

# BEAT CARNIVAL ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE 2023 - 24 YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2024



Beat Carnival is constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee  
Registered number: NI27789 Registered in Northern Ireland Registered charity number: NIC103347  
Beat Carnival is governed by Articles of Association, updated in April 2015

## **BEAT CARNIVAL ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 sets out a legal requirement that all organisations registered as a charity in Northern Ireland must have purposes that are for the public benefit. This Annual Report provides information on how the charity has met the public benefit requirement during the year: to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.

### **BEAT CARNIVAL'S PUBLIC BENEFIT PURPOSES**

are set out as:

- Advance public education, appreciation of and participation in carnival.
- Promote arts and culture by managing an Arts Resource Centre as a cultural and social amenity;
- organising and delivering carnival events, arts workshops and other activities, events, performances and initiatives throughout the year;
- providing tuition in creative design, constructional, textile and performance skills;
- promoting cultural tourism and cultural exchange and opportunities for vocational and recreational purposes for all groups and abilities.
- Advance community development by engaging with and assisting voluntary and community groups and organisations to organise and participate in cultural, arts, leisure and heritage projects and initiatives.
- Promote other charitable purposes so long as these purposes would be considered to be charitable under the law of Northern Ireland.

### **PURPOSE IN 2023 – 2024**

- A sustainable company. In 2023-24 there was particular purpose and priority to strengthening the company, adapting the business model and preparing for the future. The organisation was preparing for a critical period of organisational transition. 2023-24 strategic development was to address the challenge of senior leadership transition, replacing the founder-leader of the cultural organisation. The organisation is acting in good time, to have a structured, two-year, strategically coordinated succession process. We have examined resilience and sustainability by engaging consultants, researchers, undertaking business planning and an extensive process of stakeholder consultation. Beat is planning for a two-year Strategic Coordinator post to work with managers through transition to put the organisation in good shape for the future.
- Programme purpose. Cultural democracy underpinned our approach. The programme delivered arts education and pathways to further education and careers for younger people. Youth support, including well-being, was a central benefit, as was training and employment for artists in a wide range of artforms at the Centre. The Beat Carnival Centre programme provided weekly creative activities for all ages and abilities and the Centre was a hub for many workshops and events in neighbourhoods and city spaces, enabling arts access and inclusion. Programme design and delivery partners ranged from neighbourhoods described as disadvantaged /deprived, who told us they felt left-out of many, often centralised, opportunities—through to international culture partners.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

### VISION, MISSION STATEMENT AND VALUE BASE

#### **Vision**

The vision for Beat Carnival's work with artists, their audiences, the community, individual participants and young people is of a:

*"vibrant, colourful, creative and welcoming society".*

Beat Carnival will aim to achieve this through their organisational vision of being:

*"the leaders in excellence of Carnival artforms".*

#### **Mission**

The Beat Carnival's mission statement is to:

*"Make accessible and spectacular Carnival, leaving a legacy of creative skills, collaboration, participation and celebration".*

#### **Values**

Beat Carnival operates to a set of core values.

- Inclusive: Carnival is for everyone. Carnival activities celebrate diverse cultures and a common humanity with as few barriers to participation as possible.
- Quality: There is an aim for excellence in everything Beat Carnival does.
- Innovative: Beat Carnival will strive to take forward the carnival artform, creating new ideas and approaches. The skills and knowledge of local artists and carnival participants progressively increase through training and experience.
- Legacy: Carnival will be devised, developed and delivered in ways that leave a legacy of skills, ambition and achievement within communities.
- Civic pride: Carnival makes visible the organisation's great pride in being created in Belfast.
- Fun: Enjoyment and entertainment are key aspects of every Carnival.

### WHAT THE ORGANISATION DOES

Beat Carnival is Northern Ireland's foremost and long-standing Carnival Arts company. We create carnival parades and outdoor arts performances. The first city-centre parades were in 1995. We encourage our city of Belfast and communities across the country to think big about celebrating creative, community life in ways that are ambitious and welcoming to all. Beat's specialisms include carnival arts of drumming, dance, making (floats, puppets, props, costume), music, street theatre performance, children's arts and crafts. There is no other carnival arts organisation of the scale, activity, history or influence in Northern Ireland. Beat Carnival has introduced many of the artform techniques and trained many of the artists now working across the country.

