

Lough Neagh Partnership Limited
Company limited by guarantee

Trustees Report (Incorporating the Directors report)
Year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Trustees/ Directors

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

Mrs Mary Veronica Devlin	The Honourable Shane Sebastian Clanaboy O'Neill
Mr Conor Jordan	Ald Arnold Hatch
Cllr Derek McKinney	Mr Conor Corr
Cllr Henry Cushinan	Ms Una Johnston
Mrs Elizabeth Meharg	Mr Drew Nelson
Mr Rory O'Kane (resigned 10/5/23)	Cllr Ian Milne
Cllr Donal McPeake	Cllr Paul McLean
Mr Martin Kearney (resigned 1/6/23)	Cllr Eimear Carney (appointed 19/6/23)
Cllr Thomas Gordon (appointed 31/8/23)	Cllr Paul Dunlop
Ald Jim Montgomery (resigned 1/6/23)	Cllr Roisin Lynch
Mr Paul Quinn (resigned 14/9/23)	Cllr Andrew McAuley (appointed 1/6/22) (resigned 1/6/23)
Mr Joe Nelson	Mr Gary McErlain
Mr Leo Cassidy (appointed 10/5/23)	Cllr Densie Johnston (appointed 4/10/23)
Ms Kathleen McBride (appointed 4/10/23)	Cllr Stewart Wilson (appointed 4/10/23)
Ald Jay Burbank (appointed 4/10/23)	

Structure, governance and management

Lough Neagh Partnership Limited, which is a registered charity with Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under registration number 106275, was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland on 2nd November 2001 under registration number NI041855.

The company is registered with Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under the name Lough Neagh Partnership Limited, it does not operate under any other names. The charity's principal office address is also the registered office address of the company.

Structure of Organisation: The Board of Directors meets every 2 months and is responsible for the development of Policy and Strategy and management of strategic outcomes and achievements. Four directors are also part of a Financial sub-committee which meets before the Board meetings to ensure the financial management of the body.

Governance

The governing document is the Articles of Association of Lough Neagh Partnership Ltd and Lough Neagh Partnership is governed by the Board and the terms of its membership are set out as per the Articles of Association

Recruitment of Trustees

Trustees are proposed and elected at an annual AGM and nominations are confirmed at the first Board meeting after the AGM.

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Objectives and Activities

The company was formed with the objective of bringing together the local community, businesses, schools, residents etc. to work in partnership to ensure that this area of natural beauty and important ecological environmental and social benefit to Northern Ireland as a whole will be safeguarded, protected and managed in a sustainable way. The specific charitable objectives of the organisation are detailed in the LNP articles of Association are below

The Charity's objects ("Objects") are:

(1) The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region (the "area of benefit"), users of Lough Neagh and its environs and visitors to the area in the interests of social and economic welfare by all or any of the following means:

(a) the provision or assistance in the provision of recreational facilities in the interests of social welfare for the public at large and those who, by reasons of their youth, age, disability, or social or economic circumstances have need of such facilities.

(b) advancing sustainable development for the public benefit by the promotion of sustainable means of achieving economic growth and regeneration, in particular by promoting tourism and opportunities for cultural and recreational activities for all age groups;

(c) fostering a sense of community by encouraging and celebrating a sense of place, civic pride and an appreciation of the scenic beauty and heritage of the area;

(d) the maintenance, improvement, or provision of amenities for the benefit of the public and visitors to the area.

(2) The conservation, protection, restoration and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the area of benefit by all or any of the following means:

(a) managing land, the bed and soil of parts of the Lough, and facilitating the availability and safeguarding assets for the benefit of the community;

(b) carrying out a co-ordination and networking role with other agencies and interested parties within the community, public and private sectors that are involved in rural regeneration, the protection of the environment, cultural and heritage activities, tourism and scientific research;

(c) promoting awareness, understanding and appreciation among the public of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the area of benefit and the ecosystem value of nature and the Wetlands region to humanity;

(d) promoting sustainable development, developing and implementing conservation management plans and advising on, applying and extending good practice.

