

Annual Report & Report on Public Benefit

Community Organisations of South Tyrone and Areas Ltd

(COSTA)

REPORTING PERIOD

1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

TRUSTEES

Richard Knox	<i>Chairperson</i>	
Trevor Lockhart	<i>Secretary & Company Secretary</i>	
John Burrell MBE	<i>Treasurer</i>	(Deceased 6 Dec 2023)
Heather Nixon-McLaughlin		
Raymond Harrison		
Wilfred Mitchell OBE		
Anthony McGonnell		
Rosina O'Neill		
Carmen Hamill		
Sharon McAleer		(Appointed 22 June 2023)
David McFarlane		(Resigned 22 June 2023)

BANKERS

Ulster Bank Ltd
14 High Street
Omagh
Co. Tyrone
BT78 1BJ

AUDITORS

Mac Neary Rasdale & Co
Registered Accountants & Auditors
Darling Street
Enniskillen
Co. Fermanagh
BT74 7EW

TRUSTEES REPORT

The trustees, who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, submit their Annual Report and the audited Financial Statements for the **year ended 31 March 2024**. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Companies Act 2006 and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) effective 1 January 2015) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

Community Organisations of South Tyrone and Areas Ltd (COSTA) was first established in 2000 as an unincorporated Association.

COSTA was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee No. NI 42832 governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association under the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 on 26th March 2002, and now as amended, under the Companies Act 2006 on 21 March 2013.

COSTA is registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland No: NIC101598.

The registered office address is President Grants Homestead, 45 Dergenagh Road, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland, BT70 1TW.

COSTA has held International Standards Organisation Quality Management Status: ISO 9001:2015. Certificate: FS 592437 was last awarded on 21 February 2017.

COSTA is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) through DAERA's Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS) Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI) and Mid Ulster District Council.

The trustees of the company are its directors for the purposes of charity law and are collectively referred to as trustees. The number of trustees shall not be less than 4 or more than 15. COSTA is managed by a board of voluntary trustees elected every year from across the Dungannon and South Tyrone area of Mid Ulster. After each election, an induction session is held for new members of the board to explain the major areas of activity, including current programmes of work, guidance on the governance aspects of a trustee's role, an introduction to the strategic aims over the year ahead and an examination of the main threat and opportunities facing the charity.

The day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated to a staff team headed by Loraine Griffin (Network Business Manager), which reports to the Board of trustees between 5 to 7 times per year. The Finance and Human Resources Sub-committee oversees major aspects of work and reports from the sub-committee are presented back to the full board meeting as they occur.

Written policies and procedures detail the decision making powers which are delegated to staff and those which are retained by the trustees. The current Finance and Human Resources sub-committee has committed to working with the Board on an ongoing programme of review of policies which used within the organisation.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The trustees have taken a detailed review of the major risks to which the charity is potentially exposed. A major risk exists with regard to future core funding for the organisation as the current contract for the Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCDSS) as this core funding stream comes to an end in **September 2025**. This funding stream provided by LRCDSS provides the essential key source of the organisation's income to ensure retention of the office and essential staffing resources.

The Board believes the organisation has considered this risk and made provision under the Reserves Policy will be vigilant of the organisation's risks as new contracts and tenders are negotiated in the coming months. This situation is true of a large swathe of the sector at this point in time, however, COSTA Trustees are confident that they will be able to sustain the organisation with both current contracts, current reserves and new opportunities. The Network has applied jointly with CWSAN to DAERA's new Tender process for the RCDSS and has been successfully awarded a new contract which will run for up to 3 years with a possible further extension of 2 more years.

PURPOSES

In ensuring that the activities of COSTA provide a public benefit, all our activities are related to one of more of the following charitable objects:

- a) to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of voluntary and community organisations and projects in the area of benefit by providing advice information, education and training, administrative support and practical assistance to such organisations and projects for the benefit of the public;
- b) to promote or assist in promoting community capacity building programmes and projects for the benefit of the people in the area of benefit who have need of such assistance
- c) to promote or assist in the promotion of and cooperation and networking between voluntary and community organisations in the area of benefit between themselves and others;
- d) to support community development, social inclusion and wellbeing activities and to work with partners to support and improve the conditions of the inhabitants in rural life and the development of a sustainable community;
- e) to identify the funding and policy needs of voluntary and community organisations in the area of benefit;
- f) to promote the advancement of health and well-being;
- g) to promote good relations, religious and racial harmony and equality and diversity;
- h) to promote awareness of the community in the area of benefit among public bodies, service providers and statutory agencies and to act as a representative of voluntary and community organisations offering services and support to the inhabitants in the area of benefit;
- i) to advance any other exclusively charitable purpose as the directors, may from time to time, decide in accordance with the law of charity.

