

The trustees of the Society are pleased to present their annual Director's report together with the audited financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 March 2022, which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for Companies Act purposes.

The financial statements comply with all relevant legislation and with current recommended accounting practice

Structure, Governance & Management:

The John Hewitt Society was formally incorporated in August 2001, as a not-for-profit limited liability company with charitable status, registered in N. Ireland at the company address.

Established in 1987, for over thirty years the Society has run its key event the John Hewitt International Summer School (JHISS), first in Garron Tower School, Co Antrim, and over the last two decades in The Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre Armagh. Until the disruption of the pandemic lockdown in March 2020, which resulted in our first-ever online virtual festival, the JHISS has run annually over six days at the end of July, featuring approximately 45-65 events involving over 70 artists, contributors, and performers from Verbal, Visual and Performing Arts, politics and individual speakers based on a theme. Highly regarded as a Literary and Arts event of Local, National, and International esteem, the John Hewitt International Summer School is recognised by Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council as one of their flagship events receiving financial support from their International Tourism Event Fund (£15k), and since 2020, through a Service Level Agreement (£10k) for provision of cultural services within the borough.

The Society has, through the management of the JHISS for over 30+ years, proven its ability to deliver a large-scale event of national and international reputation, with relevant local interest as well as the ability to attract visitors and tourists from well beyond our borders. The event is coordinated by the Director working closely with a diverse voluntary Arts programming committee with 15 members. The Society is a registered arts charity with Charities Commission NI & Companies House, with professional membership of NICVA, Arts & Business NI, and the Fundraising Regulator all of whom support the committee & board with information and training in best practice within financial controls, audience development, and effective governance procedures.

The Society has a number of best-practice policies in place which are reviewed every three years, including, Financial Controls & Expenses; Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults; Health & Safety; Environmental; Equal Opportunities, and a Risk Policy and Register which the trustees review quarterly. An Event Management Plan and Risk Assessment matrix are reviewed for all large-scale projects. In 2020, the John Hewitt Society Friends scheme was launched to help raise additional funds. A new donations portal has now been added to the website and everyone who registers for an event online through Eventbrite can donate.

In addition to sustaining and increasing the quality and popularity of the John Hewitt International Summer School, the Society provides literary arts programming in collaboration with local Councils, schools, writing groups, community, cultural heritage, and arts organisations across Northern Ireland; cultural tourism opportunities with literary walks, workshops, and a bus tour, when requested, and an expansion into cross-community engagement using creative writing to explore cultural identity issues. As we emerged from lockdown, the Society revived its community engagement outreach activities for literary arts within Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council, and in partnership with others launched a new Literary, Arts and Heritage Festival in North Belfast over the last weekend in February.

The Society continues to build strong relationships with elected members and local Government Officers throughout N. Ireland, as well as with a wide range of community & voluntary organisations within local Council areas and outside, including cross-community and cross-border organisations. To date, the Society has developed several longstanding

relationships with an increasing number of funders and sponsors, with some spanning 10 years or more, indicating that sponsors and stakeholders have confidence in the Society's ability to plan, execute and deliver high-quality events.

Board of Trustees

Chairperson: Anthony Kennedy, OBE

Deputy chair: Ryan Cornett

Treasurer: Ryan Cornett

Secretary: Naomi Leitch

Dr Myrtle Hill, Dr Paul Maddern, Paul McAvinchey
Paul Sweeney, Aoife Walsh (formerly Fee)

Programme Committee:

Alex Catherwood, Ryan Cornett, Cahal Dallat, Frank Ferguson (appointed June 2021), Anne-Marie Fyfe, Stephen Gordon (resigned January 2022), Myrtle Hill, Bill Jeffrey, Tony Kennedy, Naomi Leitch, Paul Maddern, Tess Maginness, Paul McAvinchey, Raquel McKee, William Redpath (resigned May 2021), Paul Sweeney, Aoife Walsh (formerly Fee)

Staffing:

Patricia Morris, Director.

The Director answers to the Board of Trustees.

The Chair of the Board line manages the Director.

Independent Examiner:

Janet Jensen, ACMA, CGMA
Ekstra Accounting Solutions Ltd
2 Beechhill Park South
Belfast
Co Antrim
BT8 6PB

Public Benefit Statement:

Mission of The John Hewitt Society

to promote literature, arts, and culture inspired by the ideals and ideas of the poet John Hewitt.

