

## **Belfast South Network Company**

### **Trustees' Report**

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present the annual report together with the financial statements of the charitable company for the year ended 31 December 2022.

#### **Trustees**

Ms E M Sillery

Dr I R Taylor, Treasurer

Mr S Alford

Mr I Moffitt, Secretary

Reverend E Hyland, Chairperson

Mrs S Kerr (appointed 31 March 2022)

Mr A Kerr (appointed 14 June 2022)

Dr G M E Hinds (resigned 20 September 2022)

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

##### ***Nature of governing document***

The company is governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

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

The charity was incorporated on 3 June 2010 under the Companies Act 2006, being a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

The company is recognised as a charity with HM Revenue & Customs under registration number XT29315 and with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under registration number NIC101506.

The company is managed by a Board of Directors. Three of the Directors are elected as Honorary Office Bearers, these being Chairperson, Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

The role of the trustees is to ensure that Belfast South Network Company is effectively governed; to ensure that the charity complies with all relevant legislation, its own Memorandum and Articles of Association and the requirements of good practice; and to ensure that the charity works to agreed strategic and operational plans.

## **Belfast South Network Company**

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#### **Objectives and activities**

##### *Objects and aims*

The Agape Centre is operated by the Belfast South Network Company. The Centre's mission is to –

- Create opportunities for partners and the local community to work together to foster greater understanding and interaction between different cultural, ethnic, religious and social groups;
- Provide opportunities for cross-community partnership networking to enable collaboration and resource sharing among the statutory, voluntary and community sectors; and
- Provide accommodation and services to a multiplicity of users, including ethnic minorities, parents, young people and children, the elderly and disadvantaged groups.

The intention is to build on emerging relationships and to foster new ones, with the idea of increasing social cohesion.

The charity's main asset is its three-storey premises – the Agape Centre which is situated in a densely populated area on the Lisburn Road, Belfast and which is used for a mixture of activities which seek to achieve the charity's objectives.

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#### *Objectives, strategies and activities*

#### **Objective 1: To provide and maintain buildings to be used for places of worship or for carrying out or furthering the other objectives of the company**

The primary benefit which flows from this purpose is the advancement of religion, namely Christianity and particularly Methodism, within the South Belfast area. This benefit is shown through the regular attendance of people at a Sunday service of worship. This service has also been available online via Youtube to members of the congregation, the wider circuit of Methodist Churches and further afield. Pastoral clusters continue to offer support to all members of the congregation whether they are able to attend weekly services or not. This is one of many ways the congregation seeks to provide outreach. There is an annual "Living with Loss" service for those who have been recently bereaved. The varied programme of activities, which are widely advertised and open to both members and non-members of the congregation, includes a weekly Drop-in session, a very active ladies' group, Bible Study, Public Theology seminars/lectures/workshops, book club and Friday evening meal.

Other Christian Groups such as the Harbour Team and the Russian Orthodox church also used the worship centre.

An interdenominational Centering prayer group meets weekly.

Our "Thinking Aloud" series of online discussions on theology and ethics in the public square continued with an online joint series with the congregation from Dun Laoghaire Methodist church entitled "Engaging with our time"

We join with other south Belfast churches, in a small number of shared events, particularly in the period of Lent. The Methodist Church in Ireland used the Agape Centre for various meetings throughout the year.

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**Objective 2: To advance education, promote health and well-being and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of the community.**

The Agape Centre hosts statutory and community bodies providing public services including Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Community Mental Health Team, the AA and South Belfast Youth Football League (SBYFL) who are all based at the Centre.

With more proactive use of social media, including the development of the Centre's website, usage of the Agape Centre by community, voluntary and commercial groups with a wide variety of interests continues to grow. A number of Housing Management Groups and Residents' Associations use our premises for regular and annual meetings while local businesses and charitable organisations such as the Stroke Association, Barnardo's, Women's Aid, Adoption UK and family mediation make use of our facilities for off-site meetings and training courses.

Both through Centre activities and the associated church, we contributed extensively to both local and wider development projects. We collected regularly for Storehouse, assisting those in Belfast requiring emergency food and acting as a referral point. Through support for Belfast Central Mission, we assisted with their Christmas Gift programme and also contributed to the annual Christian Aid collection. Support for global development was also provided through substantial church contributions. Of particular note is the "Save a Heart" charity (established by a member of the congregation) which has been delivering and supporting heart surgery in Nigeria.

The Centre continues to be a centre for various groups impacted by Breast Cancer and is used by various agencies as a safe place for contact groups ie supervised meetings between parents and children who live apart.

Forward South Partnership hosted a Community Health Day for local residents.

In response to the rising cost of living crises the church ran a weekly warm space from October to the end of the year.

