



Trustees' Annual Report 2023/24

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 2023 was £9,315.43. Income during 2023/24 Financial Year totalled £14,553.29 and Expenditure totalled £4,935.39, leaving a Balance at Year End of £18,933.33.

Activities and Achievements:

In the 2023/24 financial year Hillstown Rural Community Group (HRCG) continued with a ranges of activities and events aimed at improving the lives of the local community and surrounding district.

The first activity of the year was a celebration event in May for the Coronation of King Charles III at which entertainment and food, including a special Coronation Cake were provided. This event was supported by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and proved very popular with the local community.

During the 2023/24 year HRCG continued to deliver 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. The health issues discussed included: Blood Pressure; Home Health Monitoring; Keeping Healthy during the Winter; Rheumatoid Arthritis; Hearing; Pain Relief; Healthy Eating; Exercise; and Skin Conditions. 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 NI Screen which proved very popular. These sessions prompted discussion amongst the seniors and helped contribute towards reduced social isolation and promoted positive mental health and well-being. The seniors also enjoyed a visit to Arthur Cottage in Cullybackey where they learned about the history of the Arthur family and where they were also able to sample breads and apple tarts baked over the open fire in the cottage.

During the year group members participated in a Discover Ulster Scots Programme during which the group heard from various speakers and musicians from the Ulster Scots culture and tradition. The programme which was funded by the Ulster Scots Agency culminated in a visit to the Ulster Scots Discovery Centre in Belfast. A better understanding of the history, culture, music and language of the Ulster Scots tradition was achieved.

At Christmas we held our Annual Community Christmas Dinner with 70 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.

We held a very successful Burns Night with Ulster Scots entertainment including Robert Burns' poetry, information on the life of Robert Burns, a Piper, and a Ceilidh Band as well as a traditional Burns Supper of Haggis, Neeps and Tatties.

For the first time HRCG hosted a Cushion Cover Block Printing Workshop at Hillstown which proved very popular and a number of new people attended this activity who hadn't previously engaged with our group.

Two of our group members continued 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 continuation of a men's monthly group meeting as well as other health and information sessions.

Throughout the year we shared information with the local community about various other events and activities being organised by other organisations in the wider local area. The

information sessions, activities and visits organised by HRCG 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 of Hillstown and the surrounding district.

Signed: Hubert Nicholl

Chairperson: Hubert Nicholl

Date: 27 January 2025