

Vision: Establishment of a thriving, diverse Sailortown Urban Village in Belfast Docks

Mission: Establish Sailortown as a gateway to North Belfast with St Joseph's Church and Parochial House at its heart.

Chairs Report:

This year has been a bedding in period for the Committee as we assume the reins first taken up by Sailortown residents in 1999 when faced with the closure of St Joseph's Church and Parochial House. Over the last year we received National Lottery Heritage Fund assistance and are currently working on strengthening our Trustees skills and Staff Capacity to manage a future full restoration of our 2 listed Buildings. As part of this work we are commissioning a Conservation led Condition Report to assess what Structural work needs to be done to reopen St Joseph's as a Community owned space.

Currently open for meanwhile use after a series of H&S repairs, the Church now has a range of activities and events, but these are still limited in capacity pending major intervention work. However, we believe that there is now an extremely strong case for a full restoration of these iconic buildings.

We are also working on strategic planning to ensure that Sailortown has a realistic and viable plan to drive forward the original campaign groups vision of a renewed and proud inner city Community in the Docks area of Belfast.

We wish to thank all our funders, partners and Stakeholders for their support over the year and look forward to strengthening these relationships over the next year.

Trustees:

James McDyer (Chair)

John Gray: Culture/Heritage

Andrew Molloy: RIBA Accredited Conservation Architect

Aisling Madden: PHD Architecture Student

Rosemary McDyer (Treasurer) Ex resident

Martina Campbell: Local Resident

Staff:

Terry McKeown: Project Director

Maeve O'Connor: Community Development

Overview

Sailortown Regeneration Group (SRG) is a Registered Charity set up in 2012 and is governed by a Constitution

Purposes: to promote urban regeneration and advance community development

To further these purposes for the public benefit, SRG carries out the following activities:

- Improve public amenities, facilities and infrastructure
- Work with partners to support Community cohesion and the development of a sustainable community within Sailortown
- To establish a community facility and cooperate with statutory an or voluntary organisations to maintain and manage such facility for activities

The main activities of Sailortown Regeneration Group in the year were:

- Meanwhile use of St Joseph's Church
- Community Development in Sailortown Area
- Culture Arts Heritage Events and community activities
- Organisational Review

The Charity employs a number of grants to carry out these activities and employs 2 staff to manage its day to day operations.

Executive Summary

2023-2024 was another year of working to regenerate Sailortown. We provided activities for our local residents through a range of activities including Sports, Circus skills, Arts/Crafts, Bingo and Boxing. We also held the 2nd year of our Sailortown Festival in June.

St Joseph's, now open for meanwhile use, was able to offer venue hire to a number of Arts and Culture organisations including Cath Q, Festival, Opera NI and Belfast Harps Festival. The space is very popular with local musicians due to its fantastic acoustics and was used for Gigs, filming, Yoga and Boxing events.

We collaborated with the Stella Maris Hostel on a community artwork installation and with Ulster University on a new website for St Joseph's

The year saw Sailortown centrally included in wider connectivity plans for the city of 'Belfast. A new bridge is proposed to link Sailortown to Titanic and create a 'Maritime Mile Loop.'

More detail is here: [wesleyjohnstonsailortowntitanicbridge](https://www.wesleyjohnstonsailortowntitanicbridge.com)

There is a way to go yet, but hopefully we are a step nearer to realising our long term vision for Sailortown to be re-integrated into the City as an inner city Urban village.

Thanks to the tenacity of the Sailortown ex residents Belfast's Docks heritage will be remembered.

There are also plans to build new Social and affordable Homes in Sailortown:

[PilotStreethousing](#) Again a Key step towards repopulating an area devastated by the Belfast Inner City Motorway.

There are however still challenges. Sailortown needs to be included in City Centre and North Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal plans and badly needs investment in independent businesses, Community spaces and public realm improvements.

We are calling for implementation of the [YSIPlacemakingReview](#) recommendations and a focus on the needs of people not traffic.

A highlight of the year was being presented with a Cooperation Ireland: Pride of Place award which was celebrated in the Harbour Offices and at a reception in the Lord Mayor's Parlour.

