

Royal Society of Ulster Architects

known as RSUA

Trustees' Report

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present the annual report together with the financial statements and auditors' report of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Objectives and activities

Objects and aims

The principal objectives of the Society are as follows:

Good design matters because it brings social, economic and environmental benefits. Well designed houses and neighbourhoods make our lives healthier, happier and safer and our communities stronger; students learn better and achieve more in inspiring educational buildings, recovery times improve in hospitals designed to meet the needs of patients and staff; and businesses profit from greener, well considered premises.

Public benefit

The public benefit may be demonstrated by the increasing number of awards and positive publicity given to the design of buildings and the built environment in Northern Ireland.

These are not just awards for design in terms of aesthetics but are also for construction excellence and functionality. Such awards recognise sustainability, accessibility, the services the building gives to the public and the effect the building has on the regeneration of a street or area.

Articles on buildings in national as well as the local architectural and construction press also demonstrates the benefit to the public.

The beneficiaries are the users of buildings which would encompass all members of the public.

RSUA's objectives and public benefit statement are accepted by The Charity Commission. The main strategies employed to achieve public benefit by the Society can be broadly categorised during the year as follows:

- * RSUA Design Awards
- * Publication of the Society's magazines.
- * RIBA Bookshop at the RSUA
- * Client Advisory Service, including design competitions/competitive interviews
- * Practice Services Scheme
- * CPD Seminars and courses
- * Liaison with government bodies particularly in relation to public sector procurement and planning

These broad categorisations of activities are currently carried out for the Public benefit.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 4 of the Charities Act 2008 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

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Achievements and performance

In 2023/24 RSUA's unrestricted income increased by around £10k primarily due to the following factors.

- Increase in subscription rates
- Growth in Ask an Architect
- Running the RSUA Sustainability Conference

In 2023/24 RSUA's unrestricted expenditure increased by around £4k primarily due to the following factors:

- Increase in staff costs
- Increase in support costs

In recent years RSUA has increased its free reserves. For 2023/24 RSUA budgeted to spend more than the income we brought in. We were successful in doing so.

RSUA spent roughly £33k more than the income we generated in 2023/24.

RSUA intends to continue to lower its free reserve over the next few years and will budget for annual expenditure levels to be higher than annual income levels.

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The income generated in 2023/24 has enabled RSUA to carry out a wide range of charitable activities including:

Continuous Professional Development: Provided a broad range of learning opportunities for members through online events including an on-demand option.

Architecture Night: Major event attracting over 300 that celebrates architecture in a unique way. This year the event was held at the Kings Hall Belfast.

Early Career Design Competition: Please Replace the Handset and Try Again was the RSUA/JP Corry Early Career Design Competition in 2023. The winners were announced at Architecture Night and a red phone box in central Belfast will be transformed in 2024.

Engagement with clients: RSUA has engaged with Councils, central government bodies, universities, housing associations and others to promote the benefits of investing in design quality and to provide support in obtaining it.

RSUA peer approved Design Quality Panel: The panel members provided expert assistance to a number of initiatives including the Belfast Stories project and to Tourism NI.

Professional Insights Programme: RSUA members provided over 100 second year students from both universities in Belfast with a range of practical insights to the work of an architect in practice.

Procurement: RSUA continued to work with clients and policy makers to improve procurement with a view to creating conditions to allow architects to deliver of their best.

Engagement with Councils: RSUA met with a number of local councils on a wide range of matters but with a particular focus on planning.

RSUA Design Awards: A robust judging process for the RSUA Design Awards 2024 took place in spring 2024 and the winners were announced at a Gala Evening in the MAC theatre in Belfast in May 2024.

Communications: A full-page feature by an RSUA member appeared each month in the Irish News. RSUA launched a new site signboard service to members in September.

General meetings: Two General Meetings this year have been held in-person and have included an architect-led building tour. The other two General Meetings have been held online and have include a 'My Architecture' presentation by a member.

Publications: Perspective and Living Design magazines were published throughout the year.

Practice Services Scheme: Benefits for practices that subscribe to the Practice Services Scheme were further enhanced this year.

Study Trip: A Study Trip to Cork took place in June 2023. A study trip to Vienna was planned for June 2024.

Ask An Architect: The initiative raised £16,000 for Friends of the Cancer Centre through its partnership with the Jill Todd Trust whilst raising the profile to the public of the role of the architect.

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Local Groups: A range of RSUA local groups met with the local Council to seek ways to improve architecture and the built environment in the Council area.

Building Inspiration Lecture: The building inspiration lecture was postponed. RSUA aims to restart the lecture series in late 2024.

Wider representation: RSUA actively participated in the NI Construction Group, the Strategic Design Group, NI Assembly All Party Group on Construction and the Expert Panel on Building Safety

Honorary Membership: In recognition of the important role that non-architects and architects from outside NI have on architecture in NI, RSUA conferred Honorary Membership this year on broadcaster William Crawley.

Committees and Groups: During the year the Committees and Groups continued with an active programme of work. The Education and Careers Committee was formed.

Engagement with students and younger members: RSUA continued to increase its engagement with students and younger architects this year through:

- The perfectly proportioned quiz of architecture and other things in partnership with the universities held in the Black Box
- The design competition for early career architects
- Student medals
- Awarded the Alan Barnes travelling scholarship
- Increased the number of practices signed up to fair pay commitments for Part 1 graduates
- Provided free or reduced price tickets for students at various RSUA events
- Offered Support to ArcSoc at QUB for a number of lectures
- Organised 'Preparing for Practice' a Part 3 study evening
- Delivered the Professional Insights Programme for second year students in partnership with both Belfast universities
- Early Career Architects Forum held a number of events
- Held a special celebration for all the newly qualified architects in NI

Financial review

The total unrestricted incoming resources for the year amounted to £358,212 (2022/23: £348,794), with expenditure of £391,494 (2022/23: £387,754) resulting in a net decrease in funds of £33,282 (2022/23: £39,960). This leaves unrestricted funds of £571,594 (2022/23: £604,876) at the year end of which £224,387 (2022/23: £230,460) relates to fixed assets.

