



Coiste Forbartha Charn Tóchair  
Carntogher Community Association

# **Tuairisc na Bliana**

## **Annual Report**

Eanair – Nollaig 2023

January – December 2023



The Trustees, who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of the Companies Act, present their annual report and audited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The information with respect to trustees, directors, officers and advisers set out on the information page, forms part of this report.

## 1.0 Background

*Carntogher Community Association was originally set up as an unincorporated association on 8th January 1992 and formally reconstituted as a company limited by guarantee with Charitable Status on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1998.*

### **1.1 Charitable Purposes & Constitution and how our charitable activities deliver public benefit**

*The trustees have had regard to the Commissions Public benefit statutory guidance.*

*The objects of the Association as set out in the Memorandum of Association are as follows:*

*(i) to promote the revival of the Irish-language in General and within the Carntogher Area in particular.*

*(ii) to promote the benefit of the inhabitants of Carntogher and its environs without distinction of age, sex, race, political, religious or other opinion by the advancement of education and the provision of facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants;*

*(iii) to preserve for the benefit of the public whatever land buildings or other structures may exist in Carntogher and its environs of particular beauty or historical or architectural interest;*

*(iv) to provide or secure the provision of public amenities in Carntogher and its environs for the benefit of the inhabitants thereof;*

*(v) the conservation and protection of land in the Carntogher area which is of aesthetic or scientific interest.*

## **1.2 Administration & Governance**

Carntogher Community Association is registered with the Companies Registrar under registration number NI035332. It is also recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue, NIC 104017. Its registered office is at An Carn, 132A Tirkane Road, Maghera Co. Derry BT46 SRE and most of its ongoing operations are also located at this address. The trustees and secretary of the charity who served during the year and at the date of this report are as follows:

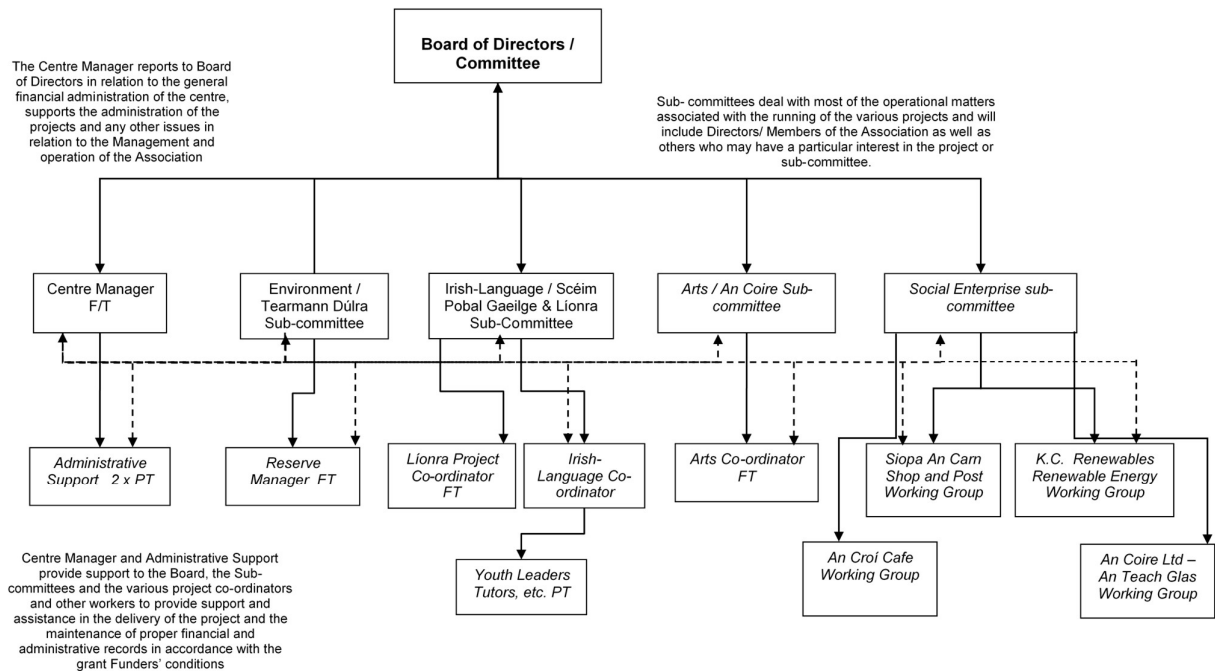
- Liam O Flannagan Chairman
- Niall O'Kane Company Secretary
- John Donnelly (Resigned on 1 April 2024)
- Barry Glass
- Karen Mills
- Caoimhe Mhic Thaidhg (Appointed on 1 April 2024)