Strategic aims

- Fortify The John Hewitt Society as one of Northern Ireland's main literary organisations, with an artistic reach across Northern Ireland.
- Strengthen the John Hewitt International Summer School as Northern Ireland's main literary event with an increased international programme.
- Develop new audiences, including developing a cohesive outreach and community development scheme to build a more diverse audience, reflective of society.

Objectives

- Provide a high-quality Literary Arts programme which explores and celebrates the artistic and social power of poetry and prose, and an appreciation of our rich literary arts heritage.
- Increase new attendees at the Summer School by an additional 5% by promoting the bursary sponsorship scheme to the local community through cross-promotion of author readings to community outreach participants and other events and festivals across NI.
- Enhance the development of the literary arts through innovative partnerships and collaborations and encourage new attendees/bursary sponsorship applications from collaborative relationships developed throughout year-round programme of activities outside of the annual Summer School period.
- Re-establish the international output of the Summer School through staff utilising international funding opportunities for artist exchanges and travel bursaries.
- Further develop regional partnerships and cross-border opportunities by exploring new avenues of income e.g., trusts & foundations grant funding and sponsorship from local Councils, traders, businesses and individuals.
- Develop cultural tourism links through tourism contacts such as Tourism NI, Australian's Abroad and others.
- To attract, develop and retain a diverse cross-cultural demographic, local and global audience through our annual in person and online programme, digital and social networking platforms.
- Encourage the exploration of diversity, cultural and social identity by encouraging discussion and debate through the medium of the literary arts and creative writing.

Develop new audiences

- Engage with tourism opportunities, partnering with hospitality and/or accommodation providers to further develop links to promote cultural festivals as key attractions in attractive locations.
- To establish a new weekend Literature, Heritage and Arts Festival in North Belfast in partnership with local Arts, Heritage, Community groups, Ulster University and individuals, based on the highly successful JHISS model, providing neutral spaces for the local community and individuals from throughout Belfast, NI, ROI & elsewhere, from different cultural and community backgrounds to allow them explore political and cultural issues through high profile literature, arts and heritage events, take part in creative writing tastings workshops and engage with high quality artists, writers and speakers.
- Engage 50-100 new participants annually, across socially disadvantaged areas in the continuation of the Once Alien Here project as part of our community outreach programme.
- Programme ambitious and high-profile international poets/authors/speakers at the JHISS and at other events.
- Maintain partnerships with established Literary organisations to maximise artistic potential of our programme, such as with Poetry Ireland and Belfast International Arts Festival.

Achievements & Performance

After Covid lockdown when businesses were allowed to open up again with social distancing and other public health restrictions, the Committee planned a return to normal activities starting with a reduced 5-day JHISS programme from 9.45 am – 8.30 pm daily, as evening Theatre performance for the public were not allowed. Despite the various challenges, we were delighted to programme and stage our first hybrid JHISS at our festival base in the Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre Armagh, from 25-29 July 2021. Over the 5 days, we produced 5 digital and 5 hybrid events live to Artists in Finland, India, South Africa, Australia, UK, and Ireland, while the rest of the contributors were live and live streamed on stage in the Market Place Theatre in Armagh. All events were recorded and can be viewed on the John Hewitt YouTube Channel as part of our archive and for future audience development. As Theatres were not allowed to open to the public until 6pm on Tuesday 27 July, the first two days of Summer School events were held online, with in-house artists live streamed from the Theatre. In line with public health protocols at that time, including social distancing and a maximum audience of 90 per event enforced in the Theatre, our main audience were our bursary students with additional public audience making up to 90 people. Although we had over 150 online applications for the bursary sponsorship scheme, the

number of residential bursaries were constrained by reduced opportunities for sponsorship due to the financial challenges at that time. However, with all theatres closed for the previous 100 days, it was uplifting to see the excitement and enthusiasm of the bursary students and audiences who attended to be able to return to live events once again. An exciting addition to our programme during this period was the debut Look North! The North Belfast Festival (NBF) in which the Society was the lead organisation and was elected to chair the NBF network membership. This new weekend 3-day Festival was developed in partnership with local Arts, Heritage and Community groups including Belfast Charitable Society, The North Belfast Heritage Cluster and Ulster University

Activities:

- **The Big Arts Weekend, Cushendun.** 1 May 2021: Online.

Author Bernie Mc Gill in conversation with Tony Kennedy. Due to Covid regulations at that time, this event was live online through Zoom platform.

- **The 34th John Hewitt International Summer School**

Monday 26 - Friday 30 July 2021: The Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre Armagh.