We were also shortlisted for an Aisling Award and a Ulster Architectural Society Heritage Angels Award where we were runners up in the 'Best Maintenance of a Historic Building or Place'. Category. Hopefully this recognition will assist us in our objective to restore St Joseph's as an iconic Community Space



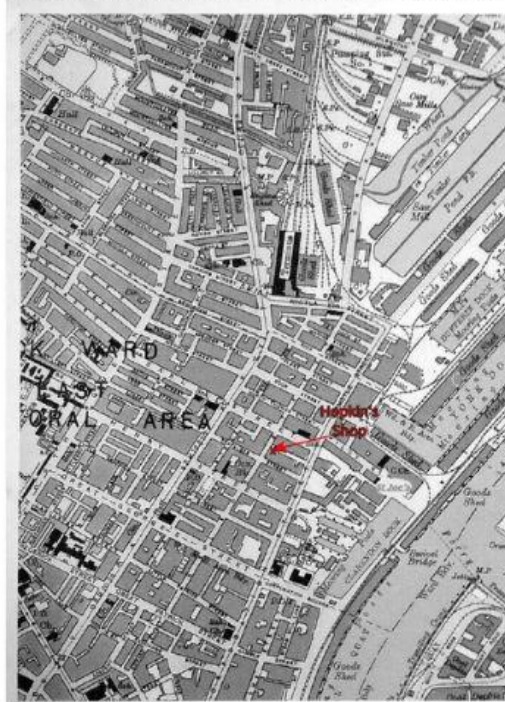
Some Sailortown Activities 2023-24



Our Benny's
Sponsored Walk

Old Sailortown Map

Hopkin's shop was on Nelson St; back door was on North Ann St
Nelson St is now the slip Road for the M3 and Westlink Junction



Benny is now 87 and will walk from his home in Rathcoole to Shaws Bridge and back again to raise funds to help restore St Joseph's. He'll stop at St Joseph's for a chat and a loo break as he always does and later a cuppa at Shaw' Bridge.

Benny was born on 2nd Dec 1935 and his family came to Sailortown just before the Belfast Blitz where they opened a corner shop on the corner of Nelson St and North Ann St. Benny's mum ran the shop while his dad fought in WW2 ending up in Dunkirk, before starting work in H&W as a riveter.

He remembers the Harland and Wolff shipyard workers in their hobnailed boots calling in the early morning for a buttered farl, a feg and a match. These workers crossed the river by boat to the yard on the other side of the Lagan.

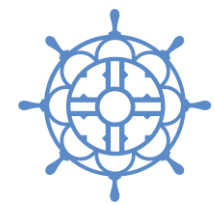
Hopkin's shop was open from the crack of dawn to late at night with customers often knocking on the back door if the front was closed.

Benny started work aged 14 in Milewater Mill and met his wife Violet In Earl St Mission Hall just round the corner from his home in Sailortown.

In the late '60's Hopkin's home and shop were razed to the ground for the new urban Motorway.

Benny and Violet moved to Rathcoole a large housing estate just outside Belfast

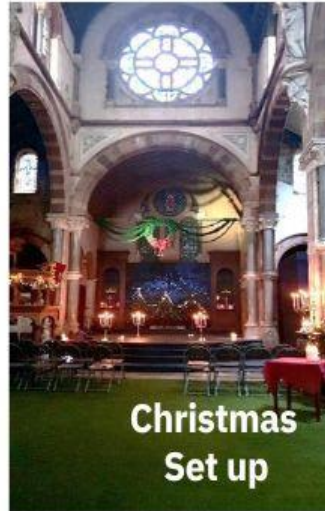
Violet died 17 years ago, and Benny still lives in their home in Rathcoole
Please support him and us as we continue to bring Sailortown back to life as an Inner City Urban village



SAILORTOWN
REGENERATION



Music and Lights



**Christmas
Set up**



Céilé



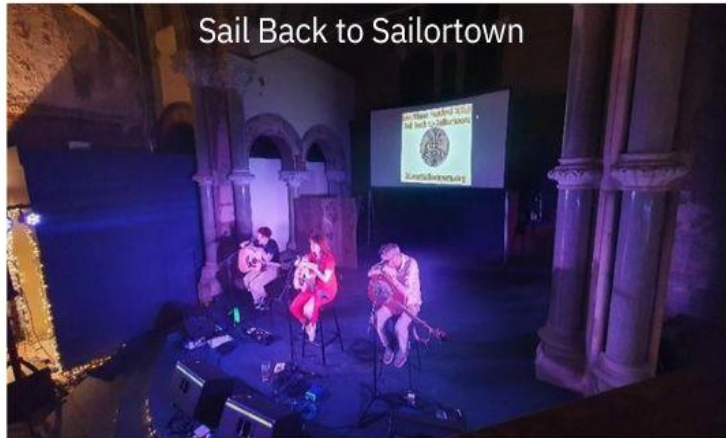
Grand Opera Performers



Lord Mayor's Parlour Visit













Future Outlook

In 2025, a key focus will be to Strengthen our Governance Skills by identifying Key Skills needed for strong leadership as better times are finally in sight for Sailortown.

We will seek to create strong relationships with Local Housing providers to ensure they work for the benefit of the their Tenants.

We will continue to engage with Placemaking agencies to create people friendly connections which improve our local neighbourhood.

And finally we will target major Capital Restoration funding to achieve our key Goal of restoring our 2 listed buildings as part of our North Belfast Flagship project.

Contact Information

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City Council



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for Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Belfast
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MARITIME
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