There were no restricted activities undertaken during the year, 22/23 incoming resources were £19,000, with expenditure of £20,000.

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Policy on reserves

The RSUA Council has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets ('the free reserves') held by the charity should be between 2 and 6 months of the resources expended, which equates to between £65,249 and £195,747 in general funds. At this level, the Council thinks that RSUA would be able to continue the current activities of the charity. In the event of a significant drop in funding, it would obviously be necessary to consider how the funding would be replaced or activities changed. At present the free reserves amount to £347,207 and exceed the Council's target range. The Council will continue to monitor RSUA's free reserves.

RSUA has delivered a financial performance this year in line with its budget. The new accounting system and internal accounting processes introduced in 2018/19 have been refined and are now providing better quality and more timely financial information. RSUA continues to undertake a formal budget review process with Council each year.

Principal funding sources

The main incoming resources of the Society remain the membership subscription rebates from RIBA, CPD income, PSS income, sponsorship, bookshop, commissions and other grant funding.

The Society is extremely grateful to all its grant funders and sponsors, without whose support the Society would not be able to run a number of its activities.

Plans for future periods

Aims and key objectives for future periods

The Society plans to continue the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

The trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. The trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of one year from the date of approval of the financial statements.

Structure, governance and management

Nature of governing document

The Royal Society of Ulster Architects is a company limited by guarantee and as such the liability of each of the members is limited. Under Section 62 of the Companies Act 2006, the Society is exempt from using the word Limited. The Society's governing document is the Memorandum and Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute £5.00.

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Recruitment and appointment of trustees

Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Council are elected to serve for a period of three years after which they need to stand for re-election at the next Annual General Meeting if they wish to continue to serve on Council.

RSUA seeks to ensure that members with a range of experience from within the architectural profession serve on the Council.

Induction and training of trustees

Most council members are familiar with the role of the charity through their membership of the architectural profession. New council members attend an orientation meeting to brief them on their legal obligations and responsibilities as members of Council.

Arrangements for setting key management personnel remuneration

The President and trustees work wholly on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration, bonuses, or benefits-in-kind or have any pension entitlements. Likewise, society volunteers are not remunerated. The post of RSUA Director is a remunerated position. The Director's remuneration is set by the Honorary Officers Committee.

Organisational structure

The Society is managed and directed by its Council. Vacant Council seats are filled through an election process. The Council meets at least six times during the period September to June.

Membership of the Society can be classified as: chartered members, honorary members, student members, associate members and affiliate members. Each category has its own conditions and terms as outlined in the Society's governing document.

The Society is in alliance with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The Council of the Society shall relate to the Council of the RIBA only in respect of matters relative to its status in alliance. RSUA sits on the Council of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland as an observer.

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Relationships with related parties

RIBA

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Major risks and management of those risks

Personnel

the risk of losing key staff or volunteers, with the associated loss of expertise and experience

Reputation

the risk that the society might be suffer reputational damage as the result of unauthorised public statements

Financial Risk

the risk that society could run into financial difficulties

RSUA operates a risk register which formally records the key risks and actions taken to minimise those risks. The register is reviewed by Council annually and is a permanent item on the agenda for the Honorary Officers meetings.

Financial instruments

Objectives and policies

The charity's activities expose it to a number of financial risks including credit risk, cash flow risk and liquidity risk. The use of financial derivatives is governed by the charity's policies approved by the board of trustees, which provide written principles on the use of financial derivatives to manage these risks. The charity does not use derivative financial instruments for speculative purposes.

Cash flow risk

The charity's activities expose it primarily to the financial risks of changes in foreign currency exchange rates and interest rates. The charity uses foreign exchange forward contracts and interest rate swap contracts to hedge these exposures.

Interest bearing assets and liabilities are held at fixed rate to ensure certainty of cash flows.

Credit risk

The charity's principal financial assets are bank balances and cash, trade and other receivables, and investments. The charity's credit risk is primarily attributable to its trade receivables. The amounts presented in the balance sheet are net of allowances for doubtful receivables. An allowance for impairment is made where there is an identified loss event which, based on previous experience, is evidence of a reduction in the recoverability of the cash flows.

The credit risk on liquid funds and derivative financial instruments is limited because the counterparties are banks with high credit-ratings assigned by international credit-rating agencies.

The charity has no significant concentration of credit risk, with exposure spread over a large number of counterparties and customers.

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Liquidity risk

In order to maintain liquidity to ensure that sufficient funds are available for ongoing operations and future developments, the charity uses a mixture of long-term and short-term debt finance. Further details regarding liquidity risk can be found in the Statement of accounting policies in the financial statements.

Creditor payment policy

The society support prompt and targets payment for goods and services to be made within agreed payment terms or within 10 days of receipt of invoices not in dispute.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each trustee has taken steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information. The trustees confirm that there is no relevant information that they know of and of which they know the auditor is unaware.

Small companies provision statement

This report has been prepared in accordance with the small companies regime under the Companies Act 2006.

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Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Royal Society of Ulster Architects 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), including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland". The report and accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions in the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

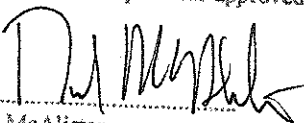
Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and 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, comprising FRS 102 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 charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that can disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company 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 charitable company 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 31 May 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



P McAlister
Trustee