The Charity also admits additional members who are involved in the management and delivery of the activities of the charity. These are appointed at the AGM and are as follows:

- Martin Diamond
- Padraig Ó Mianain
- Diarmuid De Brun
- Susan Uí Mhianain
- Shane Ward
- Claire Mulholland
- Pat Mullan

All of the above members have the option to attend the Trustees/ Board meetings and to be involved in a range of sub-committees. The charity has 10 direct employees (7 full time & 3 Part time) and its social economy businesses employ over 6 full time and 14 part time employees (10 FTE).

The operational management structure of the charity is as follows.



The Trustees/ Board meeting takes place on a bimonthly basis and the sub-committee meetings generally happen on a monthly basis. Applications for trusteeship/directorship are sought at the AGM which is advertised within the local area.

### **1.3 Financial Review & Reserves Policy**

The Trustees, who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of the Companies Act, have approved their annual report and audited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2023.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts and comply with the 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 2015)".

The charity's policy on restricted funds is to separately record donations, grants and other sources of fundraising where restrictions are imposed that are narrower than the charity's overall objectives. The majority of these incoming resources have been utilised in the year for their intended purpose.

The trustees have a policy of designating funds for specific purposes. The charity has received funds from a number of sources to finance the acquisition of fixed assets.

The trustees have established a policy whereby the unrestricted funds not committed or invested in tangible fixed assets of designated for specific purposes ("the free reserves") held by the charity should be between six

and nine months of the resources expended, which equates to a minimum of £90,000, in general funds. At this level, the trustees consider that they would be able to continue the current activities of the charity in the event of a significant drop in income. It would be necessary to consider how the income would be replaced or activities changed.

At the balance sheet date the free reserves (Net Current Assets), amount to a deficit of £149,098 and do not reach the minimum £90,000 and did not exceed the minimum target level. This showed a reduction in the deficit by £19,450 from the previous year which showed a deficit in our reserves of £168,548. We will continue in the coming years to reduce this deficit in our Net Current Assets in order to target towards securing the minimum level of surplus of £90,000. We have targeted to do this over a 5-years period by reducing this deficit by around £50,000 in each of the coming 5 years.

In order to deliver a long term sustainable position in relation to its core operational costs and the rebuilding of its reserves the Association will continue to adopt the strategy of promoting social economy projects in order to build a source of income including An Croí Cafe, Siopa An Carn (a gift shop/ book shop/ post office), An Teach Glas, self-catering accommodation and a new venture Prionta. To date these ventures have been working towards a modest income to the Association, but building on the success of these ventures will provide a sustainable income to the

Association that will help meet our core costs, allow match funding for various projects, and to start to rebuild out capital reserves.

## **1.4 Investment Policy**

While building its reserve, the charity aims to ensure that there is sufficient cash flow to meet its ongoing commitments. Funds that are surplus to immediate requirements will be kept available on a current account and any funds not immediately required will be invested in short term deposit accounts at the most beneficial rates available reflecting the investment period.

## **1.5 Risk Management**

The trustees have reviewed the major risks to which the charity is exposed and systems have been established to manage those risks.

## **2.0 Charitable Activities - Introduction**

Overall, 2023 proved to be another busy year for the Association with a wide range of successful projects promoted during the year and the continued growth of our social enterprises.

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The following provides a summary of the activities undertaken through the various projects during the year:

## **Carnogher 30 Year Celebration**

An evening of celebration was hosted by Mid Ulster Council to mark the Associations 30 Years. A lovely evening spent recognising the work of the Association and the impact on the local community.



