

Association of Talking Newspapers Northern Ireland (ATNNI)

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

2022 Committee

Chair	Marion McLaughlin
Secretary	Julie Russell
Treasurer	Jennifer Loughridge
Information Officer	Patricia McGuinness

Committee members

Robert Apsley

Richard Bradley *to sept 22*

Phil Graham *to oct22*

Margaret Davidson *from nov 22*

The Committee of the Association of Talking Newspapers, Northern Ireland (ATNNI) is pleased to submit its Annual Report for 2022 to its members.

The committee met four times in the year – in January, April, September and November 2022. We continue to have use of a room in Fergus Hall thanks to St Mark's church in Portadown. It was good to be able to resume face to face meetings after the many disruptions of the pandemic, but the fallout from Covid was still a big factor in the business of the Association throughout the year.

All TNs were contacted several times in the year to gauge their post-Covid status and it was sad to know that some have decided to close completely while others are only slowly restarting. There was better news from several which are confidently back to normal. The Association offered support and advice where needed. Where a TN was closing, help was given by the Information Officer in the legal process required and in sourcing a new home at another TN for any equipment.

Challenges facing all TNs were identified and included:

- Recruitment of volunteers, especially technicians
- Suitable premises
- Getting the message to communities so that new listeners are identified
- Building/keeping strong relationship with sensory teams
- Changing technology – most older people are not keen on streaming and podcasts
- Fragile state of newspaper publishing in general

The effects of the last 2 points will be long lasting and TNs know that new technology will, in due course, give blind and vision impaired people fast and unhindered access to local news and information. Until then, TNs will endeavour to provide this and ATNNI will continue to support local groups.

At the time of our AGM in June 2023 the current state of play across Northern Ireland is:

Talking Newspapers currently in operation in NI	Talking Newspapers closed either temporarily or permanently
Antrim/Ballymena Bangor/Newtownards Coleraine Craigavon Downpatrick Fermanagh Mid-Ulster Newry Omagh Strabane	Armagh Ballyclare/Larne/Carrickfergus Banbridge Belfast Londonderry Dungannon (now part of Mid U) Lisburn

Coleraine TN has been proactive in seeking volunteers in Derry/Londonderry for restarting there with support from the Association and from Coleraine TN. This has been delayed by the pandemic and will be a focus in the year ahead.

The ATNNI website and Talking NewspapersNI Facebook page continued to provide information and to promote Talking Newspapers to the public; they also have the aim of creating a social media community for our volunteers across NI. In addition ATNNI provides a link to the Talking News Federation in GB and ensures local information is held on their UK-wide website.

ATNNI is grateful to former members Jackie Cotton, Richard Bradley and Phil Graham who resigned from the committee in 2022 after long and dedicated service.