Activities, meeting objectives public benefit

Beneficiaries of the activities are:

Local communities and people who live by the shores of the Lough and enjoy its natural heritage and recreational facilities

Visitors to the Lough and the surrounding area.

People who work on the Lough or around its shoreline.

Local businesses who provide local investment and economic development opportunities.

Local Councils and government departments who work in partnership with the Lough Neagh Partnership to protect the heritage of Lough Neagh

Local schools who link with the work of the Partnership and improve awareness and knowledge of local children of the issues associated with the Lough.

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Summary of Charitable Activities for the purposes of Public Benefit

The board members have had regard to the Public Benefit requirement as stipulated by Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The activities entered into, and achievements attained during the year ended 31st March 2024 have been wide and varied and have provided huge public benefit, as can be seen in the information noted below:

Projects for Further Development	Progress since last year	Progress since last year
Charitable Objective: The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region		
<p>Marketing and promotion of Lough Distribution of Lough Neagh newsletter for stakeholders and consumers online, social media promotion and attend and promote at trade fairs and exhibitions.</p>	<p>Lough Neagh Partnership regularly share content across Facebook, Instagram and on their website and email marketing for the businesses from the Lough area. These include profiles with reference to the Artisan Market pages and campaigns, events they are involved with and news stories as well as PR photographs used to advertise the markets. These members have also been supplied with digital marketing toolkits to help support their marketing efforts in relation to the markets. The market also featured boat trips with River Bann Tours and Lough Neagh's Stories from Toome to Lough Beg.</p> <p>Lough Neagh Tours attended Meet the Buyer and followed up by sending a tour portfolio of key experiences from the area along with a list of hotels</p> <p>Newletters issued to monthly April – September.</p>	<p>LNP attended the consultation for the ten-year Tourism Strategy for NI and provided feedback. Newsletters issued in Halloween and Christmas.</p> <p>LNP Participated in World Travel Market and ITOA, following up with a Portfolio of key experiences including River Bann Tours, Tyrone Crafted Glass, Rosehill House, Coyle's Cottage Lough Neagh's Stories, Glenshane Country Farm, Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Bakehouse NI, Ballyscullion Park, Katies Cottage and the Lough Neagh Fisheries Exhibition.</p> <p>Further to a fam visit conducted last year, bookings have now been secured with an international tour operator. LNP has developed a bespoke bird tour itinerary to include River Bann Tours trip from Ballyronan to Lough Beg – this itinerary was developed at the request of the operator. Two bookings with forty-six guests have now been secure for May/June 2024 with a view to more after successful completion of these trips.</p> <p>Lough Neagh Tours Facebook 9,600 followers Instagram 1,073 followers X 311</p> <p>Lough Neagh Artisans Facebook 2,500 followers Instagram 2,431 followers X 121 followers</p> <p>Lough Neagh Partnership Facebook 5,100followers Twitter 1,083 followers LinkedIn 399 followers</p>