We provide participation and training programmes and have extensive experience of work with community organisations. People gain new skills, connections and individual support at weekly activity programmes in Beat Carnival Centre and through extensive outreach. Carnival arts bring new sources of creativity to Northern Ireland's traditional experience of cultural parades and street music. Carnival arts, outdoors in public spaces with people from diverse backgrounds, are experienced in ways that are culturally inclusive. The organisation's involvement in a wide range of networks, locally and internationally, increases diversity of relationships and shared benefits. Beat Carnival's activity is provided free of charge to participants and audience so that barriers to access and engagement are as low as possible. Ease of access is one of the ways that the activity increases equality of opportunity.

Beat Carnival Centre with its programme of arts creation, education, training, community outreach

and events production, provides a focal point for anyone interested in the development of carnival arts. Artists design, create, rehearse, teach and train at the Centre. The Carnival Centre's work makes a special contribution to festivals, community celebrations and civic events. Importantly, the premises and its activity provide an accessible, supportive and 'safe space', particularly for young people. Participants at Beat's weekly programme of open-access workshops range in age from four to over 65 years. Six or seven evening sessions operate each week at the Centre. Public audience at Beat's free events gain enjoyment and an increased sense of community pride and connection. In 2023-2024 Beat Carnival provided 1,078 benefit activities (workshops, artist sessions, events) for 140,510 beneficiaries.

## COMPANY AND PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

### WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023-2024

Direct benefits provided by Beat Carnival's activities in 23-24 included new awareness of, and participation in, creative activities for individuals, for groups and communities and for the general public. Free-access, collaborative, carnival arts activities fostered good relations and animation of public and neighbourhood spaces, including spaces that have been or are contested or controlled by factions. The public spaces where arts activity took place were made more welcoming for all. Beat Carnival's activity increased interest in arts in young people and under-engaged groups. The activity improved access to information and expertise about arts for excluded people and communities. In areas that are deemed 'disadvantaged' it inspired ambition and enabled personal achievement and pride. Beat created developmental partnerships with community groups and other arts companies, to increase representation, knowledge sharing, skills sharing, specialist support, capacity building and the promotion of shared values. Beat's safe, imaginative and attractive arts and cultural activity resulted in people, many of them being children and young people, engaging with others. Pleasure and fun were gained through the programmes. Children and young people benefited from emotional growth, personal development and increased social skills. Participants, both individuals and groups, were better equipped to make positive changes in their lives. Social connections were enabled in a year of damaging isolation and more people took positive action on issues. An important benefit of Beat Carnival's activity was significantly increased support of young people, through implementation of a long-term Youth Development programme.

Activity development and performance highlights over the year:

- Beat Carnival celebrated 30 years since company formation. A packed festival programme included community engagement workshops with community groups and schools; Brazil and Belfast trad fusion music night; Artist Residency from Shademakers carnival production company based on the Isle of Wight; a specially commissioned immersive theatre tour of Beat Carnival history; Carnival family event in 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast; sold out 'Electro Carnival' event at The MAC with suite of commissioned songs by Katie Richardson.
- Electro Carnival performance was repeated in SSE Arena at opening of One Young World conference, livestreamed worldwide.
- Growth of Youth Development Programme. With significant investment from The National Lottery Community Fund, Beat Carnival was able to sustain and expand the youth programme. Beat worked with over 60 young people per week (term times) across four projects in our core programming. The young people range in age from 5 years to 24 years old. The programmes focus on creative skills development; encouraging self-expression; and experiencing joy & less stress.
- Youth – Future Leaders. Staff mentored two senior young people in a new Future Leaders programme. Participants take a lead and learn project management and facilitation skills.
- Youth – A new Carnival School programme delivered with youth and community groups across Northern Ireland focused on groups experiencing poverty, having additional educational needs and facing discrimination (eg LGBTQIA+ groups). In programme sessions young people could

express themselves via a range of carnival arts and create in a carnival celebration within their school or youth setting. 21 sessions, 11 groups, 273 participants.

