

The Obon on the Foyle Festival Group

Report of the Trustees For the year ended 31 March 2023

Trustees **Yoriko Marshall
Cara McLoughlin
Colleen O'Neill
Shay Clyde
Gerry Delaney**

Charity Number **NIC103135**

Registered Office **The Playtrail
15 Racecourse Road
Derry
BT48 7RE**

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The Obon on the Foyle Festival Group

Report of the Trustees For the year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees present their report and financial statement for the year ended 31 March 2023

Principal Activity

The principal activity of the company in the year under review is the advancement of human rights, conflict resolution or reconciliation, the promotion of racial harmony, equality and diversity. Provide opportunities for the Japanese community living in the North West and surrounding areas to make their customs and tradition part of the local cultural calendar. Address the barriers existing in N Ireland in particular in relation to music and festival by creating a new shared space where both traditions can feel safe and included.

Trustees

The trustees serving during the year were as follows:

Yoriko Marshall
Cara McLoughlin
Colleen O'Neill
Shay Clyde
Gerry Delaney

About the Obon on the Foyle Festival Group

Foyle Obon is a pioneering Japanese arts organisation leading the way in the development and delivery of Japanese arts in Northern Ireland. We focus on local and international partnership building, commissioning, education projects, supporting emerging and established artists and building community and intercultural understanding. We deliver a year-round outreach programme and flagship Foyle Obon Japanese festival. We are passionate about our work and community and are core deliverers of this work in N Ireland.

Our Vision

Using Japanese arts & festival to create & share joy, build community, and celebrate hope in a diverse, inclusive, and peaceful Northern Ireland.

Our Purpose

We empower and support our community of Japanese facilitators, artists, and practitioners of Japanese art forms through innovative artistic programmes, professional development and capacity building.



Our Values

Integrity: The ethical framework of our organisation. We are committed to following defined principles of ethical, honest, and trustworthy leadership. We treat everyone with respect and kindness.

Empowerment: The work of our organisation. We are committed to empowering our artists, audiences, and volunteers by developing artistry, confidence and skills. We support people to own their voices and take their place in the world.

Inclusion: The community building role of our organisation. We are committed to bringing our diverse and far-reaching community together through our Japanese arts and festival programme. We hold space for kind and brave community connections. **OF/BY/FOR/ALL.**

Wholeheartedness: The spirit of our organisation. We are committed to supporting creativity, inspiration, and connection through our arts. We are passionate about cultivating courage and compassion in the spirit of joy and festival. We seek to actively create happiness and celebrate life.

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2022 – 2023: Key Projects and Activities

Introduction:

2022 – 2023 was another successful for the Obon on the Foyle Festival Group. We were delighted to stage our first Obon Festival after Covid19 caused the cancellation of both the 2020 and 2021 Festivals. This was a year of 'opening up' for the arts and communities and people were excited to experience live arts and culture safely once again. We were delighted to be back to face-to-face teaching with our existing taiko groups and with new groups. We are excited to be working with Ulster University on a ground-breaking piece of research on the use of taiko as a tool to improve health and wellbeing.

Key notable activities of the Obon on the Foyle Festival Group in 2022 -2023 include:

Projects:

Sunflower Taiko – Drumming for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

We are working with Ulster University to conduct research on the mental health and wellbeing benefits of taiko drumming. A core group of 15 participants commit to three ten weeks blocks of taiko drumming and a performance or volunteering opportunity at our Obon festival. The project began in September and is progressing very well., some members even performed at our Christmas concert. At the end of the project, Dr Grainne McAnee will collate all her research and evaluations into a much-anticipated report. The project is funded by the Department of Health Mental Health Fund.

Irodori Taiko for LGBTQ+ Teens and allies

We are now in year 2 of this 3-year project funded by BBC Children in Need (this is the second round of 3-year funding for this project). Irodori taiko offers a safe and inclusive space for building confidence, exploring identity, and learning to use your voice – as well as learning to play and perform taiko!

Our group of young LGBTQ+= players and their allies/siblings have been continuing to learn taiko and have performed at our Obon Festival and Christmas concert. This year they have had the opportunity to go to Tullarvan Mill for a 3-day residential which was really successful and enjoyable.

Foyle Obon Festival 2022

On May 28th, 2022, we held our first Obon Festival since the pandemic caused the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 festivals. We once again transformed the Playtrail into a Little Tokyo and welcomed 300 members of the public to join us for workshops, food, dance and taiko. This was our first time to pre-sell the event online only, to avoid overcrowding, and tickets sold out before the day.

