

Trustees Report

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and served during the year, were

- Kevin Delaney
- Paul Mulholland
- John McMullan
- Alec McRitchie

The trustees are elected/re-elected at the Annual General Meeting.

None of the trustees have any beneficial interest in the company. All of the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

Work West has four trustees who convene eight times per year to discuss and make decisions as to the long term plans of the company. Day to day running is undertaken by Claire Ferris, who is the organisation's Chief Executive.

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

Charitable registration was granted by the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland on 5 June 2015. Following a ruling in 2020 Charities in Northern Ireland registered within this time period are not registered charities but charities in law.

Objectives and activities

The charity's objects are to be a commercially viable organisation which seeks to improve the economic and social profile of West Belfast. There has been no change in these during the year.

The social purpose of the charity is to equip people with the knowledge and skills to become economically resilient. This means developing an entrepreneurial culture in the local area, stimulating enterprise awareness with young people, offering alternative models of enterprise to the local community; as well as developing the personal confidence and ambition of the business people who locate in Work West or use its business support services to grow and succeed to motivate and enable enterprising individuals to establish and expand job creating businesses.

Work West operates workspace through two sites, one targeting private sector businesses and one targeting social enterprises and social innovations. The main office for the agency is located at the thinc lab in the Social Economy Village where the key interventions relating to property management and programme support are actioned. Staff are working both at home and in the office in a hybrid model.

Restricted funds are raised through local government agencies for capital (Cluster fund) or at times the co-ordination and running of some programmes. Overall however the majority of the income is unrestricted.

Work West raises unrestricted funds through the operation of property rental at the private sector site and the Social Economy Village site. Programme delivery and consultancy work also contribute

to unrestricted funds being generated. All funds generated from this activity are used for charitable purposes

Strategic report

The following sections for achievements and performance and financial review form the strategic report of the charity.

Achievements and performance

The Charity has successfully delivered a wide range of support services to businesses and social enterprises in the pre start, start up and growth phases.

Work West developed a strategy from 2021-2023 which would inform the development of the agency during this period. Throughout the year Work West has remained a high performing agency in terms of all programmes delivered in terms of attainment of target.

Work West continues to deliver the two year contract for the Ards and North Down Social Entrepreneurship Programme which was awarded in May 2021 . As at 30th June 2022 15 jobs had been created.

Work West secured the contract for the Go Social programme which was retendered in May 2019 for 3 years. There was an extension of 6 months due to COVID. As at 30th June 2022 35 jobs had been created and 214 people engaged with.

Enterprise Northern Ireland manage and subcontract work to Work West for the Kick Start Programme which supported 17 clients to secure investment of up to £1500 for their businesses.

Work West secured £25,000 Belfast City Council Cluster Fund to invest in redesigning and upgrading the Courtyard at Work West for indoor and outdoor space for tenants to connect with each other and their teams.

Work West secured over £18,000 of consultancy work.

During the period we delivered Foursight creative profiling to 91 people from 9 groups. One of these groups was the senior leadership team of CFNI a major funder.

The Work West site operated at on average 98% occupancy throughout the period. As at 30th June 2022 there were 34 tenant companies/ organisations located on the Work West site and the Social Economy Village. The Social Economy Village operated at on average 86% occupancy over the same period. The lettable space increased over the year by 375 sq ft on the Work West site through renting 2 additional offices formerly used by the organisation. Over 10 existing businesses (both social and private) have been provided with support and signposting through our commitment to achieving a positive social impact in the area. The support for these businesses (who have not qualified for help through specific programmes) assists Work West to achieve our social objectives.

Over 50 hours of time has been given locally to support the regeneration of the area through participation of key staff on Boards and Committees within West Belfast and beyond.

Public benefit

The Directors confirm that they have had due regard for the guidance produced on Public Benefit by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, and are pleased to report that during 2021/2022 they have continued to meet the Public Benefit requirement as follows:

(i) The creation of employment, training and work experience opportunities for residents living in economically and socially deprived areas and consequently a reduction in poverty, unemployment and hardship, leading to a better quality of life for the beneficiaries and consequent improvements in health and well-being.

