

TRUSTEE ANNUAL REPORT Nollaig 2023

Public Benefit Statement

The public benefit that flows from the purpose is the educational benefit of additive bilingualism which improves self-esteem, promotes cultural awareness and tolerance, enhances individuals' job and recreational opportunities, leads to formal and informal educational qualifications (Diploma, Degree, OCG, GCE/GCSE and Fáinne exams) and integrates the Irish speaking/learning community into the rich cultural fabric of Northern Ireland and beyond.

The benefits are evidenced through frequent internal and external qualitative assessment, including annual participation in the Conradh na Gaeilge and other competitions; registers of and feedback from participants at lessons, courses and events; photo and press coverage, documentation and recordings; audited annual accounts; engagement with and feedback from our Facebook page and new Instagram account; and detailed reports to any occasional funders (Foras na Gaeilge, An tOireachtas, Glór na nGael, Community Foundation/Ultach Trust).

The possibility of any harm, for example by physical injury incurred by participation in games and activities for children, is outweighed by the benefit and significantly reduced by the policies and procedures in place to address such risks, for example our Child Protection Policy, Volunteering Policy, Risk Assessments and Health and Safety Guidance and our attentive upkeep of the building and its resources.

The charity's beneficiaries are the general public in Northern Ireland, the general public in neighbouring border counties (Louth and Monaghan in the main), the wider community of Newry, and visiting language promotional groups. Specific projects may address the needs of discrete sections of society (e.g. those promoting reconciliation in the north or those parents who are raising their children through the medium of Irish).

We run graded and structured Irish language classes at 5 levels. We also:

- mount bilingual educational exhibitions at least once a year
- organise half-day and one-day intensive courses
- publish monolingual Irish and bilingual materials
- deliver and facilitate lectures
- participate in Oíche Chultúir
- encourage readings of new fiction
- provide for occasional book launches
- support third level students with their research
- promote singing and drama and emergent creative writing in and through Irish
- develop and manage a users' library of Irish language texts and recordings
- promote Local Studies through providing original and historical resources in Irish and English

The only Private benefit flowing from this purpose is that Volunteers will gain advantage from our programme of ongoing training, in the areas of teaching skills, resource preparation, Child Protection, book, paper ephemera and vinyl conservation, and event management skills for example - skills that are transferable to other settings - albeit this is incidental and necessary to ensure the benefit is provided to our beneficiaries.

Through our training programmes, Volunteers will acquire skills and experience that will directly assist the quality of our provision. Our archive and library continues to expand, especially in the area of book and journal acquisitions. Two significant acquisitions of books have substantially increased the book stock in the past year and many new books are out on loan to early readers of Irish materials.

Purposes

The purposes of our organisation are: to educate the public in and through the Irish language, and in particular the Irish language as used in its spoken and written modes, by the provision of structured and graded language courses and other formal and informal learning opportunities; to promote and develop the Irish language for the benefit of the public in the area of benefit; to encourage appreciation for, and participation in, bilingual Local Studies activities by people in the area of benefit with a particular focus on the young, unemployed, those new to Irish, returners to education and retired; to encourage and stimulate literacy in the Irish language in the area of benefit by the provision of library and research facilities, bi-literacy training, facilities for book launches, public readings and writing workshops.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries are all those who availed of the educational provision and activities provided at the Gaeláras and occasionally online, and those who used our community space. This includes those who availed of a new bespoke beginners' class (September 2023) and our new Déanfaidh sé an G nó course with online audio support. Others who benefitted received free promotional print and other materials in Irish and English through the post. The local and wider community, non-Irish speaking, benefitted from the educational materials available from the users' library, especially the local history section (some of which now appears in a trilingual feature in a local newspaper on a fortnightly basis), and from free copies of educational literature. Vulnerable adults are catered for with one to one provision as suits their needs. Others who benefitted included the Summer volunteers who helped to revamp our Library, our Audio Archive and our Special Collection. Overall, the beneficiaries included those whose personal self-esteem, cultural confidence, awareness and tolerance, and cognitive development have been enhanced through Additive Bilingualism.

Activities

The public benefit of our educational benefit of additive bilingualism was evidenced in a number of ways. We promoted cultural awareness especially through our good relations and wider educational activities which included: a street-based Cultural Night; a Burns Night exhibition; a lecture and exhibition on the Ulster Gaelic League; a bespoke course for assistants in the Naíscoil; online provision during Seachtain na Gaeilge and a history tour; active support for events in South Armagh including the Michael J Murphy Winter School and the Cardinal O Fiaich Centenary celebrations; support for adults studying A Level Irish; co-operation with Newry Bosco in provision of learning materials; continuing occasional provision of courses to 5 levels in the Newry Gaeláras; support for our online language course entitled Faigh Fáinne-Caith Fáinne; a Belfast and the Irish Language Exhibition.

We have run Leabhra-Feabhra activities; sponsored prizes for Bunscoil and Naíscoil pupils and supported Sports Day and the Christmas Plays; sponsored online competitions; hosted meetings of diverse language and community-based groups; invested in our library stock and storage; and increased our provision of educational

materials for the local press, concentrating increasingly on articles/features that include Ulster Scots.

Achievements

Classes are thankfully back up to speed after Covid and numbers are steady. Our Facebook (2290 followers) and Instagram platforms (580 followers) are popular. Our storage and cataloguing system remains a major work in progress. We are open to the public more hours, provide more one-to-one support; promote local authors; develop our evolving marketing through our part-time Oifigeach Forbartha Gnó. Our two recent publishing projects – Cuisle na nGael 2023 and The Butter's through the Champ have been very well received. Our booklet Faigh-Fáinne Caith Fáinne has been distributed widely and will need a reprint in 2024. We jointly oversaw the re-launch of the seminal songbook Abair Amhrán. The rare items in the archive have been augmented. Our outreach has been extended and has seen us involved with Ballybot Community Association, Restorative Justice Newry, Dundalk Gaelic League, Omeath Historical Society, the University of Ulster, Dáil na Mumhan, St. Michael's PS Cillín, Newry Maritime Association and the Newry Museum.

Restrictions on who can benefit

Our planned events are all free at entry – lectures, exhibitions, one-day courses, competitions, guided tours of the Gaeláras, access to our resources and archives. We endeavour to do almost everything bilingually though this is not realistic at times if we are stressing the total immersion approach to second language learning. Any monolingual events (and the number of these increased this year) are advertised as such as a matter of policy and practice, or a level of fluency is indicated. Activities involving Irish Medium Educational Sector children are always conducted through the medium of Irish only as we seek to provide language role-models for the children. Wider bone fide community groups and other cultural groups can use our premises free of charge.

Private benefit

The only Private benefits are that Volunteers, participants and visitors will gain advantage from our programme of ongoing training, for example in the area of book conservation and cataloguing, up-skilling linguistically in preparation for public examinations (A Level/Diploma/Degree/TICO), in researching and producing bilingual promotional literature and developing event management skills, in teaching an adult class, in promoting publications - skills that are transferable to other settings - though this is incidental and necessary to ensure the benefit is provided to our beneficiaries.

Statement of compliance

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's educational purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.