

CO-OPERATION IRELAND

CHARITY REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Directors present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, 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)" (effective 1 January 2019).

Challenges

The Stormont Government collapse, the Windsor Framework, shrinking budgets, and the cost-of-living crisis are all challenges facing Co-operation Ireland. The Stormont government collapsed in January 2020, due to a political impasse over the Windsor Framework. This has created several challenges for charities such as Co-operation Ireland. Firstly, the framework is not universally supported and this has impacted relationships between the UK and Ireland and within communities in Northern Ireland. The Framework and the fallout from it is a good illustration of the importance of Co-operation Ireland and the work we do to encourage dialogue, mutual respect and understanding. In addition, with no local ministers in place, outside of Peace Plus and existing programmes already agreed, no new programme funding can be signed off without ministerial approval. Existing budgets have also been squeezed. The cost-of-living crisis is also having an impact on Co-operation Ireland.

Financial review

Despite the ongoing issues and the continued challenges presented by the return to work from the Covid pandemic, Co-operation Ireland was able to continue its long tradition of working to bring people together throughout 2023 period against a backdrop of political instability both nationally and domestically.

We are reporting a deficit of £20,528 for the year ended 31 December 2023. This is mainly due to a bad debt from Charity Fundraising Auctions, and depilation costs incurred when moving offices.

Structure, governance and management

The Trustees of Co-operation Ireland operate as a dual Board and dual Sub-Committees managing an organisation composed of two main legal entities. Co-operation Ireland, registered as a charitable company in the Republic of Ireland (Companies Registration Office (CRO) registration no.: 72194 and Charities Regulator of Ireland registration no.: 20010799) and Co-operation Ireland, registered as a charitable company in Northern Ireland (Companies House registration no.: NI015955, Charity Commission for NI registration no.: 101318). The Northern Ireland company also has a trading subsidiary (Co-operation Ireland Events Ltd (Companies House registration no: NI036713)) to manage large events.

To ensure compliance with NI and RoI jurisdictions' laws Trustees are always cognisant of the statutes and rules that apply to these separate jurisdictions.

In the USA an organisation called Co-operation Ireland Inc., which is a related entity, through an operationally independent company based in New York supports the objectives of Co-operation Ireland by seeking financial resources for programmes and raising awareness of Co-operation Ireland. Co-operation Ireland Inc. is not controlled by Co-operation Ireland and is not consolidated within the results of Co-operation Ireland.

CO-OPERATION IRELAND

CHARITY REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Directors who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr T Brannigan
Mr J Clerkin
Mr P Farrell
Mr C Flanagan
Baroness A Foster
Sir G Hamilton
Sir J King
Ms S McClelland
Sir D McKibbin
Mr D O'Ceallaigh
Sir J Phillips
Mr T Ringland
Baroness M Ritchie
Mr P Robinson
Sir D Wootton
Mr F McCormack (Appointed 27 June 2024)
Ms L Nelson (Appointed 24 June 2024)

Staff and Offices

Resources from the Dormant Accounts Fund NI operated by the National Lottery Community Fund which supported VCSE organisations will allow us to adapt to future challenges and be more financially resilient by reviewing and update processes. Co-operation Ireland has invested £100K in improving working conditions for our employees by adopting a hybrid work model.

The hybrid work model allows our employees to be truly flexible while also being connected to colleagues and partners. The Belfast office is now equipped with video conferencing, to make it easy for employees to collaborate and stay connected, regardless of where they are working.

The digital transformation initiative has focused on improving our communication and collaboration tools.

The investment in hybrid working and digital transformation is part of our commitment to creating a workplace that is supportive of our employees' needs. We believe that this investment will help us to attract and retain top talent, and to improve our productivity and innovation.

Programmes

The total number of people engaged in the Co-operation Ireland programmes 2023 is 1,894. This engagement reflects the broad and impactful reach of the Youth Team's diverse projects, along with the Cross Island teams project that have each designed to foster positive change and build bridges across communities.

One of the standout initiatives is the Amazing The Space (ATS) programme, which involves 241 young people aged 13-15 from various regional school partnerships across Northern Ireland. Funded by The Executive Office's Central Good Relations Fund, this programme is focused on promoting positive attitudinal change and fostering community cohesion among youth from different backgrounds. Another significant project, Entwined Futures (EF), targets 160 young people aged 13-15 from schools with a North/South and cross-community mix. This programme, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund, deepens participants' understanding of Irish history and its contemporary implications while fostering meaningful relationships across the island.