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		<p>Mailchimp Stakeholder list 833 subscribers Artisan traders 176 subscribers Tourism list 476 subscribers</p> <p>Mailing list Tour operator contacts – 325</p>
Charitable Objective : The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region		
Develop a Lough Neagh Artisan Food Programme, identifying artisan event opportunities and promotion of them.	Held two successful Artisan Food Markets on 21 st May & 30 th July 2023 at the Lock Keepers Cottage in Toome including several traders from MUDC area.	<p>The market scheduled for 10th September had to be cancelled due to the blue-green algae in the Lower Bann River.</p> <p>The group offers members networking and collaboration opportunities and mentoring, as well as the regular markets at the Lock Keepers Cottage in Toome. As part of the market activities, boat trips are provided by River Bann Tours & Lough Neagh's Stories from Toome to Lough Beg.</p> <p>The Lough Neagh Artisans are hoping to avail of further funding to develop the group and are consulting with DAERA to shape phase two of the project, this is anticipated to be open from mid-2025.</p>
Charitable Objective : The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region		
Joint development of tourism and economic programmes with Councils and Partners and, assist with access and recreational plans for school lands Derrytresk, and Traad Point/Ballyronan and Lough Promotion.	<p>Lobbied both ABC AND MUDC to examine development of the Blackwater and dredging of Canal mouth of Blackwater.</p> <p>Met with ABC regarding tourism development of Blackwater River</p> <p>Prepared major proposal for School lands</p>	<p>Meet with Senior staff regarding the development of Tradd Point</p> <p>Also met with Outscape and attended consultation event regarding Tradd Point.</p> <p>Met with John Mc Grillen TNI CEO to discuss wider Lough neagh promotion in light if Blue Green Algae.</p>
Charitable Objective : The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region		
Development of Blackwater River, providing technical advice associated with dredging, and	<p>Met with DFI on two occasions.</p> <p>Met with Blackwater group</p>	<p>Met with DFI staff to discuss Lough and Blackwater navigation needs. Focus for LNP is dredging the opening of Canal mouth</p>

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<p>development of the whole of the Lough and ownership models</p>	<p>Lobbied all parties regarding a new interdepartmental structure and investment for Lough Neagh</p>	<p>Followed up letter to Minister O Dowd regarding setting up of an interdepartmental body</p> <p>Met with all party leaders to promote new structures and investment for Lough Neagh in 2024</p> <p>Applied for and gained £240,000 of grant assistance from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for new resilience plan and ownership analysis, need £6,666 match funding from three main Councils including MUDC.</p>
<p>Charitable Objective :The conservation, protection, restoration and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the area of benefit by all.</p>		
<p>Continue to develop NIEA Shoreline Plan and securing funding for a management plan for Killycolpy and Killywoolaghan, community bird hides as per 2021/22, develop wet woodland and climate change strategy for Western Shores taking into consideration Councils and Partners's climate change and biodiversity plans. Implement recommendations for Lough Neagh islands and ASSI plan.</p>	<p>Management Plan for Killycolpy complete</p> <p>Wet woodland study and Climate Change and Carbon study now completed</p> <p>Transfer of Kilycolpy nature reserve and School lands signed for and completed SEUPB nature peatlands restoration project prepared with RSPB</p> <p>Islands conservation work and all bird monitoring continuing via new boat.</p> <p>Dealt with media response to Blue Green Algae.</p> <p>Major PR engagement regarding blue green algae</p> <p>Public meetings with NIEA held including presentation at public meetings</p>	<p>All work in Kilykoly complete and cattle to be placed there this year to improve land</p> <p>Approx £70,000 of funding gained from NIEA for consultation on new SPA and ASSI plan for Lough Neagh</p> <p>New major Catchment Pollution proposal being developed along with a new communications plan working in partnership with NIEA and DAERA</p>
<p>Charitable Objective :The conservation, protection, restoration and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the area of benefit by all.</p>		
<p>Continue to develop and deliver an Environmental Farm Scheme on western shores of Lough Neagh by attracting new funding and through engagement with farmers, landowners, and relevant stakeholders</p>	<p>Environmental Farm Scheme Project has been extended from 1 April – 31 December 2026. This focuses on lands along the western shore of lough Neagh.</p> <p>A major Nature Recovery Network has been developed at School Lands and at Killycolpy/Killywoolihan. Focusing on managing biodiversity and water quality improvements.</p>	<p>New pilot project pitched to DAERA to replicate outcomes approach like what DAERAs new Farm Nature Policy 2026. DAERA still considering outcomes payments for environmental programme for farmers along the shores of Lough. Main beneficiary will be in Mid Ulster area Lough Neagh EFS Group Scheme Members 150+ receiving support and mentoring on Group</p>