- Youth – Summer Scheme - 15 sessions of our Summer Project with 35 participants and ended with a Carnival Arts Showcase and dissemination of the international SPOTing (Spaces of Transformation) Arts Education report to peers, funders and supporters.
- Youth – renovation of new ‘Our Space’ youth room at Beat Carnival Centre designed with and for young people.
- Many performances and events produced over the year included Halloween and Christmas entertainment.
- Contributed significantly to invigorating the Newry St Patrick’s Day Parade. 3 floats, music, community engagement, Montserrat Masqueraders (Caribbean St Patrick's Day).
- QUB media students' documentary produced about Beat Carnival’s involvement with Belfast's St Patrick's Day Parade.
- International collaborations and relationship development included the Trans Europe Halles network and a conference in Leipzig, Germany; TEH Arts Education Hub meeting in Paris, France; TEH Cultural Transformation Project and Movement; Masterclass sessions as part of International Samba festival Mega Samba in Portugal with 12 BEATnDRUM participants.
- North Belfast Festival development and programme. Sold out Samba performance in Oh Yeah Music Centre and successful family Open Day at Beat Carnival.
- Planning for Beach Of Dreams 2025, a major UK-wide creativity and climate action project and coastline festival. Beat Carnival is Northern Ireland partner.
- Academic connections – QUB Centre for Creative Ethnography and University of Liverpool RAC.
- Significant development for Beat Carnival 5-year strategy including sessions with Beat staff and Board.
- Three work-experience school placements
- Individual placements provided for Artisteducater students from ArtEZ University of The Arts, Arnhem, Netherlands: 1 undergraduate student for 6 weeks, 1 masters student for 3 months.
- Hosted Links network meeting.
- Hosted fact finding visits from Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, MLA All Party Group for the Arts chair, Sian Mullholland; and Arts Council NI senior officer Patricia Lavery.
- Governance development: new member and director recruitment and new Chair and Deputy Chair appointed.
- One of the many comments and endorsements received over the year is this from a parent of a youth programme participant:

*“This programme is absolutely amazing. It has definitely increased her confidence, has allowed her to make amazing new friends, and enjoy being creative and encouraging diversity. The staff are fabulous, they provide great opportunities for the kids and are so highly spoken of. Communication is great and it is definitely a great safe-space for children.”*

Beat Carnival was able to ascertain the value and effectiveness of its activity because it monitored details of participation and outcomes; gathered feedback from participants and audience; used agreed performance indicators; produced reports and commissioned external consultation services.

**PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE: PARTICIPATION and AUDIENCE BENEFITS**

2023-2024 Programme		
1	Strategy Development	Staff capacity building, succession planning and business model development. Transition strategy planning including proposal for a Strategic Co-ordinator post. - Increased organisational resilience and sustainability.

		- Succession Strategy underway.
2	Creativity Centre of Excellence	Building works were completed to improve access, inclusion with a new accessible entrance on Gardner Street and a new accessible toilet on the ground floor. - Increased access to arts spaces for D/deaf/disabled people. - Increased creative workspaces in Belfast City Centre. - Proposal to Arts Council for uplift award to engage professional services to safeguard building and improve facilities was not successful.
3	The Beat Space: Youth Programme	Tiny Beat, Junior Beat, BeatnTech, What's The Story? weekly Youth Arts participation and education workshop sessions. Spaces of Transformation arts education methodology testbeds and case studies; research dissemination. New, co-designed youth room and facilities, Our Space. - Increased access to quality arts experience for children & youth. - Increased arts education and research. - Increased artistic skills.
4	Beat Carnival Music	Specialised Carnival Music training and rehearsal sessions and a newly commissioned suite of music. Irish trad, Brazilian and world music performances; Rhythm Routes, to new destinations project; Electro Carnival new electronica to advance the carnival music artform. - More people involved in music-making. - Increased performance with community musicians. - New music research and production moved artform forwards.
5	Big Ideas: Beat R&D & Training for new Outdoor Arts, Carnival and Being Green	Masterclass sessions. Being Green; Beach of Dreams NI hub and UK partnership. New event development: significant research and development with artists and new partners for a new major Belfast 2024 event. Major application to Creative Ireland for UK and Ireland coastal arts project was not successful. - More artists trained in quality skills. - Methodology developed relative to Arts Education and to Ecology. - Planning advanced for new, ambitious events on creativity and climate action themes.
6	Events For All: Events Production	Beat 30 anniversary celebrations, St Patrick's Day in Newry and other festivals and events. - Large scale events co-designed for public spaces. - A major event outside Belfast. - New audience reached.
7	Outdoor & Carnival Arts Sector: Support & Growth in NI	Development of Carnival On The Coast concept and Creativity & Ecology theme with potential collaborations in NI and Southern Ireland. - Increased support and sharing for Carnival Arts sector development.

