

Belfast Interface Project
(A company limited by guarantee)

Report of the Trustees (including Directors' Report)
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, are pleased to present their report with the audited financial statements of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2023, which are also prepared to meet the requirements for a directors' report and accounts for company and charity law purposes. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Charities SORP (FRS 102) (2nd edition – October 2019) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)' (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charitable company.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Company Registration number

NI067459 (Northern Ireland)

HMRC Charity Registration number

XR41089

Charity Commission for NI Registration number

NIC103356

Principal and Registered office

Cathedral Quarter Managed Workspace
109-113 Royal Avenue
Belfast
Co. Antrim
BT1 1FF

Trustees

The trustees who served the charitable company during the year and up to the date of approval were as follows:

Maria Morgan	Chairperson
Rev Bill Shaw OBE	Deputy Chair
Muriel Bowyer	Treasurer
Bernie McConnell	
Aisling Cartmill	
Gerry McClory	
Ed Petersen	
Ashok Sharma	
Gerry Skelton	
Sam White	
Gerry O'Reilly	
Paddy O'Donnell	
Mark Arthur	(appointed year ended 31 March 2023)

Company Secretary

Bernie McConnell

Acting Practice Co-ordinator

Paul Smith

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REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS continued

Auditor

Grace Taggart
CG Taggart Accountancy Services
Chartered Accountant & Statutory Auditor
17 Cypress Crescent
Donaghadee
Co Down
BT21 0QG

Bankers

Bank of Ireland
4 – 8 High Street
Belfast
BT1 2BA

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Belfast Interface Project (BIP) was established in 1995 and became a membership organisation in 2000. It currently has a membership of 49 community groups from nationalist and unionist interface areas of Belfast as well as 16 associate and 12 individual members.

Governing document

Belfast Interface Project formed a company limited by guarantee, with company number NI067459 on 7 December 2007 and is accepted as a charity by HMRC under reference XR41089. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association and is governed under its Articles of Association. The assets and liabilities of the charity were transferred to the company on 1 April 2008. Our Memorandum and Articles of Association was updated, agreed by the Charity Commission for NI and adopted by the Board and membership at our AGM on 17 February 2017.

Recruitment and Appointment of Board of Directors

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles are known as members of the Board of Directors. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Board are elected to serve for a period of three years. They may be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

Organisational structure

Belfast Interface Project has a Board of Directors of up to 21 members who meet at least eight times a year and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. At present the Board has 13 members and is made up of community group representatives, individual and associate members. A Finance sub-group made up of Maria Morgan, Muriel Bowyer, Bernie McConnell, Rev Bill Shaw, the Practice Co-ordinator and the Finance Manager meets as and when required. The day-to-day management and operation of activities is carried out by staff led by the Acting Practice Co-ordinator who reports regularly to the Board.

Risk Management

The Board has assessed the major risks to which the charitable company is exposed, in particular those related to its operations and finances, and systems and procedures have been established to mitigate those risks.

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Risk Management continued

An ongoing risk for the charitable company is in relation to its membership of the Northern Ireland Charities Pension Scheme, a defined benefit scheme which was closed to new members in 2009.

The scheme has accrued a deficit which to date has been managed through agreed monthly repayment terms which are scheduled to run until March 2028. The deficit had reduced significantly over recent years. The charitable company was in regular conversation with The Pensions Trust around the status of the deficit and had agreed a very manageable payment plan. A court case is set for January 2024. The finance manager is in regular contact with The Pensions Trust who are overseeing the repayment scheme.

The Board has taken a number of actions to mitigate the risk, including working in partnership with other organisations making up the NI Charities Pension Scheme and accessing expert pension advice.

The Community Toolkit/App went live to the public in September 2023. It has been rendered marketable throughout the sector and potentially across the public and statutory spectrum. A 10 week training programme has been designed to complement the toolkit, providing instruction and training on its multiple functionalities and thereby increasing potential fundraising and generating additional financial resources. BIP has been using individual aspects of the platform to deliver recent programmes such as “Shared Futures - Future Building” to youth/community groups across Belfast, while continuing to develop its potential with groups engaged in the “Peoples and Communities” project.

Covid-19 continues to be a serious problem. The charitable company will continue to address the negative impact of the virus by observing all guidelines and implementing recommended health and safety procedures. We will continue to follow government guidance. Remote working arrangements remain an option if necessary and IT equipment has been upgraded to cope if necessary, including a ‘Zoom’ conferencing facility. BIP will continue to assess matters and address the needs of the organisation with regards to Covid 19 where necessary.

BIP and our partners at Animorph were able to design the community planning toolkit technology to be adaptable to Covid 19, using the various compose, communicate and collaborate functions to enable groups and/or multiple group and individual interaction, if the need for social distancing arises again.

PUBLIC BENEFIT STATEMENT

The trustees have complied with the duty to have due regard to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland’s statutory guidance on the public benefit requirement issued under the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Belfast Interface Project, formed more than 25 years ago, has a long history of participative work in peace building, reconciliation and conflict transformation across our city’s numerous interface areas.

