

Charity registration number NIC103648

Company registration number NI042872 (Northern Ireland)

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED
GROUP ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr S J Dunlop Mr D G Lennon Mr S T W Roycroft Mr J Moore Ms S Jones Mr C McCreery Mr T Herron Ms R Edwards Mr M Fleetwood Ms P Abbott	(Appointed 29 March 2024)
Charity number	NIC103648	
Company number	NI042872	
Registered office	The Court House 16 Quay Street Bangor Co. Down BT20 5ED	
Auditor	GMcG BELFAST Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor Alfred House 19 Alfred Street Belfast BT2 8EQ	
Bankers	AIB 11-15 Donegall Square North Belfast BT1 5GB Cambridge & Counties Bank Charnwood Court 5B New Walk Leicester LE1 6TE	

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

CONTENTS

	Page
Trustees' report	1 - 6
Independent auditor's report	7 - 12
Consolidated statement of financial activities	13
Consolidated balance sheet	14
Charity balance sheet	15
Consolidated statement of cash flows	16
Notes to the financial statements	17 - 32

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in the notes to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2013, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, Companies Act 2006 and "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).

Since the group and parent charitable company qualifies as small under Section 383 of the Companies Act 2006, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Director's Report) Regulations 2013 is not required.

Objectives and activities

Principal activities

The principal activities of the group during the year were the advancement of arts, culture and heritage through the delivery of music and arts events, including annual festivals and one-off concerts and events; and the operation and management of a bar and ancillary activities.

Policies and objectives

In setting objectives and planning for activities, the Trustees have given due consideration to general guidance published by the charity commission relating to public benefit.

Activities for achieving objectives

Open House Festival promotes regeneration through arts and cultural events. It currently runs three separate strands of activity:

- An annual arts festival in Bangor;
- A year round programme of events in Belfast and Bangor;
- An independent music and arts venue in the former Bangor Court House.

The vision of Open House Festival is 'Transforming people and places through arts and culture'. Its current mission is to spearhead the regeneration of Bangor, repositioning it as 'The Brighton of Northern Ireland' – a centre for art, culture, leisure, and tourism. This will build on the city's history as a seaside holiday destination, and exploit its built heritage, its proximity to Belfast, its natural assets, and its burgeoning creative community. This also aligns with the recent Integrated Strategy by Ards and North Down Borough Council, entitled 'Blue: Green – Creatively Connected'.

The charity seeks to create an artistic programme that has depth, breadth, and integrity: that unearths new, young and emerging talent; sheds light on the unsung heroes; celebrates world-renowned artists, and uses them to spearhead marketing campaigns, draw new audiences and generate revenue. The charity strives to paint a positive picture of Bangor to the rest of the world, through the vehicle of artistic and cultural activity, and ultimately to bring the rest of the world here to experience it for themselves.

At Open House Festival headquarters, it is the belief that the annual Festival, and the many activities that connect to it, can be a catalyst for cultural, social, and economic transformation in Bangor and throughout Northern Ireland. Specifically, Open House Festival works to:

- promote and increase participation in arts and cultural activities;
 - provide an international platform for local emerging artists;
 - provide a focus for the creative sector in Bangor;
 - generate income to support our programme of artistic and cultural events;
 - promote the economic growth of Bangor;
 - work with other local partners to develop a world class arts and creative sector for Northern Ireland;
 - promote cultural understanding and social cohesion, bringing communities together and eliminating prejudice and cultural stereotyping;
 - create a positive public perception for Northern Ireland, at home and abroad;
 - develop Northern Ireland as a global destination for cultural tourism.
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OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Achievements and performance

Significant activities and achievements against objectives

Review of activities

2023/24 was a busy and successful year of events for Open House Festival.

During July and August 2023, Open House Festival delivered a full arts festival throughout Bangor city centre, including the following key elements:

- A series of 58 concerts, films, literary events and comedy shows in venues such as the Walled Garden at Bangor Castle and the Court House, with artists including Nick Lowe, James Nesbitt and Shane Todd;
- Free concerts in Ward Park every Sunday afternoon featuring local musicians across a range of musical genres from rock to punk to folk;
- Seaside Revival Vintage Festival on McKee Clock Arena and Bangor seafront including a vintage car and bike show, retro music and dance, stalls and sideshows, plus the legendary Pickie to Pier Swim for 200 contestants.