8	Community Arts with City and Neighbourhood	<p>Beat community arts co-design in the city and with neighbourhoods. Participation in local networks and North Belfast Festival Steering Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Arts co-design and facilitation increased in marginalised areas including North Belfast.</li> <li>- New North Belfast programmes facilitated.</li> <li>- Increased contribution to networks and other cultural initiatives.</li> </ul>
9	Beat International	<p>Participation in European meetings and projects. Trans Europe Halles network of independent cultural centres: international networking and collaboration, conference meets, Arts Education Hub, Youth Hub, Cultural Transformation Movement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintained and increased participation in International networking and collaboration.</li> <li>- Beat provided increased opportunities to others as cultural hub.</li> </ul>
10	Beat Arts Services	<p>Arts services delivery, sessions and events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specialist arts services delivered across Northern Ireland.</li> <li>- Arts audience increased.</li> <li>- Income generated.</li> </ul>

Number of full-time equivalent staff	3
Number of short-term, contracted or freelance staff	128
Number of volunteers	50
Number of volunteer hours	560
Number of participant sessions	324
Number of individual participants	1,592
Number of Artists work / development sessions	693
Number of Performances / Events	61
Number of estimated audience-attendees	131,725
Number of visitors from outside NI	2,000
Number of online products (videos etc)	60
Number of known online audience-views	13,102

Percentage of total programme that included particular categories of participants, % groups and individuals identified as usually 'missing out', that engaged in Beat Carnival programmes:

Participation Engagement	% of programme activity that involved individuals in these categories
People with a physical or mental impairment	100
Newcomer or ethnic minority people and groups	100
People living in deprived neighbourhoods	100
LGBTQ+ people	100
Older people (aged 65+)	50
Children and young people (aged 0-24)	80
Unemployed People	0

## STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

### Nature of the Governing Document and Constitution of the Charity

Beat Carnival is a registered Charity (NIC103347 and HMRC XR 82700) constituted as a Company limited by guarantee and is therefore governed by Articles of Association. The directors of the company are also trustees of the charity. Eligibility for membership of the charity, and membership of the board of trustees is governed by the Articles of Association.

### Relationships Between the Charity and Related Parties, Including its Subsidiaries

The charity has a social enterprise subsidiary (Beat Trading Ltd) with which it has many transactions and a controlling interest. The only other related parties are trustees and there are no transactions with them.

### Company Operations and Project Management

Beat has a long-term Strategic Plan and an annual Operational Plan. Its projects operate within that framework. Projects are managed through Project Plans with timelines and Project Teams. The project budget is monitored and adjusted as necessary to ensure that spend does not exceed the project income.

Beat produces detailed risk assessment for events.

Beat targets recruitment and publicity to ensure that a wide cross-section of people get involved in the company and its programmes.

Beat's Director presents a monthly financial report to the company Board. Beat operates separate cost centres on SAGE.

Beat's financial statements are subject to a full financial audit at the end of each financial year. Beat management and Board of Directors regularly review financial procedures. Beat operates procurement policy and has a select list of suppliers that is updated at the end of each financial year. Beat provides value for money by careful costing, recycling materials and having a high level of voluntary contribution.

Beat Carnival complies with legislative regulations laid out in Equal Opportunities legislation, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Children's Order, GDPR and other appropriate legislation. Beat Carnival Policies include: a Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy, a Health and Safety Policy, Community Relations Policy, Harassment Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy and Privacy Policy.

### Staff Training

Staff and freelance artists received Carbon Literacy Training; Arts and Dementia training; LGBTQIA+ Awareness; Autism Awareness training. Board received Governance training

### Staff Changes

Advertised for Strategic Coordinator post. No applicants.

### Risk Statement

Further to the above management statements, the trustees identify the major risks to which the charity is exposed each financial year when preparing and updating a strategic plan, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity. The trustees then review any major risks that have been identified and establish systems to mitigate those risks. The charity is satisfied that the systems are in place to mitigate their exposure to the major risks that have been so identified and reviewed. The charity is open to the usual financial risks of any organisation, and the charity has introduced controls to minimise these risks, such as two signatures being required for payments from the bank account. In addition, the accounts are regularly explained to members of the charity and are open for member's inspection at any time. Identified risks include: Strategic, Financial, Governance, People, Reputation, IT and Data, Health & Safety, Assets.

### The Beat Carnival Centre building

There were issues of concern with repairs needed to Beat Carnival Centre, Northern Ireland's unique arts creation facility. We think the asset is an important, unique asset in the Northern Ireland and Belfast arts 'ecosystem' and should be safeguarded and developed for greater benefit. In this period

we undertook further repairs to some of the widespread water ingress. The biggest improvement was in accessibility and inclusion, with the new automatic entrance from Gardener Street to the arts activity room and an adjacent disability accessible toilet.