During the year Work West delivered the following initiatives which helped them to achieve the public benefit detailed in point (i) as follows

- Delivery of the Ards and North Down Social Enterprise Programme lead in element of the programme which supported marginalised groups and individuals to become more enterprising. Up until June 2022 15 jobs were created in the local area many of which were secured by residents living in economically and socially deprived areas. A number of groups supported through the programme had a health and well-being focus. The social impact within the area will have been significant with enhanced mental health, confidence and employability skills. The target of 35 jobs will be achieved by programme end (March 2023).
- Under Go Social 35 jobs were created on the programme by June 2022 (end of year 3 contract extends until 31st March 2023) many of which were secured by residents living in economically and socially deprived areas. The programme target of 50 will be achieved by programme end.

(ii) Enhanced knowledge about setting up and running small businesses and social enterprises resulting in increased levels of self-employment and better prospects of sustainable development.

During the year Work West delivered the following initiatives which helped them to achieve the public benefit detailed in point (ii):

- Through the Ards and North Down Social Entrepreneurship programme 14 new products and services had been developed by participant organisations engaging in social enterprise activity (up until March 2022)
- As at the end of June 2022 Go Social had helped 25 social entrepreneurs set up a new social enterprise
- Through the CFNI Oak funded Housing and Homelessness programme three collaborative teams made up of seven organisations were exploring social enterprise as a model to deliver innovative services to help address housing and homelessness across the North.
- 214 organisations / individuals attended outreach, networking and best practice events for social enterprises and cooperatives during the period.

(iii) Increased levels of knowledge and transferable vocational skills among employees / work experience trainees, assisting in the creation of a more educated, skilled and qualified community.

During the year Work West delivered the following initiatives which helped them to achieve the public benefit detailed in point (iii):

- The CFNI Oak Funded Housing and Homelessness Programme supported seven organisations (15 people working across three teams) from all over Northern Ireland to use the design thinking and creative problem solving process to develop innovative approaches to solving key challenges relating to housing and homelessness in Northern Ireland. Each team developed a new concept and prototyped the idea and all three teams secured funding from CFNi to bring their innovations to fruition. Best practice was shared and new collaborations formed. The skills acquired on this programme were of great benefit to participants directly but also to users and other employees within their organisations.

- Seven workshops were delivered as part of Ards and North Down Social Entrepreneurship Programme and Go Social which facilitated a high level of knowledge exchange attracting 78 attendees (64- Andsep and 14 Go Social).
- Three social sparks took place in Belfast attracting 51 participants experiencing design thinking and exploring the potential of setting up a new social enterprise or cooperative under Go Social in Belfast. Two further social sparks took place, one in Ards and North Down and one in Lisburn and Castlereagh.

(iv) A greater sense among the beneficiaries of more fulfilled and purposeful lives, resulting in a safer, more stable and cohesive community.

During the year Work West delivered the following initiatives which helped them to achieve the public benefit detailed in point (iv)

- The Design Thinking and creative problem solving work delivered under thinc including the CFNI Housing and Homelessness programme and Foursight allowed participants to learn a new skill which is very transferable to home and work life. This skill could be used to solve problems and create new ideas and innovations in participants lives in general. The reach and impact of this process goes beyond the teams who participated directly on the programme.
- 91 people participated in Foursight reveal sessions.
- Both social enterprise programmes supported 65 groups to lead more purposeful lives as the social enterprises at the core of their journey were focused on social impact.

Financial review

The trustees are satisfied with the results of the year as reflected in the financial statements.

Reserves policy

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's expenditure. The trustees consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in income, they will be able to continue the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

Plans for future periods

Work West is a market leader in the field of enterprise development, both private and social having operated in this arena for 33 years. Work West is committed to using design thinking and creative problem solving approaches in relation to its programme delivery. This is reflected through the thinc brand (test house for innovation and creativity). The board has invested in staff training over the period using global experts in Canada and USA and is confident about the demand in the market for creative and design thinking. Across the organisation new programmes and approaches are being developed and tested in relation to entrepreneurship and thinc. A series of products have been tested over the period and are being promoted through consultancy as well as through contracts secured from Council and others. The team continue to use technology to extend their reach in terms of workshop, best practice and mentoring delivery for both enterprise and innovation work.

Over coming months a review will take place of data management within the organisation with a view to implementing a new system to enable the Board to access a broader range of information to facilitate decision making. This will be supplemented by timely reporting on social value relating to the work undertaken.

Occupancy of units is strong and demonstrates demand in the area. The team is keen to explore expanding the property offering by both upgrading current stock and exploring acquiring more space on or off site. There are plans to invest in a tenant navigator role which will support tenants to avail of all support on offer for their businesses to grow. This role will act as a bridge between property and programmes within Work West.

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors 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).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.