The following are the Vision, Purpose, Values and Principles of the charitable company:

Vision

Our vision is of interface communities being transformed; becoming prosperous, confident and cohesive. Embracing new and emerging technologies Belfast Interface Project has been exploring the use of virtual and augmented reality to future-build and enable co-creation planning for positive change. While employing a unique community planning toolkit embracing an ethos of communication, co-operation and collaboration. Belfast Interface Project has and will remain committed to change reflective of the diversity of our society and the residents in Belfast’s interface communities.

Purpose

Our purpose is to act as a catalyst for change, empowering and supporting interface communities.

Values and Principles

Our core values are integrity, trust and mutual respect, which allow us to work in partnership with a shared ownership of issues and solutions.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES continued

The strategic objectives include:

Strategic Aim 1: Policy: To work with local communities to inform, develop and challenge interface policy development that is of practical benefit to interface communities.

Strategic Aim 2: Advocacy: To act as an independent voice for interface communities

Strategic Aim 3: Transformation: Being a Catalyst for Change

Strategic Aim 4: Empowerment: Building Capacity and Confidence

Strategic Aim 5: Building a Resilient Organisation

During 2022-2023 the Board of Directors' duties have included continuing to oversee the following tasks:

The restructuring of BIP that began in 2010 continues to evolve. This in part is due to both external resources and internal re-focusing on key areas of work. This approach has allowed BIP to begin slowly expanding outside of the Belfast area and has included significant project work in Derry/Londonderry. We have adjusted our staffing requirements and they now reflect our current needs and the economic/funding climate in Northern Ireland. The Acting Practice Co-ordinator will oversee the running of all projects and a Finance and Admin manager will oversee the day to day running of the office.

Our Strategic and Operational Plan of 2015/2020 required revising in line with its time limitation and natural progression. Our Strategic and Operational Plan for 2021/2025 takes into consideration the current economic/funding climate to establish a more focused implementation strategy. Having successfully concluded our previous plan with the recruitment of new staff and the establishment of new projects in interface areas, the new 4 year strategy will focus on building a resilient organisation, while maintaining our core themes including Policy, Advocacy, Conflict Transformation and Community Empowerment.

In 2021 BIP, in partnership with Cooperation Ireland, successfully tendered for a Special EU Programme Body (SEUPB) contract, as well as a successful application to The National Lottery "People and Community" fund, to develop the Community Toolkit across Belfast. The SEUPB project was completed successfully in June 2023. The Peoples and communities project funded by the National Lottery will be completed at the end of March 2024. New applications will be submitted to National Lottery and IFI by the end of October 2023. Along with our partner groups an application will be submitted to SEUPB to continue the development/design of the platform. When applicable, we will submit an application to CRC for core funding. We will continue to resource and further develop our innovative and ground-breaking augmented reality project (Community Toolkit), continually looking at new ways to remove, ameliorate or re-classify interface barriers while exploring the possibilities for the toolkit in other settings such as rural areas.

BIP are in the process of upgrading our network system, including data storage capabilities and broadband. We are in the process of finalising the funding for this project with Belfast City Council. It is to be funded from BCC7. The value of the grant is £3,500. This will cover the cost of all works and equipment for the new system. A further £5,000 was received from Halifax Foundation to help with running costs including rent, telephones etc.

We have continued to deliver programmes across the city with youth and community groups using the Shared Futures – Future Planning aspect of the toolkit.

Our partners at Essex University have introduced our Community Toolkit, which incidentally is being developed through our Shared Futures project, to Essex County Council. They have expressed an interest in the project and are debating its possible uses. We are still waiting a final decision on the possibility of a pilot scheme.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES continued

In 2021-2022 BIP was commissioned by the North Belfast District Policing & Community Safety Partnership to carry out a piece of research on interface violence and anti-social behaviour. This included an online survey and one to one interviews with local community workers. Professor Peter Bloom of Essex University, partner on this project, was commissioned to do the deskwork and collate the information. This project was completed by 31/05/2022. The Final report was published in June 2022.

Our “Shared Futures” project, which was chosen by CRC to be profiled on their website as one of the projects that benefited from CRC small grants funding can be viewed on their website. This is a great advertising score for the project and follows on from similar pieces, done over the past year. We have engaged with other media outlets to promote the project. This highlights the excellent work being carried out in interface areas by workers from Belfast Interface Project. We have had requests for further short documentary style projects highlighting the toolkit from the BBC and Green shoots media. We continue to investigate the possibilities.

BIP has and will continue to assist in managing mediation, conflict management, mentoring initiatives and development programmes with our community partners and city-wide membership. We have delivered numerous training sessions in many interface areas across Belfast which has been enabled by additional funding successfully secured from Belfast City Council Capacity Building grants. BIP has also maintained its membership as an independent director/Board member on a number of key social economy and training developments including SKAINOS, Cromac Regeneration Initiative, Templemore Avenue School Trust and TIDES Training, thus seeking to find a long-term roadmap towards a future where the necessity for interface barriers is reduced over time and employment and education opportunities are enhanced.

BIP continues to engage with key public and statutory organisations including Belfast City Council (BCC), The Executive Office (TEO), Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). BIP is also engaging with a number of councils including Derry City Council and community organisations, such as St Columbs Park House and Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre to further develop our regional capacity.