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<p>to improve conditions. Assist Councils and Partners in development of an Agricultural Strategy.</p>	<p>143 Group Scheme members continue to receive mentoring and support. £17,500 average investment per farm over last 6 years. New policy engagement with DAERA Countryside Management helping co-design for new Farming with Nature Policy. Offer open for help with the development of new agricultural biodiversity and climate change strategies in new 5-year SLA from Mar 2024– Mar 2029</p>	<p>Scheme management. Total Investment brought into Lough via EFS Scheme £4,800,00+ over 6 years, out of £7.6 million offered. New entrants Offer open for help with the development of new agricultural biodiversity and climate change strategies in new 5-year SLA from Mar 2024– Mar 2029 entering again in 2024 Covid underspend reallocated to project providing Climate Resilience Plans for farmers plus a series of information leaflets covering a wide range of environmental projects approx. Extension to EFS Group Scheme awarded providing additional £255,000 from April 2023 – Dec 2026.</p>
<p>Charitable Objective :The conservation, protection, restoration and improvement of the physical and natural environment of the area of benefit by all.</p>		
<p>Develop funding applications and attract investment from SEUPB NIEA DAERA for new environmental programmes</p>	<p>Discussions held with RSPB regarding SEUPB peatland and Nature recovery proposals for Lough Neagh continued. Met with NIEA regarding water quality issues and blue green algae and workable solutions for 2024</p>	<p>£1.2 million submitted to RSPB and SEUPB for restoration for peatlands at School Lands Approx £500,000 Solutions to Pollution pilot proposal submitted to NIEA to monitor pollution throughout whole catchment of Lough neagh working in partnership with Rivers Trust and Ballinderry River Enhancement Group. Approx £80,000 communications plan for dealing with Blue Green Algae fall out in 2024/25 submitted to NIEA</p>
<p>Charitable Objective : The promotion of rural regeneration and community development for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Lough Neagh Wetlands region</p>		
<p>Develop an Interdepartmental Committee for Lough Neagh and examine funding opportunities for technical developments of Lough Neagh ownership bid.</p>	<p>Meeting and presentation made to all party leaders and group Lobbied all groups and MLAs to set up new interdepartmental structure for Lough throughout 6-month period £240,000 grant achieved for new heritage resilience plan and ownership of Lough Neagh examination</p>	<p>Met with HLF to sign of proposal Meeting with Shaftesbury Estates again Did presentation to all relevant MLAs in Stormont in Dec 2023 Attended Stormont Lough Neagh debate and lobbied MLAs Met Minister Muir and senior NIEA staff to discuss new structures and investment for the Lough</p>

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How have these activities provided a benefit and what difference have they made since March 2022)

Strategic Goal Achievement and strategic benefits from the LNP Plan

The following section describes the achievement of strategic goals of the Partnership over the last year with reference to its specific action plan and differences that were achieved

Goal 1: Lough Management: To establish a new model for the navigation, management and ownership of the Lough that can deliver on shared goals.

Projects

- Lobbied to set up new Interdepartmental/Council working group (Lough Neagh Management Group) and Stormont Government Lough Neagh motion on new structures agreed. New political will of Stormont to tackle problems
- Received funding to examine new ownership models to assist government set up new structures and help buy the bed and soil of Lough Neagh. New engagement with owner of bed and soil

Goal 2: Resilience: To become a resilient and financially sustainable organisation; well governed with skilled staff who are secure in their posts and reserves to spend on our important work.