Objectives and Activities / Public Benefit

In shaping our activities and objectives, the trustees have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

During the reporting period the organisation carried out its operations under the following four strategic aims and associated objectives:

- 1. Support for Community Planning**
- 2. Support for Isolated Rural People**
- 3. Support the Sustainability of Rural Villages**
- 4. Supporting Marginalised Minority Communities in rural border areas.**
- 5. Promoting Good Community Relations**

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REVIEW

Hello and a very warm welcome to all for COSTA's 2023 Annual General Meeting.

The location of this years' AGM is of great significance as we welcome you all to the newly refurbished Old Market Yard Hall which was funded by the Mid Ulster Rural Development Partnership LAG's, Rural Services Scheme under the NI Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020.

The Hall Committee worked extremely hard in bringing a share of the Rural Development funding into Clogher. In particular, I want to acknowledge Richard Mulligan for his leadership in driving this initiative forward, ensuring delivery of an excellent capital development for community use, for

hosting us tonight, and assisting COSTA and CWSAN in carrying out a review of the Clogher Village Plan.

Later on we look forward to hearing from local woman, Veronica Morris from Rural Support who will be filling us in on what is out there for Farmers and Farm Families in such challenging times. Then we will be tucking in to some delicious food from Diamond Catering as we Network.

This year sees its own fresh challenges as the Cost of Living Crisis bites. Tough time are certainly ahead as the government takes a hatchet to Budgets and Public Services, and many Voluntary/Community Sector organisations will struggle with having their funding cut or stopped altogether. COSTA aims to survive and to support our local groups and infrastructure through such a tough and quite unprecedented environment.

COSTA thanks and acknowledges our keystone funder the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DEARA), which makes the Network possible, and for their role in ensuring continuation of the Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Inclusion (TRPSI) Scheme, and the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme which has funded groups throughout the Mid Ulster District and the region for over 8 years now.

I give a note of sincere thanks to all my fellow Board members, and off course to Mid Ulster District Council for their many years of funding and dedicated support.

This year however sees many changes to our Councillor representatives following the recent election with some new Councillors joining us shortly: Cllr Gael Gildernew, Cllr Eugene McConnell and Cllr Karol McQuade and I hope they enjoy their time on COSTA.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Cllr Dominic Molloy on his position as MUDC Chairperson and Cllr Meta Graham in her position of MUDC Deputy Chairperson, both of which will continue on COSTA.

It is however extremely unfortunate that we will be losing three very highly valued Council members; Cllr Frances Burton, Cllr Sharon McAleer and Cllr Sean McGuigan. Cllr McAleer will hopefully be re-joining us again as a Community Representative on the Board. In addition, David McFarlane from Bush Community Group will also retire as a Board Member this year.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our out-going members for their time, skills, dedication, knowledge and years of experience given to COSTA. We wish them all the very best for the future. I also extend our very deepest sympathy to Cllr Meta Graham and family for the sudden loss of her husband Robert Lawrence Graham on 12th December 2022, and also to Trevor Lockhart and family for the very recent passing of his brother Kenneth Andrew Lockhart on 11th June 2023. Our thoughts are certainly with you all.

COSTA continues providing for the local community via our single staff member, Development Manager, Loraine Griffin. Along with Conor Corr, Seamus Donnelly and Marguerite Quinn of CWSAN a further year of the DAERA Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCDSS) contract has been delivered throughout Mid Ulster District as part of 7 regional providers. Our partnership with CWSAN – who cover the Cookstown and Magherafelt areas - continues on strongly and we hopefully look forward to many more years of joint working across our District and from our Office at President Grant's Homestead.

I also present our Annual Report which showcases the level and diversity of our work both for and in the local community. Many very positive developments for COSTA continued this year as we served on Mid Ulster Community Planning, the Charity Commission NI Stakeholder Forum, and the Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum to name but just a few.