This year's Festival programme was a mixture of the physical and the virtual with all events both live and live streamed to a global audience daily. Spread over 5 days and ending each night at 8.30 pm, due to continuing public health Covid regulations at that time, some contributors and audiences were back in the Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre Armagh, while others joined us online. With social distancing still in place and with a restricted Theatre audience, not only had we very reduced audience numbers but they were spread throughout the auditorium with every other row free.

The Summer School addressed Climate Change and Environmental issues with the theme *"The Environment: Staking the Future: politics, people, and planet"*, inspired by John Hewitt's poem, *'Because I paced my Thought'*.

The opening speaker Professor Pramod Nayyar contributed live streamed from the University of Hyderabad, India and gave a stimulating talk, after we resolved problems arising from a local electric storm in Mumbai. With the support of the Irish Association, John Fitzgerald former Chair of Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Board contributed from Galway on the response Ireland should be making to the climate emergency; Sam Mc Bride then of The Newsletter spoke of the RHI scandal; Pádraig Ó Tuama stimulated us with his talk on Partition, Poetry, Borders and Imagination, and Professor Conor Carville spoke on Heaney's Hewitt. The Arts talk by Rita Duffy involved deliberations on the climate crisis and the urgent need for change.

Alan Mehan introduced a panel discussing Inspiring a Sustainable Future comprising Professor John Barry, Emma Must, and Emmi Itäranta contributing live from Finland. The Slugger O'Toole panel consisted of Steven Agnew, Dawn Purvis, Joanne Stuart and considered the relationship between the environment and the economy. Poetry contributions were by Audrey Molloy - live from Australia - Caitiona Ní Chléirich, John Fitzgerald, all presented in association with The Gallery Press; Annmarie Ní Churraín, Lisa Kelly, Stephen Sexton, Kathleen McCracken, Rachel Hegarty and Jane Robinson, with special performance poetry event hosted by Raquel McKee, Colin Hassard, Nattasse Latcham and Tu Nokwe.

Prose writers were Billy O'Callaghan in conversation with Paul McVeigh, debut novelists Danielle McLaughlin and Fiona Scarlett, Nuala O'Connor in conversation with Maureen Boyle, Lucy Caldwell and Louise Kennedy in conversation with Jan Carson, and Jane Robinson speaking and reading. The Crime Fiction Special involved Claire Allen, Gerard Brennan, Brian McGilloway and Stuart Neville. Armagh Writers Victoria Catolla, Conor Carville, Sue Divin, and Byddi Lee shared their experiences with us. Glenn Patterson chaired a discussion about screen writing featuring Daragh Carville, Aislinn Carke and Declan Lawn. The centenary of Brian Moore birth was marked by a debate chaired by the

John Barry is Professor of Green Political Economy and Co-Director of the Centre for Sustainability, QUB, and Co-Chair Belfast Climate Commission. His areas of academic research include post-growth & heterodox political economy; the politics, policy, political economy of climate breakdown & climate resilience; socio-technical analyses of low carbon energy transitions.

Barry.

'Revolution, Letting Go and Moving On: Reconnecting People, Place and Planet through Poetry and Politics' by John Barry.

27 October 2021: QUB, Larmor Lecture Theatre.

• **QUB The John Hewitt Public Lecture**

The last showcase in a series of Once Alien Here (OAH) published books of creative writing by local ABC Council residents, in association with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Peace IV programme and the John Hewitt Society. Despite various challenges due to the pandemic, local community groups in Madden, Darkley, Keady and Armagh and two online groups completed our creative writing course over lock down with a variety of in person (when allowed) and online workshops culminating in this showcase event. It was a rather nostalgic event due to the many challenges they all had to encounter, none more so than for the members of the two online groups who were able to meet each other for the first time. Hosted by ABC Council PIV and BFAM staff, it included workshop participants from each group, along with family members and friends who came to support them. A total of 8 participants (aged 16 – 70s) shared their writing from their book reading them for the first time on stage to high acclaim from the assembled audience and guests.

19 October 2021: Armagh City Hotel.

• **Creative Writing Programme: Once Alien Here Book Launch**

In association with the Libraries NI Armagh City Chapter in Armagh City Library. To celebrate NPD 2021, local poets Paul Jeffut and Lydna Tavakoli read from their work. This was the first live event for the poets since lock down and, for some of the audience members. Due to ongoing indoor Covid 19 restrictions, numbers were limited to 18 as this event was socially distanced and audiences had to adhere to public health covid guidance.