Projects

- Increase Council core funding to allow core stability and carry out more work
- Gained other Income generation opportunities via use of Dormant Account Fund NI to provide better service
- Increase linkages between conservation and economic prosperity via Sand Traders and

Goal 3: Support farming sector to adapt to new environmental, water quality and climate requirements

Projects

- Extended new EFS Group Scheme to 2026 and got more land conserved
- Grow Moiled Cattle Chain and encourage new types of cattle to be used
- Promote new foodstuffs of Lough Neagh via Artisan Market and create local economic opportunities
- Linked with new Water Quality Task force set up as a result of the Green Blue Algae Crisis in the summer of 2023 and will work more closely with government in future
- Developed major Peatland Restoration Project worked up at School Lands to protect major curlew species

Goal 4: Conservation management: Protect this special place and its cultural, built, and natural heritage and create new green economy business opportunities

Projects

- Shoreline and Island Conservation Management work programme implemented, and data gathered to set new conservation policy.
- Lough Neagh Heritage management continues via NLHF and NIEA Environment Fund.
- Protecting and restoring our wetland habitats and species via Peace Plus and Environment Fund etc

Goal 5: Visitors: To establish Lough Neagh and Navigable rivers as a common brand and work with private sector on food development and food experience branding

Projects

- Worked with Tourism to develop new Lough Neagh Tourism Experiences
- Promote Lough Neagh Food and food artisan events and clusters and more economic opportunities developed
- Helped Councils promote and develop River Bann and Blackwater River / Ulster Canal and created new investment opportunities for rural community

Goal 6: Innovative approaches to land management, climate change and carbon capture

Projects

- Develop conservation opportunities for non-productive agricultural land via EFS Develop Project
- Drew up Climate Change and Carbon develop new resilience plan/s and have data to use for new conservation projects
- Develop carbon capture project and examine possible trading options that will also restore new areas of damaged bog

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Mitigation of any harm

There has been no economic displacement of conservation damage as a result of the work we carried out during the year.

Have we provided information on any private benefit

Some individual farmers may have benefited from our encouragement to help them become more environmentally friendly. The details of the number of farmers is identified in the data above but the public benefits in terms of species protected land managed better areas under new nature conservation have been hugely significant. Staff of LNP have not had any personal benefit from the work except through staff wages.

Commissions Guidance

The drawing up of this report statement and the activities of the Lough Neagh Partnership have made strong reference to the charity Commissions public benefit toolkit and guidance notes.

The trustees have had regard to the Public Benefit requirement as stipulated by Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Future Vision and goals

The Partnership should review and improve its governance, remit, and staffing structures to take on board future economic and political challenges and become more financially resilient in the long term.

LNP and main Councils should request to sit on the new Water Quality Task Force to deal with green algae bloom and work to develop a long term river Catchment solution

The Partnership should take lead with other partners and govt departments and lobby and agree to set up a new management structure known as the Lough Neagh Management Body (LNMB) made up of senior director staff from the three main Councils, DFI, DAERA DFC and DFF to meet twice a year to work to this strategic review and plan and monitor progress, integrating common goals and funding applications associated with this document. This strategic review and plan 2023 – 2028 should be used as a working tool for the LNMB.

The three main Councils should increase the core funding levels to the Lough Neagh Partnership for the next five years. (2023 – 2028) to retain effective staff members, provide financial stability to the body and allow the Partnership to lever in increased value and investment.

The Lough Neagh Partnership should set up a formal linkage and partnership with cross border body Waterways Ireland and Border Council to allow it to apply for shared Island and SEUPB funding. This should be supported by the main Councils. Also recommend that LNP rep sits on ICBAN and EBR bodies to make sure more integrated approach to cross border development.

The three main Councils should endorse the nomination of political representatives to sit on the Lough Neagh Partnership Board to ensure political support and public transparency for the development of the Lough.

The three main Councils should enter into a new five-year service level agreement with the Partnership from April 2023 – March 2028 based on the attraction of additional investment and addressing agreed strategic needs and outcomes. The SLA should be outcomes and not outputs/actions focussed, and the Partnership should provide an annual report to feed into new Lough Neagh Management Body structure.

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Common Lough Neagh Marketing Destination Pot developed from three main Councils from existing City Deal, Tourism NI and Levelling Up Fund.