I wish you, your communities, groups and villages all the very best going forward, as we get back out into the community again and meet much more face-to-face. COSTA is here to support you all – so give us a call!

Richard Knox - COSTA Chairperson

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT MANAGER'S REVIEW

Welcome everyone as we celebrate our 23rd Birthday!

I am delighted we are out again in the community and celebrating 23 years in this newly renovated Hall in Clogher and I congratulate Richard Mulligan and the Hall Committee for all their achievements.

Now entering into our second year of the current RCDSS contract under DAERA, this year COSTA has been very busy delivering 25 Newsletters, 2 special funding and information Bulletins, 8 'Open Door Days' with 38 attendees, 17 Workshops to 231 participants, 185 Website updates, and 234 Facebook posts. We have actively supported and engaged over 484 times with local Groups, Communities and Villages. We worked with over 50 agencies on a wide range of initiatives: MUD Council, Age Friendly MU, Mid Ulster Loneliness Network, CYPSP, Southern Outcomes Group, Integrated Care Partnership, Patient Client Council, Encompass, Community Planning, and major strategic issues with the Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum. This year COSTA joined the Charity Commission NI Stakeholder Forum and we continue to Chair the CYPSP. Our key activities can be viewed on pages 8 - 20 of this Report.

COSTA has continued to provide our full range of support, information, services, training workshops and the DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022 which located onto a totally new on-line application and management portal, which this year saw 189 successful applications – our largest ever up-take. Thank you to Conor, Marguerite, Seamy, Anita, Denise, Gerry, Josie, and everyone in CWSAN for working so hard throughout.

I extend thanks to Mid Ulster District Council for their continued funding and support of COSTA, to Philip Clarke as Statutory Representative, and Ted and Faye Sharkey for their hard work in keeping President Grant's Homestead a very welcoming place for everyone.

A huge 'thank you' goes to the entire COSTA Board who are so supportive and volunteer their time and expertise so diligently: Richard Knox COSTA Chairperson, Trevor Lockhart, Heather McLaughlin, Carmen Hamill, Rosina O'Neill, John Burrell *MBE*, Raymond Harrison, Anthony McGonnell, Wilfred Mitchell OBE and David McFarland. Thank you to our Council Members: Frances Burton, Meta Graham, Dominic Molloy, Sean McGuigan and Sharon McAleer for their experience, knowledge, guidance and wisdom and welcome to our new reps.

We encourage local groups to make contact for any assistance required and we look forward to getting back out to see you all again while still also being able to fully accommodate online meetings via Zoom too. So please give us a call any time for assistance as we encourage everyone to reach out, to stay in touch, to stay informed, and also keep-up-to-date via our Website, FaceBook pages and our new twice-monthly Mail Chimp E-Newsletter Updates.

COSTA aims to meet all challenges ahead and to see that we continue to have a local office and a local service here to support our local communities as YOUR Local Support Network for the Dungannon and South Tyrone area ;)

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

The overall aim of COSTA's work is to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in rural deprived areas, thus supporting those rural dwellers living in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Community Organisations of South Tyrone & Areas (COSTA) in conjunction with Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network (CWSAN) have continued to work in close partnership. With over **13** years now already completed, we strive towards the start of our **14th year, from April 2024**, delivering a newly updated 'Rural Community Development Service' for the Mid Ulster area covering the Dungannon and South Tyrone area (COSTA) and the Cookstown & Magherafelt areas (CWSAN).

Rural Community Development Support Service (RCDSS)

The new DAERA Rural Community Development Support Service has been awarded in 8 geographical catchments (Lots) to 6 providers plus COSTA. This ensures a Northern Ireland-wide service for rural communities which are largely defined as 'people living in communities or settlements of less than 4,000 people'.

DAERA has a key role in the delivery of the cross-departmental outcomes and a particular emphasis on overarching outcomes: **We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment.** Of particular importance to DAERA and the Networks are Outcomes 2 and 3, Outcome 2 – A clean, healthy environment, benefitting nature and the economy. The LRDSS is a key part of delivering on **Outcome 3 – A thriving rural economy, contributing to prosperity and well-being.**

COSTA and CWSAN have secured another 3 years funding to continue to deliver the Rural CD Support service in Mid Ulster from October 2024.