7 October 2021: Armagh City Library.

• **UK National Poetry Day**

Despite all the challenges that we had to endure due to Covid restrictions, a total of 25 events with 66 contributors, including artists, academics and journalists, were live streamed from the auditorium by Silverink Belfast, assisted by the Market Place Theatre tech team. Over the 5 days, a total of 5 digital and 5 hybrid events, with contributors from Tampere - Finland, Hyderabad - India, Johannesburg - South Africa, Sydney - Australia, Dublin, Cork, Westport, Leitrim and Belfast, were live streamed to the Theatre throughout the week, while another 54 contributors were live on stage in the Theatre. In the 100 days since the first lock down on 20 March 2020, the JHISS was the first of three live Theatre events which opened in N. Ireland to a public audience on Tuesday 27th July at 6pm. With social distancing and audience numbers limited to a maximum of 90 per event, this amounted to 23% of the normal total Theatre capacity. Despite this, it was a busy and rewarding week, while it was good to see the return of our bursary students, participants/audience members returning to the Theatre again.

School for the first time.

Joint Moore centenary project leader Professor Sinad Moynihan and featuring Malachi O'Doherty, Jan Carson, and Sharon Dempsey, each arguing the case for their favourite Moore novel. Exhibitions in the Gallery and on the foyer walls featured *Perceptions* by local artist Frances McKenna, and *Road Bowling* in Armagh and Cork by Colin Robins and Joonas Aittonurmi. With the support of The Open University creative writing workshops were both physical and virtual and featured Maureen Boyle, Paul Mc Veigh, Heather Richardson, Sue Divin, Malachi O'Doherty live in Armagh while Nessa O'Mahoney, Nicola Harlow, Sarah Moore-Fitzgerald, and Kathleen McCracken delivered online workshops for Summer School for the first time.

St Patrick's Symposium, in association with Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and The Market Place Theatre, on the theme "Tending Our Planet". Hosted by former BBC Journalist Karen Patterson, it opened with a welcome message by the Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Alderman Glenn Barr. The keynote speaker was Professor John Barry, QUB. Karen Patterson chaired a youth panel of local climate change activists - Anna Kernahan, Cormac Matthews and Emer Rafferty in discussion (remotely) with Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs. The symposium also featured live poetry readings by Mary Montague and Niamh McNally, with a musical interlude by singer songwriter Wendy Jack.

• At Home with St Patrick's Week Festival Symposium
15th March 2022: The Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre.

Despite the backdrop of ongoing Covid challenges, the debut NBF 2022 delivered a total of 24 live events, one hybrid event and 4 creative writing workshops in 14 venues over 3 days along the new North Belfast Cultural Corridor. Union Street bar on Sunday night. Music Centre, The String Ninjas Band in the John Hewitt Bar, with CaberGay Looks North rounding off the Festival in Music was provided by St Malachy's College Traditional Music Group, a Music and Film Showcase in the Oh Yeah Marnie Kennedy. Malachi O'Doherty, Heather Richardson, Maureen Boyle and literary discussions by Jan Carson, Sharon Dempsey and Bleakney, Paula Cunningham, and Scott McKendry. Creative writing Workshops were delivered by Paul McVeigh, by Intercomm North Belfast and were enthusiastically received. Poetry readings were given by Colin Hassard, Jean Regeneration. Gerald Dawe spoke on "A City Imagined". The first event Look North Short Story Awards were supported Heritage Buildings in the Conflict, panel discussions on Brian Moore at 100, Literature and Religion, and Heritage and McLaverty, Ruth Carr and Raquel McKee with a poetry performance of the Life of Mary Ann McCracken, a 6x6 talk on The opening talk was given by Dr Eamon Phoenix, and sessions included Eamon Hughes in Discussion with Bernard a social history of North Belfast, and talks and tours of Clifton Street Orange Hall and The Indian Community Centre. The Festival featured walking tours of John Hewitt's walk to School, Brian Moore's Belfast Clifton Street Cemetery and Belfast Harbour Commissioners and The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and Intercomm North Belfast. Belfast, and sponsored by The National Lottery Community Fund, Belfast City Council Community Festivals Fund, North Belfast Heritage Cluster, Ulster University, Libraries NI, Beat Carnival Centre, Spectrum Centre and Imagine Hewitt Society, the festival was planned and organised through a network of organisations and individuals including the programme of activities took place over 3 days on the last weekend in February. Chaired by Tony Kennedy, the John The debut Look North! North Belfast Festival, celebrating the arts and cultural heritage of North Belfast with a diverse

• Look North! The North Belfast Festival
25 - 27 February 2022

Due to ongoing indoor Covid public health restrictions, and social distancing requirements, this annual event was moved for the first time from the John Hewitt Bar to Ulster University. A very appreciative live audience of over 40 attended a very enjoyable evening of readings by local poets - Siobhan Campbell and Gail McConnell and from Tom French who travelled from County Meath. Introduced by Dr Frank Ferguson, UU, each poet started by reading their favourite John Hewitt poem before going on to read from their own work. In association with Poetry Ireland and The Belfast International Arts Festival.