## FUTURE BUSINESS & PLANNING, ARTISTIC PLANNING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The programme has seven strategic focus areas to deliver best possible impact for our communities, audiences and artists:

**Lead for the Carnival artform** as a means of cultural expression by bringing artists and audiences together in a politically neutral but creatively diverse form of public programming. Examples: Carnival Arts R&D, music and making.

**Develop the cohesion and skills of our local communities** by delivering accessible, engaging and creative programmes that upskill and entertain participants from all communities. Examples: youth programme; North and East Belfast outreach.

**Create a cultural and creative hub** at our headquarters for the people of Belfast and beyond. Examples: youth space development and public access.

**Showcase the creative potential of Northern Ireland** by championing local artists and hosting international visitors to participate, teach, and learn in collaborative exchanges. Examples: national and international cultural and carnival networks.

**Partner with existing and new groups** to enhance our capacity and capability to deliver. Examples: connections with educational institutions, international carnival sector etc.

**Enhance our reach and communication** with existing and new audiences. Example: enhanced marketing actions.

**Develop a resilient organisation** that is sustainable and can transition to a new Managing Director. Examples: transition programme; board, staff and artist training; commercial events.

Five programme strands are planned to deliver Beat Carnival's 2024-2025 goals and outcomes, engaging 2,000 children, young people and adults in around 400 arts activities; 36 free-of-charge events in public spaces attract 123,000 audience. 2024-25 programme follows from Beat's extensive development work in 2023-24 involving stakeholders and strategy consultant. Activity is entirely aligned to Beat's strategic purpose and supports ACNI's five objectives.

### 2024-2025 CONTEXT

We are proud to operate in the arts ecosystem of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and beyond into Europe.

**Creativity infrastructure.** Beat Carnival Centre provides unique infrastructure of people and facilities for sustaining access; authentic, creative authorship; diversity and ambition in NI's arts and culture ecosystem. Beat's resilience is proven in the context of reducing arts and culture funding and increasing costs: in 24-25 we will focus on developing our sustainability model through arts service level agreements, new commercial income products, business collaboration and CSR support – in addition to delivery through beneficially collaborative arts partnerships. Beat has plans for premises improvement to safeguard the building fabric and to increase accessibility for all. We have discussed with ACNI the need for specialist assistance to make progress.

**Needs.** Arts sector, artist and civic-social needs are well understood anecdotally and through Beat's long working experience. In 2021-2023 we undertook intensive community and arts consultations and employed researchers, including a team position, to provide researched findings that we will reflect and act on in 24-25. Participatory Action Research has informed Beat's planning as presented here. Beat will continue the reflective and developmental research process, including training with community artists.

We have programmes for Transition through company leadership succession; 'green carnival' methodology for environmental benefit through creative action; inclusion and health through SEN Carnival (special educational needs) the enlarged empowering youth programme and international Cultural Transformation Movement.

**Legacy.** Beat has created a vast legacy of trained artists, ambitious communities, expectant audiences, pleased partners and enthusiastic goodwill. The 2024-25 programme will capitalise on and further develop this legacy benefit for all, through collaborations locally and internationally.

## OUR WIDER CONTEXT, THE PIVOTAL YEARS TO 2027

### **Transition, succession and growth**

Our strategy, from 2023 to 2027 outlines the priorities for Beat as it enters a new, exciting and bold phase. As the founding and leading team plan to retire in 2025, the programme here enables Beat Carnival to transition, grow and increase its impact in the face of change.

2024 and 2025 require programmes of organisational development as Beat looks to build resilience for the coming changes, whilst 2025 will have a phased transition into a new leadership structure and team. In 2026 to 2027 Beat will embed this new team and continue to excel in delivering exceptional arts experiences and carnivals for communities.

2023 focused on organisational understanding, who we are, who we serve, what our purpose is, what we're good at and where we want to excel in the future to continue to serve our community. 2024 is the year of preparation, delivering a programme of transition, ensuring our organisation is stable and resilient through strategic investments, and that our programme delivery can thrive. 2025 will be the year of change. A new leader takes the helm, with a planned, overlapping transition that allows for our team to adapt to changes and deliver exceptional programmes and reach new and existing audiences. 2026 the year of new beginnings, with new leadership, refined processes and programmes. 2027 will be a year of new opportunity and growth.