## **Scéim Forbartha Líonra Gaeilge**

Scéim Forbartha Líonra Gaeilge began in January 2022 replacing the previous SPG project. The organisation was successful in its application to the funding scheme to secure the community funding until 2024. The funding scheme covers the Irish language officer wage and overheads with a small amount contributing to programme costs.

We continued and delivered a very successful range of activities online and resumed face to face classes again from September.

A full programme was delivered with a range of courses, activities/classes

Irish classes for adults, one day intensive courses for adults (Seachtain na Gaeilge) and a Ciorcal Comhrá Conversation circle for adults.

Seachtain na Gaeilge – Irish Language Week events included: a Dianchúrsa for adults – Intensive Course – 4 levels, GCSE & As & A2 Dianchúrsaí, Workshops with Maire Andrews and local Gaelscoileanna, Screening of Frank agus Rosie & Tarrach, Lá na Scoileanna // Schools day with Franzini Brothers and Gaelscoileanna and school days for R5 – R7 & P7 from English medium schools.

Feis Charn Tóchair providing a range of competitions onsite including music, traditional singing, poetry recitation, art, fáinne competition, scholarship award, writing competitions (with over 800 entries). Recordings of the poems for each age group available on our You Tube channel was of benefit to families and parents in helping their children prepare for the Feis. 25 volunteers to help co-ordinate and deliver the Feis. Children and teenagers from 31 different schools took part.

Dianchúrsa Gaeilge onsite during Féile Charn Tóchair. 4 levels.

Dianchúrsaí Cruinnis – a series of 3 Intensive Accuracy full day courses took place with 20 + adults attending per day

Spraoi an tSathairn – Saturday morning fun club through Irish for children in Rang 2 – Rang 4. Activities include – sports, team games, arts & crafts, storytelling 35+ attending weekly

Líonra – In 2023 the Líonra project was officially launched and worked commenced with a range of events and activities. The focus was mainly on a public awareness campaign about the language in the area and creating a support network to further help the fulfilment of the plan. Some key events included internationally renowned

historian and scholar Kevin Whelan who joined us at the An Coire Arts Centre for an evening to discuss the impacts that the Irish 'Famine' on the Irish people regarding sport, language, politics and everything in between. The project also hosted a group of students from Notre Dame who visited the area and strong links have been made for return visits. The Carnlann project commenced with the appointment of a new member of staff over the summer months to compile and archive material in a digital

format for future generations. This is the first step in the project and filming of local peoples stories began in late 2023. In May 2023, a language planning Symposium, Fréamhú Teamga, was held with over 70 in attendance from various Irish language organisations. Other key areas of work included the delivery of a speech regarding Youth at Udáras na Gaeltacht summit and the appointment of the Lónra Charn Tóchair on the national language planning working group. Ensuring the group continues to play a key role in future Irish Language planning.



### **Club Oige / Youth Activities**

2023 saw great participation through all Irish language youth activities with over 100 members from P5 upward, activities included weekly youth club, group singing class, art class, comic art workshop, archery club and sports club. Activities were held

between An Carn, Drumnaph Nature Reserve and Maghera Leisure Centre and also included a few trips to other centres. The formation of the leadership programme for young people Yr 11/12 and Yr 13/14 has seen the group gather together, focusing on what skills they would like to develop and advice on what the programme will look like. There is one full-time youth worker and approx. 10 youth support staff who offer these activities to our youth.



### **Community Library/Leabharlann Phobail**

The community library offers a much-needed resource for the local community and during 2023 St Brigids PS / Bunscoil Naoimh Bríd continued to visit on a regular basis to support the work of the teachers and parents.

The Library has both an English language and an Irish-language section, together with internet access, computer-based learning material including software packages, DVDs and CDs. The library is also well used by the wider community and its use is continuing to build. The Irish-language section of the library is particularly important in helping to develop a love for learning and reading in Irish outside of a formal education environment.

The Association identified a further need to enhance and update the library and through funding from Foras na Gaeilge, the Association implemented new software for the categorising and borrowing of books. The new system will aim to improve the process for users and also support staff to manage the day to day operations of the library.