KEY ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR

The COSTA Local Rural Community Development Support Service (LRCDSS) delivered across the Dungannon & South Tyrone area of Mid Ulster District:

1. Support for Community Planning:

- 18 Newsletters and 1 COSTA Support Signposting Directory (24/11/2023) to 500+ Groups.
- 25 Email-outs to 500+ Groups.
- 185 Website updates.
- 342 posts on 2 Facebook Pages.
- 2 Facebook Pages: 558 Followers and 507 Page Likes / 52 Check-ins.

- 617 LRCDSS supports to groups.
- 14 Good Practice Checklists (Community Planning).
- 46 Community Planning Feedbacks / Opportunities / Linkages / Actions.
- 63 Linkages / Engagements regarding Community Planning.
- 4 Meetings: MUDC Community Planning.

Support for Isolated Rural People:

- 183 COSTA Member Groups.
- 7 'Open Door Days' (26 groups / 41 attendees).
- 14 Good Practice Checklists (Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation).
- 14 Checklist Follow-ups to Groups' needs.
- 116 Groups supported / mentored on Capacity Building.
- 55 Groups supported with Funding Applications.
- 81 Groups supported / mentored on Governance.
- 63 New Database Entries / Updates.
- 12 Governance Workshops with 55 participants: 'A Quick Guide to GDPR', 'Basic Financial Management', 'Charity Registration & Annual Returns' 'Update & Changes to UK Company Law' 'Funding Information & Readiness'.
- 147 Interagency Engagements: MU Community Navigator, MU Coronavirus Support Forum, SHSC Trust Social Care Hub, Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation (TRPSI) Promotions / Signpostings / Referrals: MULN, DAERA, ARTS, CYPSP, Agewell MU, Health Alliance, CDM Community Transport, Rural Support, SUSE+ / DEL / FarmSAFE, Libraries NI, Farm Family Health Checks, NIVCA, RCN, RNNI, Rural Action, JVCS Forum etc.
- 22 Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum Meetings.
- 1 Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum Workshop 'Stocktake & Forward Planning Session': 04/06/2023.

2. Support for the Sustainability of Rural Villages

- 2 Rural Villages Supported.
- 2 Village Plans Reviewed.
- 21 Village Plan Meetings: 45 Groups / 90 attendees.
- 2 Good Practice Visits: Brantry BARD and Bawn Hall (35 attendees) 15/09/2023.
- 1 Village Test & Learn Area: Aughnacloy Village.
- DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022: 12 Groups supported to submit Claims
- 3 Meetings: DAERA Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022.

3. **Governance & Sustainability**

- 1 RCDSS Event (50 attendees) with DAERA Director of Rural Affairs: 27/06/2023 with 2 COSTA Presentations: Richard Knox (Clonaneese Historical Society & Trevor Lockhart Bawn Development Association).
- 1 Programme of Evaluation in place for Regional LRCOSS and 1 Workshop 18/07/2023.
- 6 RCDSS Regional Case Studies.
- 24 DAERA / LRCOSS / LRSNs Contract Meetings.
- 4 LRCOSS Monitoring Reports / 4 Audit Certificates.
- 4 LRCOSS / DAERA Financial & Monitoring Checks.
- 1 Company House Annual Return: March 2024.
- 1 Charity Commission NI Annual Return: December 2023.
- 5 COSTA Board Meetings.
- 1 COSTA Annual General Meeting (22/6/2023) 26 attendees.
- 1 COSTA Board Training Session 15/12/2023 (7 attendees).

