

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report prepared in accordance with Charities SORP 2015 (FRS102) and the unaudited financial statements for the period ended 31 August 2024, also prepared in accordance with the aforementioned Statement of Recommended Practice and FRS 102.

Trustees

The trustees who served during the period are as follows:

Ray Morgan Chair
Kevin Scott Vice chair
Roisin McLaughlin Secretary
Conor O'Kane Treasurer
Joanne Robinson Vice Treasurer
Kate Walsh
John Reynolds
Colm McCann
Declan McFaul
Christina Murphy
Beth McComish
Chris Donohoe
Siobhan Dunne

There have been no changes to the trustees from the date of the financial statements to date the accounts have been approved.

Structure, Governance and Management

The school is an unincorporated charity and was registered with the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland on 22 February 2016. The charity number is NIC104819.

The charity is governed by its constitution and is managed by the Trustees, who are noted above. We also have a musical director who manages the musical aspects of the school. The charity's main function is to provide tuition on a weekly basis in traditional Irish music. We have two terms, a 15-week first term which runs from September to January, and a 12-week second term which runs from February to May. We are also involved in numerous musical events in and around Newtownabbey and North Belfast throughout the year.

The charity's principal address is:

17 Hollybrook Heights
Newtownabbey
Co Antrim
BT36 7XS

Objectives and Activities

We are a voluntary, community-based arts organisation now in our 19th year. The school was established to promote, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Glengormley and North Belfast and its environs, without distinction of age, sex, race, political, religious or other opinions, the education and training of people in all areas of Irish traditional music skills and musicianship and to promote appreciation for and knowledge of Irish traditional music for the benefit of the general public.

The school provides high quality traditional music tuition in the following instruments: Fiddle; Tin Whistle; Flute; Uilleann Pipes; Button Accordion; Concertina; Banjo; Mandolin; Bodhran; Guitar; Harp and Ballad singing. The term included 27 classes in total which are held in Edmund Rice College, Hightown Road, Glengormley on Thursday evenings between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. Every pupil is given the opportunity to play in a group setting between 8.15pm and 8.45pm. We hold concerts at Christmas and in May, with a music Feis in March.

There are also weekend workshops held in March, a week-long workshop in Donegal held annually in July, and a Traditional Music Summer Scheme held in August. The school is also involved in numerous community events in Newtownabbey and North Belfast. GSOTM has taken the lead in the development of Belfast Summer School of Traditional Music/Belfast Tradfest with our pupils making up 25 % of all pupils attending the Tradfest and 70% of Volunteers coming from GSOTM. We are very proud of the lead we have taken in this.

We are very much planning for the coming year and a return to face-to-face classes and engaging in our full range of social and community activities.

Achievements and Performance

The pandemic had a big impact on the numbers attending GSOTM and in the last two summers, 2022/23, we engaged in a very strong marketing campaign and an open day to try and get back to something like pre-pandemic pupil numbers. This was more successful than we expected with 320 pupils signing up for the first term (our highest ever numbers) and retention figures of 270 for the second term. We had 32 classes in 12 different instruments and had 23 teachers. It quickly became clear that the large numbers in some classes, particularly the beginner classes were having an impact on the quality of the teaching with the last year beginners in particular suffering from the large intake of new beginners. We established a beginner Harp, TW and guitar classes immediately and this was followed by intermediate Concertina and adult beginner Fiddle and Banjo, bringing us up to 37 classes.

We held a school development workshop where we initiated planning to meet an anticipated further growth of numbers in the coming year.

We were involved in numerous community activities in Newtownabbey and North Belfast and have maintained contact with other Trad Music groups. We were also able to renew our long-standing relationship with the adult and children's hospice and play at the former on a monthly basis and occasionally at the latter

We had a large number of our pupils who entered the Antrim Fleadh with great success, in particular our Grupa Ceols. We hold the grupa ceols, as much to get our younger pupils integrated into GSoTM and to mix socially as for the artistic benefit, although they do benefit greatly. It has been a massive success for us with the participants (approx. 50) gaining musically and getting great social benefit.

We continued with our monthly seisuins which have been very well attended and now established in a new long-term home in a local village hall. We started a seisun in a local public house for our young adult pupils and there is an adult seisun in the same local pub and both have been a major success.

Both our annual Donegal workshops and our annual traditional music Summer Scheme were very successful.

Similarly, over 80 of our pupils signed up for the fourth Belfast Summer School of Traditional Music with similar numbers this year. We very much took the lead in this event with 2/3rds of the adult volunteers being GSoTM members.

GSOTM held a very successful Secondary level Trad Music competition with £2000 in prize money which 10 schools took part in.

We continue to facilitate and develop a seisiun in 2 Royal Ave Arts hub for ALL young trad musicians in greater Belfast and this is very successful with up to 60 young musicians coming together from all over Belfast. GSOTM built upon this by developing what is now a tri- annual Primary Schools performance opportunity for Traditional music ensembles at Christmas/ around St Patricks day and in June which is also held in 2 Royal Ave.

We have followed the LCM curriculum and had 18 of our pupils sitting the LCM exams with excellent results.

Financial Review

The school had an operating deficit for the year of £4,444. The school continued to generate the majority of its income from tuition and membership fees, this source of income increased by £5,368 during the year. Fundraising income decreased during the year from £3,704 to £2,522. As with previous years, teaching costs formed the most significant outgoing during the year.

The school continued to receive financial support from The Arts Council NI, receiving grants of £22,025 during the year, which was fully expended, and are grateful for this continued support in enabling them to fulfil their aims and objectives on an annual basis. The school ended the financial year with an unrestricted reserves balance of £13,692.

Trustees' Responsibilities Statement

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in Northern Ireland 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 charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2015 (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- 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 proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, and the provisions of the trust deed. 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.

By Order of the Board

Ray Morgan
Trustee