The Strategic Support for Strengthening Relationships and Cooperation programme is designed for senior EU and UK policymakers, as well as political and civic leaders. Funded by the DFA's Reconciliation Fund, this initiative aims to enhance their understanding of the social and political context of the Northern Ireland Protocol, encouraging dialogue and cooperation across the UK and Ireland. The programme benefits from the CEO's guidance, ensuring its strategic alignment and impact.

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The Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders (CIFL) programme offers a tiered pathway for 217 young people aged 15-20, focusing on developing leadership, communication, and social action skills. This programme is supported by a combination of corporate fundraising, private contributions, DCEDIY, the Honourable Irish Society, and Net Eire. CIFL empowers young people to actively shape their futures and build positive relationships across the Islands.

In addition to youth-focused initiatives, the Business Support/Cross Community Team is engaged in strategic programmes like the Communities in Transition (EPPOC), which provides support to The Executive Office in addressing paramilitarism and organised crime. This crucial programme enhances community resilience and is delivered on a consultancy basis by a team of experts, demonstrating the team's versatility and commitment to addressing complex social issues.

The Irish Football Association (IFA) Capital Grants Assessment programme, funded by the Department of Media, Communities, and Sport, is another significant effort aimed at increasing sports participation by improving grassroots football facilities. This initiative supports 17 clubs through a Co-operation Ireland managed grants process, contributing to the health and wellbeing of local communities.

The Cross Island Team is also active in several vital projects, including (CET) Connect Engage Transform, which focuses on building relationships and capacity in disadvantaged loyalist and republican communities. Funded by the DFA Reconciliation Fund, this programme is essential for fostering dialogue and transformation in these areas, addressing some of the most challenging issues faced by these communities and building capacity.

Another important initiative is the cross-border circle of learning (XBCOL), which targets low-capacity grassroots community groups in border areas. This programme, also supported by the DFA Reconciliation Fund, enhances capacity development, cross-border networking, and promotes a deeper understanding of diversity, helping to strengthen the social fabric in these regions.

The Voice Matters programme, aimed at citizens from the Creggan and Waterside areas of Derry/Londonderry, focuses on renewing confidence in the democratic process and strengthening cross-community cohesion. Funded by the DFA Reconciliation Fund and the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), this programme ensures that local voices are heard and valued, fostering a sense of empowerment and engagement within the community.

The All Island Local Authority Forum and the CI Local Government Women's Leadership Programme are both designed to foster collaboration and leadership development within the local government sector across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH), the Department for Communities NI (DfC NI), and participant fees, these programmes strengthen relationships, enhance learning, and support female leadership in local government, contributing to more inclusive and effective governance.

The Pride of Place programme celebrates civic pride across Ireland, bringing together local authorities and community groups to share learning and increase recognition of their collective efforts. Supported by Irish Public Bodies Sponsorship and local authority entry fees, this programme reaches 500 participants, fostering a sense of community and shared heritage. The AIS4CA programme rounds out the team's efforts, focusing on environmental education and promoting sustainable practices among teachers and students, with funding from private donations, further showcasing the team's commitment to addressing contemporary challenges.

These programmes are made possible through the generous support of various funders, including The Executive Office (TEO) - Central Good Relations Fund, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) - Reconciliation Fund, Strategic Partnership, corporate fundraising, George and Angela Moore (Greystone Trust), DCEDIY, the Honourable Irish Society, Net Eire, the Department of Media, Communities, and Sport (via IFA), NIO, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH), the Department for Communities NI (DfC NI), participants' fees, Irish Public Bodies (IPB) Sponsorship, local authority entry fees, SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body), and private donations. Together, they ensure the continued success and impact of these vital programmes.

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CHARITY REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

New programme opportunities submitted in 2023

Co-operation Ireland has made several significant applications in 2023, most notably within the PEACEPLUS initiative. The PEACEPLUS Youth Programme: YouthImPact, under the objective of IA3.2, represents a major effort by Co-operation Ireland to empower young people, in partnership with Pobal, NYCI, and UU. Another cornerstone of our efforts is the Shared Learning Together Education Programme: Shared Education for Positive Innovation, focusing on IA3.1, where Co-operation Ireland leads with Catalyst as a key collaborator. Furthermore, we have also acted as a project partner in three other bids, with outcomes expected in 2024.