## **An Croí Coffee House & Bistro**

An Croí staff have worked tirelessly to continue to build on a strong customer base in 2023 and have continued as a popular eating establishment. Hospitality has been badly affected post covid with lack of staff continuing to create problems. However, the Café was able to reopen on Sundays in 2023 and have been building up a Sunday trade again. Overall, the café has been performing well throughout 2023 but rising costs has continued to make trading difficult with another trading loss in 2023. Steps have been taken to reduce costs and menu has been reviewed to help trading figures.



## **Training & Recreational Courses & Classes**

A full programme of workshops and classes were delivered in 2023 and these included Pilates, flower arranging, health & wellbeing talks, St Brigids Cross making, Coppercraft, kids' art classes to name a few. The numbers attending course/workshop have been excellent throughout the year and demand has been increasing.



### **Post Office & Siopa An Carn**

Siopa An Carn and Tirkane Post office are together a very important part of attracting people into An Carn and in attracting the local community into the building.

Tirkane Post Office is open 5 days a week and helps to provide more opportunities to use the service in the local community. Additional services like Amazon Hub has attracted many new customers to the Post Office and made more people aware of the services on offer.



Siopa An Carn continues to grow and expand as a well established gift/book business. A new manager, Gemma Ward, was employed to help the business to thrive and grow with a keen focus on online trading and overseeing the administrative side of the business.

From a financial point of view, it was a successful year for the shop with a small profit and this considering the registration for VAT and increasing overhead costs. It contributed a £5,000 rental to the Association and employment for 4 part time staff.

The trading figures for 2024 are expected to remain positive and provide great encouragement to the Association. Efforts to improve our online presence will be the key focus again in 2024 and developing a range of Irish language products.



### **Féile Charn Tóchair 2023**

The festival is now into its 26<sup>th</sup> year and this year the Association made every effort to offer a wide range of events. The festival committee planned a full programme of events that can be found on our website: [www.ancarn.org](http://www.ancarn.org). Events included: Rith An Carn, Family Funday & BBQ, Gaeilc Families and Territories in South Derry Talk by Thomas McErlean, Irish mass at Granaghan Mass Rock, Gig with Pólca 4, Colaiste Charn Tóchair, Adult Dianchursa, Music & Craft workshops at Drumnaph and Historical talks on Carntogher mountain. With over 1200 attendees, the festival proved very successful. The festival received funding from Foras na Gaeilge, Arts Council NI and BSG Group towards marketing, capital items and entertainment.



## **Drumnaph Community Nature Reserve**

Following the end of the Heritage Lottery Project funding in 2022, there was a decrease in the number of events and activities that took place at the Reserve in 2023. However, the site was managed by an interim caretaker who maintained the pathways for locals and visitors to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Over 40,000 visitors were recorded as visiting the site in 2023. A number of subcommittees were formed, Ecology and Development, to plan the future of the Reserve. The Association were also successful in securing 3 year funding from the National Lottery Dormant Account in Oct 2023. This funding will see the employment of a Reserve manager to ensure the long term sustainability of the reserve.

### **Events and Activities**

At the end of October, we held our annual Samhain Festival of Light which was a huge success. It was held over 2 nights and 600 people attended. Over 100 volunteers worked throughout the weekend in very challenging weather conditions to ensure the festival was a great success.



### Cairde Dhroim nDamh Funding Record 2023

FUNDER	DATE	TOTAL AWARDED	PURPOSE
FORAS NA GAEILGE	APRIL 2023	£1984	LANTERN WALK
		<b>£1984</b>	

### **An Coire / Arts Council Project Funding**

Carntogher Art Programme continued to deliver a bilingual arts programme within the community. The programme has been varied and inclusive with the programme reflecting previous years and recommendations being implemented. The programme delivered 30 separate workshops/classes including the regular painting, fused glass, sewing and wreath making. However, a number of new workshops like copperscraft, and felt making proved extremely popular among participants. A total of 15 different events have happened within the programme so far including a number of music events – Garadice, Polca 4, and Joe Diamond & Friends tribute night a few key highlights. A few other highlights included the annual Samhain event that attracted over 600 people to Drumnaph Nature Reserve, Culture Night and Marie Andrews / Franzini Brothers shows to the local Gaelscoileanna.