An Agape Lecture was hosted in which Siobhan O'Neill addressed the issue of Mental Health and a healthy society in NI.

**Objective 3: To encourage, promote and foster greater mutual understanding and better community relations by interaction between different racial, ethnic, cultural and social groups.**

BSNC has an Open-Door policy, welcoming anyone in for friendship, a chat and refreshments. The Centre is a venue for events organised by the Church and other agencies such as Belfast Four Corners Cross-Community Festival, fostering the advancement of human rights, reconciliation, the promotion of religious and racial harmony, equality and diversity. We continue to host Spectrum, providing inter-denominational worship for the LGBT community, family and friends. The Peace Players use the premises to bring teenagers from diverse communities together to promote understanding. The Agape Centre actively seeks to organise events which will bring together representatives from as many different backgrounds as possible. The local Muslim community used the Centre for their EID celebrations in May and for meetings of the first Islamic scout troop in Northern Ireland. Mermaids a support group for parents of children going through gender change also meets in the centre.

**Objective 4: To help young people, especially but not exclusively through leisure time activities so as to develop their spiritual, physical and mental capacities that they may grow to full maturity as individuals and responsible members of society**

The centre is not only the headquarters of the SBYFL but also serves as a venue for Tae Kwan Do, Irish dance classes and similar events for children and young people. Programmes promoting education have included AQE tuition. The Suzuki method, assisting the development of young children, is promoted in a weekly event. The centre hosted little kickers, a post-COVID group to help children's development via mini football.

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#### **Objective 5: To provide and promote the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupations**

The Agape Centre hosts a variety of programmes, as illustrated under earlier objectives, that provide an opportunity for the public in South Belfast to develop their leisure time interests. We host weekly Dog and puppy training, Pilates classes (for cancer survivors), Slimming World groups and Barnardo events.

#### **Objective 6: To preserve and safeguard the health of all persons who are or are in danger of becoming addicted to or dependent upon drugs of any description, alcohol, solvents or other addictive substances**

The promotion of health flows from this purpose and the Centre has provided a range of activities to meet this objective including Alcoholics Anonymous (currently using nine sessions per week), a fortnightly Aware meeting (a Depression self- help support group) and Making 2nds Count (a monthly Secondary cancer group).

The Agape Centre is used by organisations, such the Stroke Association and Women's Aid, to provide meeting places for weekly or monthly groups, one-off events addressing relevant issues.

A programme for young men in danger of becoming involved in criminality was run by the department for early intervention and safeguarding BHSCT.

#### **Public benefit**

The operation of the Agape Centre contributes to the attainment of the Belfast South Network Company's objectives as laid out above.

In terms of meeting each of the objectives listed above, the details included therein give a flavour of the activities which the public in south Belfast can participate in as a result of the development of the Agape Centre. Although the individual activities are only listed under one objective, many of them have overlapping results, addressing more than one area.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of the Charities Act to have due regard to the public benefit guidance issued by the Charity Commission.

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#### **Financial review**

The Statement of Financial Activities is set out on page 11 of the accounts. Total income has decreased from £70,813 in 2021 to £63,619 in 2022. Total expenditure has increased from £99,308 in 2021 to £131,046 in 2022. The charity has therefore generated a negative financial outcome for the year with a net decrease in funds of £67,427, made up of a decrease in unrestricted funds of £24,981 and a decrease in endowments of £42,446, with this latter figure accounting for annual depreciation on the property.

#### **Policy on reserves**

The Board has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in the light of the main risks to the organization. It has established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not designated for a particular purpose or invested in tangible assets held by the charity should be approximately six months of expenditure.

The reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the Board is confident that at this level it would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding.

As at 31 December 2022 the charity held current assets which had not been designated for a particular purpose of £50,804, a decrease of £21,193 on 2021. This amount represents approximately seven month's running costs, excluding property depreciation. The Board continues to work to maintain our target level of unrestricted reserves.

#### **Financial instruments**

##### **Objectives and policies**

The Trustees review the possibility of major risks on an ongoing basis and consider any action required to manage such risks. Risks apparent to the Trustees are in sustaining the present usage of the building and ensuring that its more commercial aspects complement those of the associated Church. While activities in 2020 and 2021 were substantially reduced because of Covid, the associated risk has reduced in 2022. With one of our main office tenants moving to their own premises in 2020, it may be some time before the office share of our space is fully utilised.

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.

##### **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.

##### **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.

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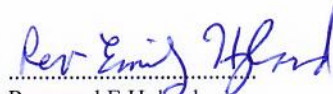
**Small companies provision statement**

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

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 25 September 2023 and signed on its behalf by:



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Dr I R Taylor  
Treasurer  
Trustee



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Reverend E Hyland  
Chairperson  
Trustee