

Work West Trustees Report 2022/23



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
- Shauna Collins (appointed July 2022)

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 five 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 utilising a hybrid model of home and office based working.

Restricted funds are at times raised through local government agencies for capital or occasionally the co-ordination and running of certain programmes. No funds are deemed to be restricted in this year. On an annual basis very little income is unrestricted.

Work West raises their 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 prestart, start up and growth phases.

Work West developed a strategy from 2021-2024 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.

Programmes and Service Delivery

Work West delivered the two-year contract for the Ards and North Down Social Entrepreneurship Programme which was awarded in May 2021/April 2022. As of 30th June 2023, 11 jobs were created with a further 21 projected. A six year extension for this programme was secured and delivery commenced in May 2022.

Work West delivered the Belfast City Council Go Social programme during the period targeting social enterprise and cooperative start ups. As of 30th June 2023, 45 jobs had been created and an additional 34 projected. Work West engaged with 248 people through outreach sessions, workshops participating clients and cooperative specific events.

Enterprise Northern Ireland manage and subcontracted work to Work West for the Kick Start Programme which supported 8 clients to secure investment of up to £1,500 for their businesses. This programme ended in December 2022.

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

During the period Work West delivered Foursight creative profiling to 99 people from 16 groups. One of these groups was the senior leadership team of CFNI a major funder. Moreover, through the **Community Solutions to Housing & Homelessness** project the team supported 10 teams (Belfast & Causeway) with 9 accessing a share of Ireland's largest Participatory Budgeting award gaining £160,000 seed funding.

Property

The Work West site operated at on average 98% occupancy throughout the period. As at 30th June 2023 there were 30 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. 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.

Approximately 30 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.

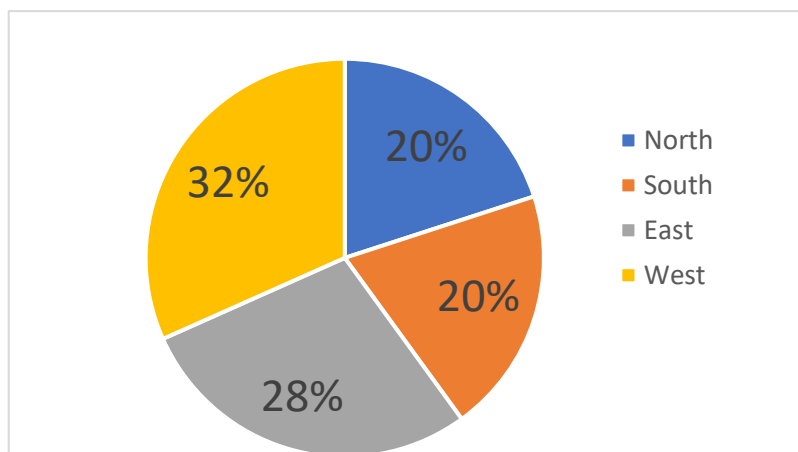
Public benefit

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 2022/23 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 2023, 11 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.
- Under 'Go Social' 45 jobs were created on the programme by June 2023 many of which were secured by residents living in economically and socially deprived areas with 63% of participants based in areas of high Multiple Deprivation.
 - In the year there was equitable spread of participants from across the city with more coming from the west of the city.
 - The programme was successful in engaging underrepresented groups also with 50% of clients being female led and 3% led by members of the global majority.



Work West were award sponsor in the 2023 'Best of the West' awards supporting the Best Social Enterprise category which was shared in a vote between Kids Together Belfast and Falls Community Council for the St. Comgalls project.

(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 12 new products and services had been developed by participant organisations engaging in social enterprise activity (up until March 2023)
- As at the end of June 2023 Go Social had helped 60 social entrepreneurs and cooperatives to develop new ventures
- Through the CFNI Oak funded Housing and Homelessness programme nine of ten teams engaged in the programme pitched for a share of the largest single award of Participatory Budgeting accessing £160,000 of seed investment for their ideas to deliver innovative services to help address housing and homelessness across the North.
- 310 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 ten organisations (40 team members) 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. 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. Nine teams pitched for a share of £160,000 seed funding as part of Ireland's largest ever Participatory Budgeting event.
- Eight skills 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 124 attendees (62 Go Social & 62 ANDSEP).
- Four 'Social Innovation' sessions took place in Belfast attracting 70 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.
- 99 FourSight profiles were completed.
- Both social enterprise programmes supported 89 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 to 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 3 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). 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 the next year we will be using technology more within the organisation to improve efficiencies across the business. There will be timely reporting on social value relating to the work undertaken also.

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 pilot 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. This may be piloted initially with tenants in the Social Economy Village.

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.