

Ballymote Community Project Ltd Trustees Report 2023-24

Ballymote Community Project Ltd (BCPL) is a (not for profit) company limited by guarantee (Co. number NI027554). The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) have recognised BCPL as a charity since 2015 (CCNI Charity reference no. NIC101358) and HMRC subsequently accepted that BCPL is a charity for Tax purposes.

Board Members (Trustees/Directors) for 2023/24

Paddy Kelly (Chairman)

Joe Torney (Treasurer)

Eamonn McGrady (Secretary)

Stephen Austin

Paddy Peake

Richard McGreevy

Joe McStay

Dermott McNabb

Ballymote Centre for Community & Business

The Ballymote Centre for Community & Business is the sole responsibility of Ballymote Community Project Limited (BCPL).

The organisation continues to consolidate its position as a successful social enterprise making a positive impact on the local population in Downpatrick and wider Lecale area.

Background

Ballymote Community Project Ltd is a Social Enterprise company managed by a voluntary board of Directors. The company built the Ballymote Centre in 1994 with £800,000 from Department of Environment (DOE) and International Fund For Ireland (IFI). The Centre was created to provide a commercial and social heart to an area of housing on the south east edge of Downpatrick which had been built to house over 800 families displaced during the 70s and 80s at the height of "The Troubles". Until that time, the area had no facilities and residents had to travel to Downpatrick town centre for all their needs. The centre filled a huge gap in provision and was immediately taken into the hearts of the people in this area. The centre was almost fully occupied by 1997 and has thrived ever since. From the year 2000, the Ballymote Board worked with the local community (largely through the Flying Horse Ward Community Forum), County Down Rural Community Network and others to raise another £1.4 million to extend what has become one of the most successful social economy projects in Northern Ireland. The newly refurbished and extended Ballymote Centre opened in July 2010.

An additional £2.5 million was raised through BCPL and working with then Down District Council they created the recently built Ballymote Health & Well- Being Centre which has become a major centre for sports and youth benefitting many people across Downpatrick and further afield. A new petrol filling

station was opened in January 2022 and has proven to be a great success for the local community and commuters alike.

TRUSTEES REPORT

Tenants & Facilities

The Ballymote Centre continues to boast a major supermarket (Supervalu), McGreevy's Butchers, Ballymote Pharmacy, Pretty Please Salon, SVDP Charity shop and Peking Garden chinese take-away. McGreevy's extended their premises into Unit 1 and opened a delicatessen in October 2023. A ground floor childrens centre provides playgroup and after school facilities for local families managed by Action For Children and Surestart. Office accommodation on the first floor are the base for a wide range of community development and Health services including County Down Rural Community Network, Community Advice Newry Mourne & Down, Flying Horse Ward Community Forum Office, Surestart, Action for Children, and a wide range of other organisations on a weekly and casual rental basis. A 3000 square feet Community Hall is used by Downpatrick Special Olympics, Downpatrick Men's Group, Irish Dancing, Downpatrick Womens Group, County Down Rural Community Network, AWARE NI and Downpatrick Indoor Archery club as well as conferences and training events by a wide range of organisations. A purpose built health suite provides clinics usually 5 days per week including Podiatry, Lymphoedema, Physiotherapy, Counselling, Diabetics and Dietetics coordinated by the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust. Additional Counselling services are provided by Lifeline, PIPs and other private counsellors as well as an excellent service by Women's Aid to vulnerable women. A group formed by local women with support from Macmillan Cancer hold a weekly bra fitting service for women battling cancer and is hugely popular. For three years now a service replacing batteries in hearing aids and advising people with hearing difficulties has been delivered from the Ballymote Centre to the whole of Downpatrick and Lecale to great success. The centre is managed on a day to day basis by David McCarthy. The centre is fully self-sufficient and has never received any grants for running costs since 1996 and has a growing turnover on a yearly basis. The centre provides over 150 full and part-time jobs. The car park is busy from morning to night and is the shopping, health and community choice for many in the area

Ballymote community Project Ltd is one of the most successful social economy projects in Northern Ireland and is testament to the small group of volunteer Directors involved since 1994.

Staffing

There is now 1 part time manager (David McCarthy), 1 full-time caretaker, 1 part time finance officer and 2 Part-Time Caretaker/cleaners directly employed in the centre by BCPL. This means that the Centre is rarely without Caretaker cover and a more flexible maintenance and cleaning rota can be maintained. The caretaking team provide an excellent service to the centre and the building has benefitted greatly this year as in every year. The Ballymote Centre has earned a reputation for being clean, tidy and does not tolerate litter, graffiti or any political overtones and that continues in this period. Occasional anti-social behaviour still blights the surrounding area and the Ballymote centre with its manager/board and partners in the PSNI, Council and other agencies consistently resists such behaviour and tries to provide diversionary and educational activities, including activities in the centre itself. Initiatives such as the "RAPID" drugs bin is designed to give people 24/7 access to a safe disposal for prescription and illegal drugs. This is an increasing scourge on the local community and drugs have been attributed to deaths by

suicide in the Ballymote area. The drugs bin is regularly emptied by the PSNI and partners and reports increasing usage for safe and anonymous disposal.

Proposals for the Future

The centre is oftentimes a victim of its own success and due to the heavy traffic throughout the day and night, parking can be an issue. With the construction of the petrol filling station, vehicular traffic has increased and the BCP are currently exploring options to create more parking space at the rear of the centre. An environmental efficiency survey was carried out in January 2023 to assess how improvements can be made to the building structures, particularly around the heating & lighting systems. We anticipate these works to be started in Spring 2024. The BCP will continue to invest in these structures on a phased basis. The BCP made numerous donations throughout 2023/24 to the local primary schools in the area to support them during the cost for living crisis and difficult budgetary cuts. The donations made were instrumental in allowing many school programs to continue, such as breakfast clubs, which would otherwise have been under threat without this financial assistance. The BCP will continue to support the local primary schools and identify other needs in the area which could be supported.