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## BELFAST ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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The Trustees present their Annual Report together with the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023.

#### **History**

The Belfast Association for the Employment of the Industrious Blind was established in 1871 to provide employment for blind people. The Workshops for the Blind (the trading name of the Association) traded for over 100 years, before selling its business and premises in Lawnbrook Avenue, Belfast to Ulster Sheltered Employment Limited, a government sponsored concern in 1980.

The Trustees of the association invested the proceeds from the sale of the Lawnbrook premises and the charity's title was then changed to The Belfast Association for the Blind. Its constitution was amended under a Cy Pres scheme which was approved by the Court on 21 June 1982.

The association was registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in 2018, its registered number being NIC 106091.

#### **Objectives and activities**

##### **a. Policies and objectives**

The principal activity of the Association during the year continued to be that of giving financial assistance to registered blind people within Northern Ireland, to former employees of the Workshops for the Blind and to voluntary organisations closely associated with the blind.

Other bodies receiving assistance are those in the field of education and medical research and equipment in relation to the blind and visually impaired.

##### **b. Main activities undertaken to further the Charity's purposes for the public benefit**

The charity has several activities running. The results of the main ones are listed in the Review of activities below.

#### **Achievements and performance**

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## BELFAST ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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#### Achievements and performance (continued)

##### a. Review of activities

The investment policy of the trustees, guided by the association's advisors, Evelyn Partners, has ensured long-term growth in capital and revenue funding. During the year the trustees realised £50,000 of investments to smooth payments to benefit grantees' projects. The value of the association's investments at the year end has therefore fallen by a small amount since the previous year, but the trustees are confident that the investment policy agreed with its advisors is sound.

In 2023 the association made and committed donations, grants and gratuities to visually handicapped people in N Ireland, ex-employees of The Workshops for the Blind and charities for the blind amounting to £48,010 (last year £34,361). In addition, grants amounting to £96,499 (last year £62,000) were made to research institutions, along with a grant of £45,000 to Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for the purchase of equipment.

The following organisations benefitted in 2023:

Queen's University Belfast  
Acorn Arts  
Atlanta Swimming Club  
Edgecumbe Club  
Angel Eyes

During the year the association funded the production costs of a book "Fingers That See", written by Trustee, Mr Alasdair MacLaughlin, detailing its history since its foundation as the Belfast Association for the Employment of the Industrious Blind in 1871. The total costs of this book amounted to £4,272, and the association has to date received £640 in donations towards this.

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## BELFAST ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

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### TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

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#### Financial review

##### a. Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the 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.

##### b. Reserves policy

The Association actively manages its investment portfolio so as to maximise returns to the Association within acceptable risks and to provide adequate reserves to meet the needs of the Charity into the foreseeable future. The running costs of the Charity are negligible in the context of the reserves held.

##### c. Financial performance

The Statement of Financial Activities, which incorporates the Income and Expenditure Account for the year can be found on Page 7 of this report. The Net movement of funds for the year is a decrease of £118,628 (last year £107,009). The main reason is a significant increase in the value of research and equipment grants of approximately £90,000 during the year. At the year end the association held total funds of £2,312,739 (last year £2,431,367).

During the year the association received total income of £98,372 (last year £95,941), while expenditure amounted to £204,205 (last year £108,533).

The association therefore incurred a net deficit of £105,833 (last year £12,592) before realised and unrealised losses on the value of investments of £12,796 (last year £94,417).

The value of investments held at the year end amounted to £2,261,926 (last year £2,331,026) which, after the realisation of £50,000 of investments during the year represents a small percentage decrease in the year. There has been a modest increase in this value since the year end.

#### Structure, governance and management

##### a. Constitution

Belfast Association for the Blind is a registered charity, number NIC 106091, and is constituted under a Trust deed.

##### b. Methods of appointment or election of Trustees

The Association is managed by a Board of Trustees which meets on a regular basis, chaired by Mr A H MacLaughlin. The appointment of new Trustees is made by the existing Trustees. The policy of the Trustees is to ensure a broad representation of experience and professional expertise. No remuneration is paid to the Trustees.

#### Plans for future periods

Future policy will be to ensure a proper balance between capital growth and sufficient revenue to provide for the needs of the Association as budgeted by it and approved by the Trustees.

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**BELFAST ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND**

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**TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023**

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**Funds held as custodian**

No funds are held as custodian on behalf of others.

**Statement of Trustees' responsibilities**

The Trustees 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).

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 its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, 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 of the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) 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 business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Charity's transactions and 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.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



**Mr A. H. MacLaughlin**

(Trustee)

Date: 16 May 2024