Thanks to the continued support of our funders, Arts Council NI & Mid Ulster District Council, who continue to support us in the delivery of the arts to our community. The project has been running very successfully over the past 9 years in attracting new people to experience the arts and also develop the skills of those in the local area and further afield. A full programme has been planned for 2024 & can be found on our website [www.ancarn.org](http://www.ancarn.org)



### **Self Catering Accommodation – An Teach Glas**

Since opening in June 2015, An Teach Glas Self Catering Accommodation has been growing steadily and has gained an excellent reputation among visitors. Over the past 9 years we have welcomed visitors from all over Ireland, France, Spain, Scotland and America who have experienced the 4\* facilities on offer.

## **Occupancy Rates**

In 2023, our average occupancy for the year was 28.5%. This is down on 2022 figures and well below the NI average. Contributing factors could be the change in trends and families travelling abroad again to holiday. Focus must be on attracting more staycations in 2024.

**A) Table 1: Occupancy rates in 2023**

	2023						Average
	Teach Shuí Finn			Teach Loch Bran			
	Available bed nights	Occupied bed nights	% rate	Available bed nights	Occupied bed nights	% rate	
January	31	6	19%	31	3	10%	15%
February	28	1	4%	28	1	4%	4%
March	31	4	13%	31	2	6%	10%
April	30	29	97%	30	6	20%	58%
May	31	12	39%	31	6	19%	29%
June	30	11	37%	30	5	17%	27%
July	31	19	61%	31	15	48%	55%
August	31	24	77%	31	19	61%	69%
September	30	7	23%	30	9	30%	27%
October	31	1	3%	31	5	16%	10%
November	30	9	30%	30	13	43%	37%
December	31	1	3%	31	1	3%	3%
Average %			34%			23%	

The Association continued to use on-line booking sites such as AirBnB, Booking.com and TripAdvisor to help to attract more guests to stay in 2023. However, work has commenced to create our own website for direct booking. The aim is to have our bilingual website up and running in early 2024. This website will in due course offer the option to guests and tourists to book activities for Spraoi as a package with their stay, as well offering a breakfast option as part of their package, not only as a selling point for the houses but also in hopes to increase footfall in An Croí.

The booking engine on the website will cut administration time on our end, in providing access to all relevant parties to the details of each booking, (number of guest, check in time etc.), providing financial reports, and integrating all booking platforms together etc. This should simplify the operational side of the business and allow more time for marketing.

The houses continue to be increasingly popular, especially amongst larger groups of people and families, and the Association increased prices for the 2023/2024 season to reflect the standard of services provided and the increase in costs of bills.

The houses and café are starting to work alongside each other to encourage those staying to avail of the other services provided in the An Carn Complex – we are offering a discounted breakfast for guests staying on longer stays. We are intending to extend this deal to other local accommodation providers in attempts to increase footfall during the quiet, breakfast hours in the café.



### **Tionscadal Forbartha Gnó/ Business Development Project**

We received 3 year funding from Ciste Infheistíochta Gaeilge to employ a Business Development officer for supporting and developing existing and new Social enterprises at An Carn. The aim of the project is to create more streams of income, and to help the organisation become more sustainable and independent of funding. In 2023, the officer worked closely with our social enterprises – Siopa An Carn, An Croí, An Coire, An Teach Glas and Prionta to enhance their services and support their needs. The main focus in 2023 has been on developing a business plan for Spraoi Ltd (Irish Language Events Company) and sourcing funding. Planning application has been submitted about the capital works associated with the project. Other key outcomes have been the creation of a new An Teach Glas website and sourcing funding for capital items for the social enterprises ie: new signage for An Croí and promotional brochures for tourism.

### **New Social Enterprise – Prionta Ltd**

We established our new printing company in October 2021 with the aim to design and print gift in Irish. We created our own line of Christmas gifts and décor, including pyjamas, cushions and mugs, and sold these mainly to Siopa an Carn, where they proved to be a huge hit. We also sold these to other distributors, Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin and Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich. In 2023, we had no production due to staff shortages although plans are underway to establish a mini enterprise group involving the Irish language leadership programme in 2024.