BIP continues to lobby the DoJ and a number of other statutory organisations to encourage them to use BIP’s cluster map of interfaces in the city, “Interface Barriers, Peacelines and Defensive Architecture”, an update of our previous research, “Belfast Interfaces: Security Barriers and Use of Defensive Use of Space”. This research will support the implementation of a template to establish a number of interface cluster partnerships through our youth intervention projects aimed at young people involved in interface violence and disaffected or disengaged from their communities.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Position

The accounts on pages 12 – 14 deal with all the income and expenditure of the charitable company, as well as its financial position at the year end.

They show an overall surplus for the year of £4,094 (2022: surplus £2,361), being a surplus of £30,407 (2022: surplus £9,704) in restricted funds and a deficit of £26,313 (2022: deficit £7,343) in unrestricted funds.

Overall, reserves are in surplus by £55,022 (2022: £50,928) with a surplus in restricted funds of £46,414 (2022: £16,007) and a surplus of £8,608 (2022: £34,921) in unrestricted funds, which includes a provision in respect of the NI Charities Pension Scheme deficit of £2,731 (2022: £3,441). Without the provision unrestricted reserves would be in surplus by £11,339 (2022: £38,362).

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FINANCIAL REVIEW continued

Principal Funding Sources

Core funding in this year came from Belfast City Council Capacity Building grant. Additional revenue and running costs plus programmatic work and research were funded by a number of other grants including The National Lottery, The Executive Office and Co-operation Ireland. Opportunities for the delivery of fee-earning services, both charitable and non-charitable, were taken up as they arose. We will continue to source funding opportunities as and when the opportunity presents itself.

Reserves policy

The Trustees' policy is to retain a level of unrestricted reserves which provides reasonable assurance of the resilience and sustainability of the charity in uncertain times. Their aim is to have unrestricted reserves of three months core salaries, pensions and running costs, plus a redundancy reserve. This would equate to approximately £33,000.

Actual reserves at 31 March 2023 are £8,608 (2022: £34,921), which includes a provision of £2,731 (2022: £3,441) in respect of the NI Charities Pension Scheme. Without this provision, reserves would stand at £11,339 (2022: £38,362).

We are currently seeking to bring in additional unrestricted funding to bring reserves into line with our policy. This will include revenue from training, mediation and facilitation projects, tenders and management fees for partnered projects in communities and other contract income.

Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charitable company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

BIP currently has a number of projects approved for funding and they are at various stages of delivery going forward over the next year.

1. Over the next year BIP will continue to develop our inter-generational Virtual and Augmented Reality Platform/Game, funding permitting. We will continue to focus on "at risk" or "hard to reach" young people in North, South, East and West Belfast. We will continue to develop our community toolkit and Shared Futures project which has been funded until 31/03/24 from the National Lotteries 'Peoples and Communities Fund' and will engage with community groups across Belfast and in Derry/Londonderry.
2. BIP remains committed in the coming year to membership and support for the E3 Multi Agency Group, Civic Society Network and T:BUC consultation forums and will deliver a TEO funded Civic Innovation project to maximise collaboration and encourage other agencies to play a role in the interface investment programme. BIP will utilise its community planning toolkit to develop a "Living with Covid" community support plan at regional level.
3. Through the QUB Psychology Dept. we expect to have an internship placement and also expect at least 1 international student placement. In 2022 we hosted a group of 22 students from the Diplomatic studies Programme at Oxford University at our offices in central Belfast. We will welcome them again in 2023.

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PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS continued

4. BIP in partnership with Essex University and Animorph Cooperative are in the process of completing funding applications to IFI and National Lottery to continue the development of the Community toolkit. An application in partnership with Cooperation Ireland, Essex University and Animorph, will be submitted to SEUPB to expand the Future Innovators project and to aid the continued development of the Shared futures Platform. To this end, an expression of interest has been submitted.
5. BIP will continue to source funding from relevant funders for future projects and support. We have plans to submit applications to TEO for next year's tranche for personal development projects aimed at young people disengaged from the respective interface communities.
6. BIP will apply to CRC for core funding to support running costs and shortfall in salaries when the new tranche opens again before the end of 2023.

Over the next few years our new strategic and operational plan (2021/2025) will continue to address positive progress towards reconciliation, conflict transformation and barrier removal in Belfast, and regionally where possible. We will endeavour to see this supported by Awards for All, CRC, TEO, DFA, SEUPB, The National Lottery and Peace+ grants for our developmental and capacity building programme for the future in all our areas of work.

Staff members have completed or are presently studying a number of courses including youth and community studies and business management.

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STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Belfast Interface Project for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP 2019 (FRS102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website.

Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- So far as each trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- each trustee has taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's auditor is aware of that information.

AUDITOR

The charitable company re-tendered for auditors and Grace Taggart of CG Taggart Accountancy Services was re-appointed for a further period of three years (year ends 2021, 2022 & 2023), with the option to extend the term by an additional two years, one of which has been confirmed.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 10 October 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Bernie McConnell – Company Secretary

