

Company registration number: NI605197

Charity registration number: 102489

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

(A company limited by guarantee)

Financial Statements Financial Statements

31 March 2024

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

Structure, governance and management

Development Trusts NI (DTNI) is incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 as a private company limited by guarantee (NI605197) and is a register charity (NI102489). The current Board of Directors are Andy Tough (Chair), Margaret Patterson McMahon (Treasurer), Brian O'Neill (Secretary), John Meehan, Nigel Kinnaird, Liam O'Hagan, Eddie McGoldrick and Fintan McAliskey. Within the reporting period Janice McDonald (Down Business Centre) served as a company Director. Stephen McClelland (Newry, Mourne Cooperative Enterprise Agency) stood down as a Director of DTNI.

The Board meets 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.

Risk Register

The organisation, in line with best practice, seeks to identify and mitigate for risks that may impact the continuance of its work. Key to this is to maintain a board of high repute and sustaining the highest standards of good governance.

The company's' CEO is charged with identifying and bringing to the attention of the board of directors matters with a potential to have a detrimental impact on the work of the organisation. A regular risk assessment is presented at the board's quarterly meetings.

For the year ahead, 2024/25, risk factors are deemed low. Though there is no clarity on future funding arrangements from the Department for Communities (DfC), it is expected that DfC will continue to invest in the work of DTNI as a regional infrastructure support provider. Programme funding from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Rank Foundation are due to close at the end of the current financial year (2024/25). Though this will impact the organisations overall level of funding, the organisation has secured new programme funding and is able to draw from its reserve to sustain its activities through 2025/26. Several additional programme investment opportunities are being developed and the organisation will continue to tender for new business.

Financial Reserves

In line with best practice in the financial governance of charitable companies, the organisation retains a six month reserve to enable it to manage its obligations to staff and creditors should the company enter a phase of closure. The audited accounts for the financial period show that the organisation finances are sufficient in this regard.

On wider matters of financial prudence, the organisation maintains a policy register directing the management of its finances and the maintenance of a reserve. The organisation outsources and tenders for financial support services in support of the day to day management of its finances and financial auditors for auditing and presentation of annual accounts.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

Objectives and activities

Mission

A Development Trust in every community that wants one: Promoting community ownership of assets and supporting community wealth & well-being.

Vision

For communities to be financially and politically empowered to control and shape their future.

Values

- **Excellence**

Striving for excellence in everything we do.

- **Respect**

Valuing everyone and supporting diversity.

- **Transparency**

Being open and trustworthy.

- **Participation**

Promoting collective action and teamwork.

- **Partnership**

Building and strengthening partnerships.

- **Justice**

Promoting community rights and equality.

- **Environmentalism**

Building sustainability for future generations.

- **Democracy**

Upholding community participation as a cornerstone of democracy.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

Priorities

DTNI represents the interests of community development trusts, associations and social enterprises 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 sustainable community development, community led business and to advance the socially productive use of land and property assets, focusing on:

1. Membership Development, Networking & Leadership:

Delivering against our values of participation and partnership.

2. Community Ownership:

Upholding our mission to promote ownership of assets.

3. Community Wealth Building:

Supporting our vision of financially empowered communities.

4. Political Lobbying & Policy Advocacy:

Delivering our mission: A Development Trust in every community that wants one.

5. Good Governance:

Ensures transparency and excellence in our operations.

To support delivery of our strategic priorities we focus on.

• **Enhancing Organisational Capacity**

Investing in our people and technology to ensure we have the resources needed to achieve our mission.

• **Increasing Member and Stakeholder Engagement**

Working closely with our members and stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.

• **Expanding Programme Offerings**

Developing new programmes and initiatives based on the needs of our communities, ensuring we provide relevant and impactful services.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

Programmes

Our strategic priorities are met through the delivery of our programmes: In 2023/24 this has included.

1. Community Asset Transfer (CAT)

Awareness raising, advocacy for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations acquisition management and ownership of surplus public land and property assets.

2. Community Ownership Fund (COF)

Providing development support, advice and access to professional expertise to bring capital investment to save community assets.

3. Community Wealth Building (CWB)

Awareness raising around CWB & facilitating 2 CWB Partnerships one in Larne and the other in the North-West with a focus on strengthening local economic development practice that addresses poverty, deprivation & marginalisation.

Working with Mid-Ulster District Council to advance a 'test and learn' intervention in support of CWB.

4. Community Rights

Awareness raising, facilitation of community dialogue and political advocacy for the introduction of a community rights act in NI.

5. DTNI Connect

Working to support our members to enhance civic participation and decision making in their local communities.

6. Research

Participation and commissioning of policy action papers on the themes of Community Led Housing, Asset Transfer (General Disposal Consent) and Rural Assets.