### **Future Projects –**

The Association is continually working on new project ideas and these include for 2024:

1. Drumnaph house & Barn – Hostel Accommodation
2. GF Trust – Sustainability grant
3. Sustainable Community buildings – Community Fund

## **Use of the An Carn Facilities by other organisations**

The An Carn centre is used by a number of other organisations, both commercial and voluntary.

### **Carn Wheelers**

Carn Wheelers is the local cycling club and is based at An Carn. It uses the centre as a base for its regular monthly meetings and provides an opportunity for cooperation on activities and events. An Carn currently provides the facilities at An Carn free of charge to Carn Wheelers.



### **North West Mountain Rescue.**

The North-West Mountain Rescue is based at An Carn and uses the centre for its regular meetings and for training events and activities as well as publicity etc. Again there are opportunities for co-operation between the mountain rescue and the Association in relation to the provision of First Aid courses and helping out at Rith An Chairn. Both groups have worked together on the Carntogher Resilience Project.



### **Club Óige Luraigh**

Club Óige Luraigh continues to provide a range of activities through the medium of Irish for children from 8 to 18 years old. The young people play an important part in organising and delivering the events themselves and these events and activities provide an important opportunity for children to use their language within an informal and fun environment.



### **Sperrin Walkers Club**

Sperrin Walking Club uses the An Carn centre for their monthly meetings and any training courses they deliver. We hope to establish strong links with the group in order to deliver a Carntogher Walking festival in the future.

### **Carntogher First Responder Scheme – Dalriada Urgent Care**



This community scheme involves volunteers from the local area who are working together with Dalriada Urgent Care to deliver grass roots medical care for members of the community. The scheme offers an essential service and support to medical professional. Quarterly training and training for new volunteers is facilitated at An Carn. In 2023, the local branch rebranded and established Carntogher First

Responders in order to source new funding pots. Plans to replace the defibrillators are well under way and hope to replace in 2024.

### **Ceoltóirí Luraigh – Machaire Rátha / Carn Tóchair**

Ceoltóirí Luraigh make regular use of the buildings at An Carn for their weekly classes, which cater for approx 150 students over a range of instruments including banjo, fiddle, accordion, bodhrán,



guitar, tin whistle, flute and a growing Grúpa Ceoil. On an annual basis they avail of the facilities at An Coire for a concert where these classes are showcasing their ability to their families in a state of the art venue. The committee also hold meetings at an Carn on a monthly basis.

## **Conclusion**

During the 2023 year the Association continued to perform an important community function within the Carntogher area. The Association has continued to provide important support for a range of other organisations within the area and hopes to further extend this with ongoing collaboration and partnership building.

The sheer range of projects promoted by the Association is an ongoing challenge to its operation as a single Management Board and the Directors are currently undertaking a review of the management structure of the group to delegate much responsibility for the delivery of the various projects to a range of sub-committees.

In the process of doing this we are taking the opportunity to broaden the involvement and membership of the Group to attract people who have an interest in each of the various projects, but who may not have been interested in being involved on a general management board. If successful, this will further strengthen the function of the Association locally and in turn strengthen the viability.

2024 will be another exciting year for the Association with plans to implement better management structures and the ongoing development at Drumnaph Nature Reserve, new projects and plans to develop tourism in the area.

### **Statement of trustees' responsibilities in respect of the annual report and the financial statements**

The trustees are responsible for preparing the financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view, in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice of the state of the affairs of the charity and of the statement of financial activities of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements the officers and members of the committee are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the 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 accounts; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the club and that help ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

### **Statement of disclosure of information to auditors**

So far as each of the trustees in office at the date of approval of these financial statements is aware:

- there is no relevant information of which the charity's accountants are unaware; and
- they have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as trustees/directors in order to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the charity's accountants are aware of that information.


**Auditors**

EM Accountants, 42A-44A New Row, Coleraine, offer themselves for re-appointment.

**Small Company Rules**

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

This report was approved by the trustees on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N O'Kane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and a distinct 'O' followed by an apostrophe and the name 'Kane'.

Niall O'Kane, Company Secretary  
Carrtogher Community Association






# C179 Trustees Report 31.12.2023

Final Audit Report

2024-10-04

Created:	2024-10-04
By:	EM Accountants (office@emaccountants.co.uk)
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