COSTA Project Partnerships & Representation 2023 / 2024

- ✓ Joint Voluntary Community Sector Forum.
- ✓ Charity Commission NI Stakeholder Forum.
- ✓ Mid Ulster District Community Plan - VCS Member / Clogher Valley DEA / Education & Skills Thematic Working Group.
- ✓ Mid Ulster LAPN – Local Anti-Poverty Network.
- ✓ Mid Ulster Seniors Network (MUSN).
- ✓ Mid Ulster Loneliness Network (MULN).
- ✓ Age Friendly Mid-Ulster Alliance.
- ✓ Agewell Mid-Ulster.
- ✓ Community Sector Training - Management Group.
- ✓ People & Place Review (Rural Advisory Group).
- ✓ MUD Council Fair Trade Steering Group (Chair).
- ✓ NI Ambulance Service Partner Voice Forum.
- ✓ ENCOMPASS Programme - Engagement Council Panel
- ✓ Agewell Mid-Ulster Partnership.
- ✓ CYPSP - Children & Young People Strategic Partnership Locality Group (Armagh & Dungannon) & Chairperson.
- ✓ RCDSS / Local Rural Support Networks Managers Forum.
- ✓ Southern Area Outcomes Group (A&D Rep).
- ✓ Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group (Dungannon).
- ✓ Collaboration Test & Learn Pilot Project (Aughnacloy).
- ✓ Linking Generations NI
- ✓ Clogher Valley Community Hub (Peace +).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WORK PLEASE SEE FULL ANNUAL REPORT
AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE: [Newsletters & Annual Reports \(costaruralsupportnetwork.org\)](https://www.costaruralsupportnetwork.org)**

FINANCIAL REVIEW

FINANCIAL POSITION AT END OF YEAR

For the year income is **£48,470**. During the year some cutbacks were made arising as a result of austerity funding cuts from DAERA.

Despite cuts to funding programmes, the organisation remains in a very strong financial position as we commence a new Tender Contract which should last for up to 3+ years ahead.

OUTSTANDING DEBTS OR LIABILITIES

There were no debts or outstanding debts or liabilities.

RESERVES POLICY

A Reserves Policy is in place which allows for an annual reserve to be held ranging between a minimum of £20,000 to £35,000. The actual free reserves **at 31 March 2024 are £20,899** to ensure that the organisation holds sufficient reserves to meet any potential scenarios.

COSTA has a Reserves Policy which details why reserves are held and the level of reserves appropriate for the charity. The trustees review the level of free reserves required (that is those funds not tied up in fixed assets, designated and restricted funds) on an annual basis to ensure continuity of charitable operations.

The Charity is looking at ways of increasing funding to meet current needs and this is reviewed annually. Designated reserves for various purposes are detailed and a cash flow fund is held to bridge any potential gaps or short-falls in funding streams and to underpin viable programmes that are experiencing cash flow problems. A staffing fund is held to cover sickness, maternity and to meet all redundancy costs.

FUNDS IN MATERIAL DEFICIT AND STEPS TAKEN TO MITIGATE

There were no funds in material deficit.

FINANCIAL MITIGATION

The Trustees of COSTA acknowledge and understand the current financial situation and are taking steps to both control and manage the situation in this current year. The Trustees actioned redundancies in response to programme closures and funding cuts prior to this financial year to ensure the organisation's finances were managed prudently and on an ongoing basis. The Trustees are confident of the performance of the organisation for the coming 12 month period and will keep a watching brief on the accounts in these austere times. COSTA receives funding from a range of government and charitable organisations and discharges these funds in pursuit of its charitable objectives and the particular programme funding targets.

FUNDS HELD BY THE CHARITY AS A CUSTODIAN TRUSTEE

The Charity holds no funds as custodian trustees on behalf of others.

FUTURE STRATEGY

The Company plans to continue in developing its services in line with its strategic priorities outlined above and it will seek to develop collaborative partnerships with a range of external agencies. Funding arrangements will be kept under review in relation to demand for service improvements and constraints on public expenditure. As a networking organisation we take seriously our role in supporting the local rural and community infrastructure, disseminating best practice, and sharing experiences so that communities can learn from each other.

BENEFICIARIES

The charity's beneficiaries are primarily the people living in and around the Dungannon South Tyrone area of Mid Ulster District who have been identified as being rurally isolated and / or socially excluded.

RESTRICTIONS ON WHO CAN BENEFIT

There are no restrictions on who can benefit.

There are no charges or fees to access any events or services.

There are no restrictions based on personal characteristics.

PRIVATE BENEFIT

There is no private benefit to any individual.

HARM

No harm has flowed from any of our Purposes.

SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTING

There are no serious incidents to report.


VULNERABLE BENEFICIARIES

Appropriate Policies, Procedures and Training are in place such as POCVA Policy & Procedures.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission NI's Public Benefit Guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

By order of the Board:



Richard Knox

Chairperson

22 June 2024