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

- Maintained a board of high reputation and skill.
- Hosted networking events, seminars, conferences, and information webinars.
- Represented the needs of members to the NI Executive, central and local government.
- Advocated for an NI capital, development, and 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 VCSEs to pursue Community Asset Transfer opportunities.
- Supported VCSEs to apply to the UK Community Ownership and Levelling-Up funds.
- Represented the interests of members on the NI Joint Forum.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

- 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 the European Federation of Societies.
- Informed the policy agenda in support of community ownership, community rights and local economy.

For the reporting period (2023-24) DTNI employed a Chief Executive Officer, two Senior Programme Coordinators, a Corporate Support 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 local government; Community Rights and support for 2 CWB pilot projects supported by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Rank Foundation programme 'Start Here, supporting the development of DTNI Connect.

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

In October '23 we held a rural Community Ownership Conference in partnership with Rural Community Network with the support of the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). This event highlighted a lack of specific legislation here in Northern Ireland compared to community empowerment rights in Scotland and England. Speakers included Scottish Government representative Malcom Cowie, Plunkett Foundation, the Development Trust Association Scotland, and the Community Land Trust Network, England.

We engaged extensively with our sister networks in the UK and successfully tendered to lead as the Community Ownership Fund (COF) development support partner in NI. The UK tender was led by our sister network Locality, the Development Trust Associations of Scotland and Wales and the Plunkett Foundation. DTNI is one of ten strategic partners providing support across the UK. COF was, at the time, administered by DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) which is now the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).

In the reporting period we promoted the opportunity that COF presented and engaged with the interest of communities who were interested in applying for capital investment. The demand from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors has been overwhelming with circa 200 organisations expressing an interest in the first year of operation. We worked extensively to meet the demand across civic society and engaged our political representatives politically presenting the case for a NI Community Ownership Fund, to meet ongoing capital need, revenue requests and the development supports required.

DTNI also submitted an application for investment to support its business proposal to acquire the former physiotherapy centre and Synagogue at 4 Annesley Street Belfast. This listed asset is scheduled for disposal by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. DTNI's proposal in acquiring this listed heritage asset was to establish a permanent base for the organisation and a resource centre for its members.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

In the reporting period we continued to advocate for the economic development functions of our members and their collective contribution to the economic affairs of NI. In the year 2023/24 we supported the setting up of 2 Community Wealth Building partnerships, in the North-West (Derry City and Strabane District Council) and in the North-East (Larne). This work has been enabled through support from the Department for Communities and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and builds on the key recommendation from the independent advisory panel on Community Wealth Building report 'to establish a CWB pilot fund. Though no fund has yet been approved DTNI and its social partners in the North-West and the North-East have worked to establish two independent CWB partnerships who in turn work in partnership to share learning and best practice to advance and implement CWB practice.

DTNI's work on CWB represent a significant development intervention on behalf of the family of community development trusts across NI. 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'.

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. In the year in question DTNI's senior programme manager worked with Mid Ulster District Council on a 'test and learn' programme exploring CWB.

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 2024/25, we have committed to delivery of following work priorities.

Working with 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 Department for Communities, namely, the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme and People & Place.
- Build a policy and programme relationship with the Department for the Economy to advance CWB in local economic development strategies.
- Ensure the work of DTNI continues to be recognised as central to the delivery of DfC's strategic plan 2020/25, 'Building Inclusive Communities'.
- Present the case for an NI Community Ownership Fund that will meet communities access to Capital & Revenue requirements.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Trustees' Report

- Engage with local government to explore common interests around wealth building, regeneration, local economy, and community rights.

Working with Partners.

- Engage and work with Locality, DTAS & DTAW to ensure that VCSE organisations from NI and DTNI members are actively supported to advance their interest in the Community Ownership Fund, its successor fund and other UK programme opportunities.
- Work with partners in the Republic of Ireland (Carmichael) to develop opportunities for cross-border networking, sharing, and learning.
- Maintain DTNI's membership and continue to work with the IFS and EFS to represent the interests of community development trusts from Ireland within Global and European networks.

Working with Members.

- Engage members to ensure their development issues and support needs are accurately captured and presented to local and central government.
- Develop new support programmes for members with the UK Development Trust Networks.
- Develop new support programmes for members through the Shared Island Fund & build relationships with VCSE's in the Republic of Ireland.
- Represent member interests on the Joint Forum.
- Deliver member development services on governance, business planning, investment readiness, enterprise awareness, management accounts and facilities management.

Development Trusts (NI) Limited

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the directors of Development Trusts (NI) Limited 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), including FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards, comprising FRS 102 have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that can disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company 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 charitable company 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.

08 Nov 2024

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



.....
Brian O'Neil
Trustee