



Trustees' Annual Report 2022/23

Charity Name: Hillstown Rural Community Group (HRCG)

Charity Reg. No: 102669

Correspondence Address: c/o 223 Portglenone Road
Randalstown
Co. Antrim
BT41 3RP

Premises Address: 130 Glebe Road
Randalstown
Co. Antrim
BT41 3DT

Trustees:

The following served as Charity Trustees during the year and up to the date of this Report:

Alan Nicholl
Gary Adair
Sharon Nicholl
Alex Wallace
Sheldon Murray
Hubert Nicholl

The Trustees have regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's Public Benefit requirement statutory guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant. In the Activities and Achievements section below, HRCG has reported on the activities the group has carried out to further its purposes for the Public Benefit.

Bankers: Ulster Bank
8 Market Square
Antrim
Co. Antrim
BT41 4AT

Governance: Hillstown Rural Community Group operates under its Constitution dated 12th June 2012.

Charity Purposes: Hillstown Rural Community Group was established to help improve the lives of the local community by offering a variety of activities within the local area that will increase community cohesion and reduce social isolation.

Charity Beneficiaries: Residents of Hillstown and surrounding district.

Financial Review: Throughout the year Hillstown Rural Community Group sourced funding from various funders. The Opening Balance at 1 April 2022 was £16,810.46. Income during 2022/23 Financial Year totalled £3,150.00 and Expenditure totalled £10,645.03, leaving a Balance at Year End of £9,315.43.

Activities and Achievements:

In the 2022/23 financial year Hillstown Rural Community Group (HRCG) activities were slow to get started because of the COVID pandemic with many older people still reluctant to get involved in face to face activities in the early months of the year. The first activity of the year was an outdoor walking activity at Antrim Castle Gardens in June 2022 following which regular activities got underway in the hall from July 2022 onwards when most older people were content to meet again inside for face to face social interaction. Between that and March 2023 there were various events and activities organised by HRCG for the benefit of the local community at Hillstown and surrounding district.

During the 2022/23 year HRCG continued to partnership with Grange Cross Community Association in delivering a number of events aimed at seniors in the local area. These events included information sessions delivered by the local Pharmacist on various health issues as part of the Community Development & Health Network, Building the Community Pharmacy Programme. There were also other information sessions delivered by the NI Consumer Council, PSNI Crime Prevention Officer, NI Fire & Rescue Service, and The North of Ireland Family History Society. These sessions proved popular and resulted in increased awareness by seniors in the local community regarding the services offered by these organisations.

Throughout the year we organised a number of reminiscence sessions which provided opportunities for the seniors within the local community to come together and reminisce. A number of these sessions were delivered by the Armstrong Storytelling Trust and funded by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland. These sessions culminated in an intergenerational activity with children at the local Groggan Primary School which proved very popular with both seniors and children. Similar reminiscence sessions were also provided by the NI War Memorial Museum and NI Screen. These sessions prompted discussion amongst the Seniors and helped contribute towards reduced social isolation and promoted positive mental health and well-being.

During the year group members participated in a Good Relations visit to Derry/Londonderry and Donegal where the group visited the Doagh Famine Village and the Siege Museum. The visit was funded by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and the group examined the history and impact of the Famine in Ireland and the 1688-89 Siege in Derry. A better understanding of these periods in history and their impact was achieved.

Two of our group members had opportunity to participate in a PEACE IV funded programme within the Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council area, the Key Institutions Programme was designed to bring communities from different backgrounds, religious beliefs and cultures together so the participants can increase knowledge and gain positive experiences across communities and cultures.

Throughout the year members of HRCG played an active role in the committee of Bann Maine West Community Cluster which involves various groups from the villages and rural areas west of Ballymena who work in partnership to organise and deliver various events and activities for the community. The focus this year was activities for Seniors, activities to break down barriers with minority communities living in the local area, and the commencement of a Men's monthly group meeting as well as other and other health and information sessions.

For the first time HRCG hosted a Christmas Wreath Making Workshop at Hillstown which proved very popular and a number of new people attended this activity who hadn't previously engaged with our group. We also hosted an event to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and an Ulster Scots Concert, both of which proved very popular events and were well attended.

At Christmas we held our Annual Community Christmas Dinner which was one of the first big community activities in the local area since COVID with over 60 people attending. The dinner provided opportunity for the community to come together and important relationship building has been achieved which has resulted in new people participating in other community events and activities.

The information sessions, activities and visits organised throughout the year have resulted in positive relationship building and friendships have been forged within the group resulting in improved quality of life, mental well-being and reduced social isolation particularly for the older generation. The Good Relations visit also offered the opportunity to visit new places and learn more about various places, cultures and history.

Signed: Hubert Nicholl

Chairperson: Hubert Nicholl

Date: 30 January 2024