Customer satisfaction ratings were at 94% – derived from more than 700 online survey responses. 95% of respondents said the festival made them feel better about Bangor, and 82% said they would have stayed at home if they hadn't been at the event, with a further 10% who would have done something outside of Bangor.

Key indicators included:

- 50,000+ people attended Open House Festival and Seaside Revival events throughout the summer;
- 81 volunteers completed a total of 203 shifts;
- The festival generated media coverage to the value of £303,300.

There was significant positive publicity for the festival and the Court House, including a live outside broadcast of BBC Radio Ulster's Good Morning Ulster from the Court House, and a feature on BBC 2's Great Coastal Railway Journeys with Michael Portillo.

We also delivered a year-round programme of shows in Belfast and Bangor, which ranged from sold out shows with Wilco and Billy Bragg in the Mandela Hall, to Foy Vance in First Bangor Presbyterian Church.

During this financial year the charity completed its first full year of activity in the newly restored Court House venue on Bangor seafront. Acquired from the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service via Northern Ireland's first Community Asset Transfer, this project transformed a derelict Victorian listed building into a permanent home for the charity and a year-round venue for arts and cultural activity. The building won a series of prestigious awards during the year including the Northern Ireland Heritage Angels Public Vote, and the UK-wide National Lottery Project of the Year, the first time a Northern Ireland project has ever won it.

During this financial year the Court House delivered a varied programme of 467 arts events, including music, comedy, film, theatre, spoken word, and visual art, showcasing more than 1,000 artists, and welcoming audiences of 43,500. Highlights of the programme included:

- The Beamish Sessions, a series of six high profile concerts including Hot House Flowers, David Holmes and Jah Wobble, and supported by United Wines and Arts and Business;
- Continuation of the Open House Festival choir with more than 70 members;
- Regular events for specialist audiences, such as our Tonic Classic Film Club, Saturday afternoon Irish traditional music sessions, and Friday night jazz sessions;
- A disco for adults with learning disabilities in partnership with Mencap and Bangor Gateway;
- The Sundown Sessions – a series of five events each featuring two emerging young original bands, programmed and managed by a student from Ulster University as part of a work placement programme;
- The Court House received accreditation as a Living Wage Employer and continued to invest in a staff training programme including Emergency First Aid at Work training, Food Safety in Catering training, Fire Warden Training, Manual Lifting training, and sexual harassment awareness in licensed premises as part of the Good Night Out Campaign.

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

A programme of works were carried out in the rear yard of the Court House, with the installation of a stretch tent and a container bar, to provide much needed overflow for full capacity shows in the Court Room, and the potential for open air shows.

During this financial year staff worked with officers at Ards and North Borough Council to progress a planned phase 2 for the Court House as part of the Bangor Waterfront Plan, to be funded through the Belfast Region City Deal.

Open House Festival joined with a group of local Bangor central traders to establish a steering group and drive forward a proposed Business Improvement District (BID). The BID team carried out a number of public consultation meetings with local businesses and met with both Ards and North Down Borough Council and Department for Communities to pursue funding for the development phase of the BID.

This was a difficult year in terms of funding for Open House Festival, with the Arts Council moving the charity from core funding to lottery support, and Tourism Northern Ireland cutting their national funding programme completely. However, the charity did secure three-year support from Garfield Weston Foundation, and Ards and North Down Borough Council once again supported the summer festival programme.

Financial review

The Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities on page 13 indicates that the group had incoming resources in the year of £1,106,890 which were less than the outgoing resources of £1,168,840, resulting in a deficit of £61,950.

The Board and senior management will take action to ensure that the financial viability of the charity is maintained, and that additional sources of income are secured from funders and sponsors.

The Consolidated Balance Sheet on page 14 shows that the group had a fund surplus of £2,046,076 as at 31 March 2024 (£2,108,026 as at 31 March 2023). This includes restricted funds of £1,676,151; and unrestricted funds of £369,925 which includes designated funds of £170,000. Unrestricted funds excluding fixed assets were £284,221.

The Parent Charitable Company Balance Sheet on page 15 shows at 31 March 2024, the parent charitable company has unrestricted funds carried forward of £297,714 (2023: £280,445) which includes designated funds of £170,000. Unrestricted funds excluding fixed assets were £211,910 (2023: £251,193). It also has restricted funds carried forward of £1,676,151 (2023: £1,794,537) which includes fixed assets of £1,625,379 (2023: £1,674,029).

Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Board of Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity 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. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Accounting Policies.

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Reserves policy

We have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation with the objectives of protecting the organisation from unforeseen financial shocks. We have established a policy whereby the charity's general unrestricted funds should be equal to twelve months net operating costs plus certain consequential additional costs (the Target general reserves).

Out of the charity's total unrestricted reserves at 31 March 2024, £75,000 has been designated for maintenance of the charity's key assets, including the Court House building. A further £95,000 has been designated for expenditure on the Court House Phase II. These designations reflect the charity's obligations and responsibilities as the owner of a Listed Heritage Asset which was acquired under a Community Asset Transfer to maintain the asset.

After taking into account these designations, the charity's general unrestricted reserves are £199,925.

The Targeted general unrestricted reserves for 2024/2025 is £503,000. These reserves are needed to meet the working capital requirements of the charity and the trustees are confident that at this level they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding.

The present level of general unrestricted reserves available to the charity is £199,925, therefore, falls significantly short of this Target. The strategy is to continue to build reserves through planned operating surpluses. The Board of the Charity believe that the Target can be reached within the next five years.

The board reviews this reserve policy on an ongoing basis as the organisation continues to develop and update it as appropriate.

Major risks

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the group and parent charitable company is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the group and parent charitable company and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate our exposure to the major risks.

Plans for future periods

The group and parent charitable company plans to continue the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years, subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

Structure, governance and management

Constitution

Open House Festival Limited is a charitable company limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. It is constituted under a Memorandum of Association dated 24 September 2019 and is a registered charity (number NIC103648 with the Charity Commission Northern Ireland and number XT32992 with HMRC).

The principal object of the charity is the advancement of public education for the benefit of the public by fostering and promoting, the improvement and development of artistic knowledge, taste, understanding and appreciation of the arts and in particular, but not exclusively, to promote and run an annual arts festival.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr S J Dunlop

Mr D G Lennon

Mr S T W Roycroft

Mr J Moore

Ms S Jones

Mr C McCreery

Mr T Herron

Ms R Edwards

Mr M Fleetwood

Ms P Abbott

Mr N Garbutt

(Appointed 29 March 2024)

(Resigned 15 May 2023)

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The strategic management of the parent charitable company is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the Articles of Association.

Each Trustee is elected to serve for a term of three years after which they must be re-elected.

Organisational structure

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charity and is governed under its Articles of Association.

Kieran Gilmore, Group Director, is responsible for the day-to-day management of the charity, assisted by a management team including Alison Gordon, Rachael Campbell-Palmer, Sarah Kiely and Tony Parker.

The Board of Trustees of Open House Festival met eight times throughout the financial year. The Board consists of 10 members, from a variety of professional backgrounds, and is responsible for the strategic direction and policies of the charity.

The Board has delegated the day to day responsibility for the charity's operations to Kieran Gilmore and the management team.

The Board has created a Finance Sub-Committee to review this aspect of the charity's operations in more detail. The Finance Sub-Committee met four times during the year.

During the year Stephen Dunlop retired as Chair, but remains as a Board member, and Jonathan Moore was elected to the position of Chair.

Subsidiary

The charitable company has one wholly owned subsidiary, Open House Trading Limited. The private trading company is registered in Northern Ireland (Company registration number: NI690376), and its registered office is The Court House, 16 Quay Street, Bangor, Co. Down, BT20 5ED. The principal activity of the trading company during the year was the operation and management of the Court House bars and ancillary activities including running a number of the Court House events.

Any profits the subsidiary makes are gift aided in full to the charity.

The directors who served the trading company during the year were as follows:

Mr Kieran Gilmore
Ms Alison Gordon
Mr Tim Herron
Ms Sarah Jones

Induction and training of trustees

New Trustees are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making process, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. They are free to discuss any issue with other directors or key employees. Trustees are encouraged to attend any appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL LIMITED

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT) (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Open House Festival Limited for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

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

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK 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 charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the group 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 group 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 charity and financial information included on the charity's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that GMcG BELFAST be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

Small companies exemption

In preparing this report, the directors have taken advantage of the small companies exemptions provided by Section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Mr J Moore
Trustee

Mr M Fleetwood
Trustee

16 December 2024