

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report)

Year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Reference and administrative details

| | |
|---|--|
| Registered charity name | Development Trusts (NI) Limited |
| Charity registration number | NIC102489 |
| Company registration number | NI605197 |
| Principal office and registered office | Cathedral Quarter Managed Work Space 109-113 Royal Avenue Belfast BT1 1FF |

The trustees

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Mr S McClelland | |
| Ms E Murphy | (Retired 19 October 2022) |
| Ms M Patterson | |
| Mr J Meehan | |
| Mr B O'Neill | |
| Mr L O'Hagan | |
| Mr F McAliskey | (Appointed 19 October 2022) |
| Mr S Whelehan | (Retired 19 October 2022) |
| Mrs J McDonald | (Appointed 27 October 2022) |
| Mr N Kinnaird | |
| Mr A Tough | (Appointed 19 October 2022) |
| Mr E McGoldrick | (Appointed 19 October 2022) |

Auditor

Johnston Graham Limited
Chartered accountants & statutory auditor
216/218 Holywood Road
Belfast
BT4 1PD

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Structure, governance and management

DTNI is incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 as a private company limited by guarantee. The Board of Directors are Andy Tough (Chair), Margaret Patterson McMahon (Treasurer), Brian O'Neill (Secretary), John Meehan, Nigel Kinnaird, Stephen McClelland, Liam O'Hagan, Janice McDonald, Eddie McGoldrick and Fintan McAliskey.

The Board meets formally quarterly fulfilling its governance responsibilities with a particular focus on Finance and HR and with oversight of the operational services of the organisation. The board has a policy of continual review of objectives to ensure compliance with governance and proper operation of the organisation.

The Chief Executive Officer oversees the organisations strategic priorities and operational objectives. DTNI complies with its legal and governance obligations and assess operational risks and mitigates for these to the extent reasonably possible.

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Objectives and activities

Mission

DTNI is a membership organisation committed to supporting the development of sustainable asset-owning communities creating shared public benefit.

Vision

Our vision is of a participative democracy made up of vibrant self-reliant communities across Northern Ireland making a positive difference to people's lives through owning and developing sustainable assets and resources.

Values

- **Mutuality**

Society, communities, and the organisation are stronger when we share knowledge and skills and work together in solidarity with each other rather than compete.

- **Accountability**

The organisation should be fully accountable and transparent to its members and funders for what it does.

- **Participative democracy**

Democracy is stronger where ordinary people organise together in community-based organisations, build their assets and resources, and actively and regularly contribute to decisions that affect their lives.

- **Social and economic justice**

A fair and equitable society is a healthier and happier one.

- **Integrity**

It is important to build trust between people by acting to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

- **Independence**

The organisation should provide an independent voice in promoting its mission and values.

Priorities

DTNI represents the interests of community development trusts, associations and social enterprise agencies that make up the Development Trust Network in Northern Ireland (NI). It provides development support, advice, expertise and experience to communities and the public sector to promote the sustainable community development and to advance the socially productive use of land and property assets, focussing on.

- **Community Asset Transfer**

Support communities to identify opportunities, unlock strengths and resources through the ownership of community assets.

- **Community Wealth Building and Wellbeing Economy**

Support communities to be inclusive, enterprising, promote wellbeing economy and have a meaningful voice.

- **Influencing Decision-making**

To influence public policy and practice, in partnership with members, in support of unlocking the strengths and resources in communities, to build wealth, well-being and shape decisions that affect them.

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- Knowledge leadership

To be a leading learning organisation, which is a valued source of expertise that uses research and evaluation to expand knowledge in the sector and continuously improves its work.

- Membership

To develop the membership of DTNI and provide effective support to members.

- Communications

To effectively promote the organisation and communicate with all its stakeholders.

Programmes

Priorities are upheld through the delivery of programme activities including:

- Community Asset Transfer (CAT) - Awareness raising, advocacy for voluntary, community and social enterprise acquisition management and ownership of surplus public land and property assets.
- Community Wealth Building (CWB) - Awareness raising and promotion of CWB with a focus on *strengthening local economic development practice, strategically engaging, and working with development trusts to deliver the priorities for a wealth generating economy that addresses poverty, deprivation & marginalisation.*
- Community Rights - Awareness raising, facilitation of community dialogue and political advocacy for the introduction of a community rights act in Northern Ireland that considers the legislative changes needed within planning law.
- Civic Participation - Working in partnership with social and public stakeholders to enhance civic participation and decision making across local government to strengthen community voice in local economic development and participative democracy.

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Year ended 31 March 2023

Achievements and performance

Established in 2010 DTNI has a modest membership of approximately 100 community development trusts, associations, and social enterprise agencies. During the current period, we have:

- Maintained a board of high reputation and skill.
- Represented our members interests through networking learning and sharing events, conferences, and information webinars.
- Represented our members interests on the acquisition, management, and ownership of assets to the NI Executive, central and local government.
- Advocated for an NI capital development revenue investment fund.
- Supported the Department for Communities to advance its policy interest and programme objectives for Community Asset Transfer and Community Wealth Building.
- Supported the interest of VCSE organisations to pursue opportunities to acquire public sector assets under the NI Executive Community Asset Transfer policy framework.
- Promoted and facilitated VCSE application to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Levelling Up programme funds.
- Promoted the interest of VCSE organisations to draw from a UK Community Ownership Fund.
- Represented the interests of members through participation on the NI Joint Forum.
- Represented the interests of members across the UK through joint work with the Development Trust Association networks in England, Scotland, and Wales.
- Represented the interests of members globally through our membership of the International Federation of Societies and in Europe through our work with the European Federation of Societies.
- Developed the policy agenda in support of community ownership, community rights and local economy.
- Worked continuously to improve our reputation and to grow our membership.