Fundraising

In February 2023, the All-island School 4 Climate Action pilot concluded with a conference at W5, Belfast. 10 schools from ROI and 10 from NI came together to share their learning in climate actions which they undertook during the first half of the school year. This pilot informed the preparation of a major application bid to SEUPB for a major all Island climate action programme involving 100 schools annually.

We had a very successful Golf classics competitions in Essendon, London in May, Cork in September, Ardglass and Royal County Down in October for the charity's work with young people.

The Annual Legal Dinner was held in June 2023 and successfully brought 300 people to the Waldorf Hilton in London.

A Rugby World Cup Cycle Challenge saw 50 cyclists from across Ireland and Britain take on a gruelling 624km cycle from Bordeaux to Nantes over 5 days in September 2023. The cycle took in 2 group stage matches against Romania and Tonga, during the Rugby World Cup, all have raised sponsorship money to take part for Co-operation Ireland.

Communication and Engagement

Co-operation Ireland's communications continue to take place primarily across our social media channels and website. Engagement in 2023 was led by former CEO Peter Sheridan. New CEO Ian Jeffers took up his role in 2024. A snapshot is as follows:

- Film 25 – Award winning short film on the Good Friday/Belfast agreement produced jointly between the British Council, NIO and Co-operation Ireland.
- Press coverage of Sir Bobby Charlton's links to CI after his passing in October 23.
- Tánaiste Micheal Martin attended a CI fundraising dinner in Dublin, where he praised the work of the charity and announced further cross border funding.
- Outgoing CEO Peter Sheridan addressed a peace conference in Harvard University
- Sir Julian King elected as CI Chairman, replacing Dr Christopher Moran who is now Honorary President.
- Europe-wide coverage (.ereb) of our Future Innovators Programme
- Director of Programmes Paul Boylan spoke at *Féile* an Phobail during panel discussion on community funding models.
- RTE paid tribute to CI founder Dr Brendan O'Regan and his legacy of development
- Office move communicated.
- Now Taoiseach Simon Harris attended CI fundraising dinner with other leading politicians from north and south.
- Former CEO Peter Sheridan awarded CBE for peacebuilding.
- New Late Late Show host Paddy KIELTY promoted reconciliation as keynote speaker at CI Legal Dinner.
- Paramilitary Research co-authored by CI as part of Communities in Transition attracted widespread media coverage.
- Former CEO Peter Sheridan and CI Staff invited to meet then PM Rishi Sunak at Good Friday/Belfast Agreement celebration in Hillsborough Castle.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that UHY Farrelly Dawe White Limited be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

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CHARITY REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Post balance sheet events

Peter Sheridan who had been Chief Executive Officer for the last 15 years since 2008, left Co-operation Ireland in November 2023 to take on a new role. After an external recruitment campaign, Ian Jeffers was appointed in January 2024 as Chief Executive Officer. Ian was the former Deputy CEO of the Princes Trust and then, Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland.

Sir Julian King, Co-operation Ireland Chairman, welcomed the appointment stating, "I am thrilled to welcome Ian to the organisation. His breadth of experience, enthusiasm and commitment to the Mission of Co-operation Ireland will be invaluable as the organisation continues to foster a truly shared and cohesive society. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter, as the outgoing CEO, for his outstanding personal contribution to the work of Co-operation Ireland over the years. The organisation would not be where it is today without his tireless dedication. "

Co-operation Ireland is to undergo a significant expansion after being awarded funding for major cross border and community development programmes. To support these new initiatives, the charity is set to hire over 12 staff members – its largest expansion since being founded as Co-operation North in 1979. The programmes will be delivered on a regional basis, and cover environmental education, mental health provision, youth work, migrant communities and financial support for cross border community initiatives. The majority of the positions are supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Other positions are linked to programmes funded from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Rank Foundation.

All programmes are designed to build stronger, more resilient communities and tie in with our strategic priorities.

Disclosure of information to the auditors

Each of the Directors has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The charity report was approved by the Board of Directors.


Terence Brannigan (Sep 27, 2024 10:33 GMT+1)

Mr T Brannigan
Director

26 September 2024



Mr T Ringland
Director

CO-OPERATION IRELAND

STATEMENT OF CHARITY RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The directors, who also act as trustees for the charitable activities of the charity are responsible for preparing the Charity 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 Directors 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 Directors 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 Directors 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.