of 2023 had helped over 100 people experience a cooking or healthy eating session with many individuals being inspired by how simple and economical it is to prepare a healthy and nutritious meal with locally grown produce or produce grown in their own gardens, despite many of the participants facing horticultural and physical challenges.

Again, Ashes to Gold was playing its part and many lives were being impacted as a result.

## **Ashes to Gold Charity**

### **Trustees' Report (continued)**

#### **Structure, governance and management**

##### ***Organisational structure***

The governance and management structure of the charity has remained largely unchanged through the 2023 year. The board met regularly through the year and steered the organisation as it carried out the various project activities. Mrs Valerie Finch resigned from the board in March 2024 prior to the writing of this report and therefore is not named on the above list of trustees.

## Ashes to Gold Charity

### Trustees' Report (continued)

#### Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with the United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

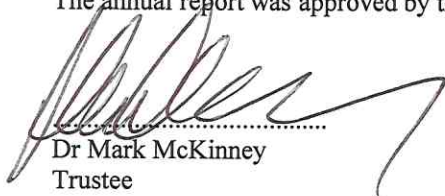
The law applicable to charities requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

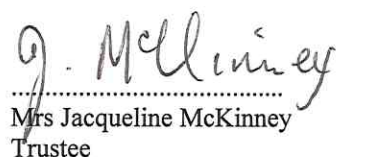
- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed 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 business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper 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 Charities Act 2011, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008, and the provisions of the constitution. The trustees 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.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 18 September 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

  
.....  
Dr Mark McKinney  
Trustee

  
.....  
Mrs Jacqueline McKinney  
Trustee