• John Hewitt's Birthday Reading
28 October 2021: Ulster University, Conor Lecture Theatre.

In the run up to the critical UN Climate Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, his presentation gave us an overview of the condition the globe is in and he offered some provocative suggestions and analyses as to what should be done, in particular highlighting the need for a broader set of tools and ways of understanding the planetary crisis. In association with Queen's University Belfast Open Learning, World Literature: Global Voices Series 2021/22.

- **Fusion Festival Armagh**
25 March 2022: Market Place Square Armagh

As part of the weeklong Fusion Festival, in association with ABC Council Peace IV Programme, we hosted an outside installation with two performances of - Armagh City as a Gallery - Poet, Piper, and Painter - featuring visual artist J. B. Vally, Armagh Pipers Club and poets Noel Monahan, and Kate Newmann.

Promotions:

Our new JHSS promo to attract a new and increasing global audience was launched as part of the opening address at the JHSS 2021 in July. With thanks to funding from The Arts Council of N. Ireland, The Department for Communities, Northern Ireland and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council.

- Filming & Editing: Corish Productions
- Voice Over: Ciarán Hinds
- Music & Score: Garth McConaghie

Other Developments

During the year, Dr Frank Ferguson agreed to join the Artistic Programme committee, while William Redpath and our long-standing Artistic Committee member Stephen Gordon both stepped down.

We are grateful to our funders, supporters and partners, especially to our core funders The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council who continued to support us financially. We were delighted with significant financial support from the N.I. Housing Executive, match funded by the ABC Council, to enable us to live stream the JHSS to a local and global audience. With Theatre audience numbers limited to a maximum of 90 per event, 23% of the Theatre capacity, this had a significant impact on our income from Summer School. During the year we were successful in being included in the Blueprint Project organised by Arts and Business NI and as a result our Director has initiated improvements to our operations.

After another challenging and eventful year, managing the slow emergence from the worst of the Covid outbreak, maintaining our activities and initiating a major new Festival. I would like to thank our Director Patricia Morris for steering us through the year, our many partners and volunteers for working with us, and of course my fellow Board and Committee members. These remain challenging times for the arts, but I am confident that with the support and the cooperation of the many friends and partners of the Society we will continue to build the activities and impact of The John Hewitt Society both on a local, regional and global stage. We look forward to another interesting and productive year

Plans for future periods

The Society will build on the continuing success of the John Hewitt International Summer School and our other events, including a new partnership with Ulster University. Despite Covid still present within the community, we are pleased that audience confidence is slowly returning to attend live indoor events. We will continue to explore options for online activities to supplement the events, in line with potential funding opportunities and other developments. We will be monitoring the impact of inflation on our activities.

Following the success of the debut *Look North! The North Belfast Festival*, delivered in partnership with a new programming network, the NBF will once again take place on the last weekend in February 2023. It is hoped this event will help strengthen our cultural presence within Belfast City Council with a view to securing future funding from the Council.

With our new online presence as a direct result of the pandemic lockdowns, numbers to our socials and the JHS YouTube Channel have increased significantly. Having completed a new Digital Marketing Audience Strategy, we can now begin a

more targeted use of digital marketing platforms to increase a greater global awareness of the legacy of John Hewitt, the poet, curator, critic and political thinker and of our activities past and present.
We will aim to source additional funding towards staff resources, to stabilise the long-term future of the company and to meet the demands of our projected programme of activities as covid wanes and the new normal resumes. With increasing costs and reduced opportunities for sponsorship from companies/traders/individuals, the Society will complete our revised business plan to help plan and respond to the many financial challenges those in the Arts still face as we plan for the future. We look forward to continuing to develop our digital presence to promote the JHSS and The Society, and to put Northern Ireland's rich literary heritage on the global stage.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 13 Dec 2022 and signed on its behalf by:

Name of Trustee J. Wainwright
Date 13 Dec 22