For the reporting period (2022-23) DTNI employed a Chief Executive Officer, two Senior Programme Coordinators, an Administration and Communications Officer and a Digital Innovation Officer. DTNI employees oversee the delivery of contract objectives in support of Community Asset Transfer (CAT) and Community Wealth Building (CWB) for the Department for Communities (DfC) and Community Rights and CWB (local Government) supported by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Rank Foundation programme 'Start Here'.

We concluded work on local economy early in the financial year for Friends Provident and on Civic Participation supported by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

We tendered for and successfully delivered the Support Network for Social Entrepreneurs (SuNSE - Interreg NW Europe) for Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council.

We continued to provide development support to voluntary, community organisations from across NI with an interest in acquiring and managing and developing an asset base including promotion of its

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position within the internal 'public sector' market and advanced its interest in the ownership and management of surplus public assets.

We engaged extensively with our sister networks in the UK to prepare a tender proposal to the Community Ownership Fund. We learned late in the financial year that our tender was successful and DTNI would be the lead development support provider in NI from 2023/25.

For several years we have been the lead advocate for the economic development functions of our members and their collective contribution to the economic affairs of NI. In the year 2022/23 we concluded our contract with the Department for Communities (DfC) on Community Wealth Building. We had engaged extensively with the VCSE sector and working with Queens Communities & Place programme at Queens University Belfast we prepared five key publications on community wealth building (see below) and an executive summary "Next Steps in Community Wealth Building".

We also worked as the secretariat for the DfC independent Ministerial Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building. The panel presented its report, "Recommendations to advance community wealth building in Northern Ireland" to the Minister at DfC.

1. Asset Based Development and Community Wealth Building
2. Making Financial Power Work for Local Places
3. Just Labour Markets & Inclusive Work
4. The Plural Economy, Social Economics and Building Communities
5. Progressive Procurement of Goods & Services

The reports on CWB represent a significant development intervention on behalf of the family of community development trusts. This work aligns purposefully with the Department for Communities' strategic plan 2020-25, 'Building Inclusive Communities'. Referenced within the cross-cutting theme 'sustainability & inclusive growth' is the departments commitment to: 'Grow and scale community wealth building to support economic recovery'.

We picked up on the new opportunities presented through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities and provided support for members applying to the Levelling Up and Community Ownership Funds through Westminster.

We continued to make representation to central government for a dedicated capital fund for the VCSE sector in NI. That campaign remains ongoing. DTNI have led the public debate on the need for reform of local economic development practice in NI. We continued to work with our partners in the family of UK development trusts and the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. The organisation continued (and diversified) its work in support of a Community Rights Act in NI supported by investment from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. In addition, we have continued to deliver on the investment from the Rank Foundation through the 'Start Here' programme with which we have been able to target and recruit new entrants to the work of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

We have continued to explore and avail of opportunities to trade on the professional expertise held by the staff team at DTNI including tendering to test the Community Transfer policy framework of Belfast City Council.

We continued to represent the interests of members through our participation on the Joint Forum shaping the new agreement for joint working between the voluntary and community sector and the public sector.

We are thankful for the recognition from our independent investors and the faith they have shown in the work of the organisation.

Heading into 2023, we committed to delivery of following work priorities.

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Financial review

The company reported a surplus for the financial year to 31 March 2023 of £60,781 (2022 - £91,603) resulting in a total reserve balance of £324,986 (2022 - £264,205).

The company has a reserves policy in place which seeks to establish free reserves equivalent to a minimum of 6 months of recurrent overhead expenditure.

Plans for future periods

Heading into 2023, we committed to delivery of following work priorities.

Working with Central Government:

- Ensure that DTNI has an enhanced role as a regional infrastructure organisation delivering on community ownership, on community rights and on the 5 pillars of community wealth building (Assets, Plural Economy, Financial Power, Fair Employment and Progressive Procurement).
- Progress our development support to align with the emerging policy & programme priorities of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme and People & Place.
- Ensure the work of DTNI is recognised as central to the delivery of DfC's strategic plan 2020/25, 'Building Inclusive Communities'.

Working with UK Partners

- Engage with Locality, DTAS & DTAW and UK support partners to ensure that VCSE organisations are actively supported to advance their interest in the Department for Levelling-up, Housing & Communities, Community Ownership Fund.
- Provide development support to assist organisations in the preparation of business case for submission to the Community Ownership Fund.
- Lobby for an NI Community Ownership Fund (capital and revenue) for VCSE organisations.

Working with Independent Trusts & Foundations

- Engage with local government to explore common interests around wealth building, local economy, and community rights.
- Engage members to ensure their development issues and support needs are accurately captured and presented to local and central government and other relevant stakeholders.
- Develop a new digital civic participation engagement platform for members of DTNI.

Additionally, we agreed to:

- Develop new support programmes with the UK Development Trust Networks." Build the Development Trust Network in NI.
- Share our development model with civic organisations in the Republic of Ireland." Lobby for an NI Community Rights and Empowerment Act.
- Represent member interests on the Joint Forum.
- Advocate for policy & programme support on community led housing.

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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.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

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The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The auditor is deemed to have been re-appointed in accordance with section 487 of the Companies Act 2006.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 9 October 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Mr B O'Neill
Trustee