We were happy with the overall success of the event. We felt we could have increased our ticket allocation, but it was hard to judge in the pre-Covid world.

The festival was funded by DCSDC Community Festivals Fund, TNL Community Fund for NI, ACNI Project Lottery Fund, the Halifax Foundation and The Japan Society.

Culture Night 2022

'Culture Night 2022 – One Night for All' was held on the night of September 23rd in venues across the City. We successfully tendered to perform as part of evening and were scheduled as part of the programme in the Guildhall Great Hall. This was a great opportunity for our community taiko groups – Himawari and Irodori – to perform in a public space. They rehearsed hard and were great on the evening. Our performance team, Ibuki Taiko, also performed. Culture Night offers an excellent profile boost for Foyle Obon and feedback from members of the public in the audience was excellent. We look forward to Culture Night 2023.

Christmas Community Concert

On the afternoon of December 4th, 2022, we held a Christmas Community Concert in the hall at Lisneal College. Funded by the PHA/Clear Project, this was an opportunity for the entire Foyle Obon Family of participants, Japanese families, performers, Volunteers, and staff to come together socially to reconnect, perform, dance, sing and have craic!

We had 40 drummers and 10 dancers, as well as 125 friends and family members. There was taiko and Bon Odori, talent spots, a quiz and lots of Japanese (and more local) food. This was a wonderful opportunity for our Sunflower Taiko drummers, members of the CFNI Mental Health Project – to perform for the first time. There were nerves but they were great, and their families were delighted!

This was also our first project that our new Intern worked on, they were a fantastic asset, and we look forward to seeing them develop in the year ahead.

Matsuri Performance Team development

As part of our ACNI Project Lottery funding for 22-23, we are working to develop a Matsuri performance group to perform as part of our 2023 Festival. We have put together a high-level group of experience local musicians in taiko, flute, marimba, harp, and vocals who are rehearsing throughout the year, developing a repertoire to be premiered at the festival. While it is important to provide performance opportunities for our community participants, we are also committed to supporting the development and inspiring the creativity of our local experienced musicians.

Intern/Taiko trainee

In late 2022, Foyle Obon welcomed Forton Umetsu to the team as our Intern and trainee taiko teacher. Forton has been playing Taiko and volunteering at Obon since they were very small! As a member of the Japanese community with an in-depth knowledge of the organisation and the art of Taiko, Forton is an invaluable asset to Foyle Obon. They were a great help with the admin and organisation of the Christmas Concert and are now shadowing Fiona at the Gaelscoil Taiko classes. They also recently facilitated Origami workshops in the community.

This week we were delighted to secure funding from the CFNI Keadue Community Grants scheme to support this as a paid role for 2 years.

Mentoring

As part of our funding from CFNI/Doh, our organisation has been selected to be part of CFNI's Capacity building Accelerator and Mentoring Programme. This programme provides a range of workshops as well as the chance to access bespoke mentoring. As a result, we were



paired with mentor Una Lynch. We worked with Una on our application to the DoH Core Fund. This was a large, unwieldy application process and Una proved to be a fantastic mentor. Her approach to fund writing was very enlightening and despite the fact that the fund itself was ultimately suspended, we felt that we learned so much from Una's advice and guidance.



Funding review:

During 2022 – 2023 we successfully secured funding from the following bodies.

Arts Council of Northern Ireland Project Lottery
Arts Council of Northern Ireland Health and Safety Capital Programme
The National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All
Department of Health Mental Health Fund
BBC Children in Need
Comic Relief
WHST Social Work Grants
Derry City and Strabane District Council Community Festivals Fund
Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland
The Japan Society
PHA Making Life Better Short-Term Fund

We would like to thank all our funders for supporting us during this past year. We will continue to focus on maintaining relationships with existing funders and diversifying the sources of income.

Financial review

As of 31st March 2023, due to successful funding applications the group was in a good financial position with restricted funds in place in the sum of £37791 towards ongoing festival and programming costs, and ongoing further funding applications prepared, submitted, or pending towards 2023/24. The group has no overdraft facility and no outstanding liabilities.

Structure, Governance and Management

During the period, the Obon on the Foyle Festival Group has ensured stability in structure, governance, and management. Board meetings have been regular and consistent.

Thanks and summary

Thank you to our committee members for their hard work and efforts throughout the year and everything they do to help the core team make our events a success. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in events and workshops and/or been audience members throughout the year. We are proud that our Obon family remains connected and together. Finally, thank you to our funders who have continued to be supportive over the past year.



19/4/23

Yoriko Marshall, Chairperson

Date