BSP, City Deal, SEUPB, Shared Island and Landfill Tax funds prioritised to Lough Neagh Area for match funding of joint conservation projects.

Three main Councils and three main Departments in the new Lough Neagh Management Body should bid, budget, and provisionally allocate revenue and matching capital funds for the next 5 years specific for joint Lough Neagh Projects and funding applications.

Specific Plans for the future

The plans for the forthcoming 12-18 months have been summarised below:

- Continue lobbying for new Lough Neagh Integrated government policy and integrated management approach to Lough
- Develop SEUPB major landscape and ownership project
- Revisit Blackwater project
- Reinvestigate navigation and dredging study and investigate funding for new markers.
- Develop Abandoned land project via Esmee Fairburn
- Develop new EF application and proposals for rangers
- Continue data collection and bird counts for NIEA
- Develop new ASSI/SPA and Heritage Landscape Plan
- Monitor and measure success of all programmes

Volunteers

All Board members are volunteers and put their own time and effort into the board and financial committee activities. The Partnership also contribute to in kind contributions of expertise for some small projects also. A variety of volunteer litter lift events were also held throughout the year.

Environmental Crisis - Blue Green Algae

This summer of 2023 witnessed a major Algae Bloom occurring on Lough Neagh. This was a result of four main factors including Nutrient overload from farms and sewage plants, climate change impact of temperature increase in the Lough and more wetter summers, together with the impact of an invasive called the Zebra Mussel. The Partnership has a number of short term, medium term and long term reactions to the environmental crisis.

Short Term

1. Raised awareness of the crisis and the reasons for it on major news broadcasters
2. Attended public meetings at Bellaghy, Ardboe and Craigavon
3. Met with all of the Political leaders and groups and provided potential solutions
4. Met and set up a cross party MLA Lough Neagh Group
5. Met Office of Environmental Protection and gave evidence
6. Met with Labour NIO Shadow Minister
7. Gave evidence to Water Quality Task Force

Medium Term Solutions

1. Increase positive message of Lough and educate on reasons for Blue Green Algae
2. Lobby for setting up of new structures for the Lough
3. LNP to sit on Lough Neagh Scientific group
4. Develop major programme with Woodlands Trust regarding afforestation of river catchments in Lough Neagh to create major buffer zones for Nutrient take
5. Apply for DAERA Pilot Programme

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6. Extend EFS scheme

Long Term Solutions

1. Roll out and improve soil management to help reduce P fertiliser use
2. Reduce P content of animal feed and examine manure P export from NI.
3. Reprioritise and redesignate Lough Neagh and its Catchments and increase assistance to Environmental Farm Scheme for nutrient reduction
4. Reprioritise NI Water investment to catchments of Lough and reassess nutrient regulations for Sewage treatment output loads
5. Introduce Septic Tank education officers around Lough and Catchments
6. Reassess real deterrent effect of Agriculture and NI Water Pollution Fines
7. Increase resources to NIEA Water Catchments Basement Plans
8. Provide a new Bio Digester Plant for Lough Neagh Catchments
9. Ensure better data collection and research via AFBI

Financial Review

Income for the company from all sources amounted to £ 482,994 (2023 - £693,964) and Outgoing resources amounted to £ 501,092 (2023 - £686,222), giving a deficit for the year of £(18,098) (2023 - £7,742 Surplus).

Policy on holding reserves

The Trustees/ directors regularly review the financial standing of the company at each board meeting. During each meeting they monitor the spending of each project against budget as these are all 'restricted' income streams. They also monitor the income and expenditure of 'unallocated' funding. The company does not have a specific policy on carrying a pre-defined level of reserves as this is not feasible given the nature of project funding.

Directors responsibilities statement

The directors are responsible for preparing the directors report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and the profit or loss of the company for that period.

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

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP ;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company 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 company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

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Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

This report was approved by the board of directors on 21st November 2024 and signed on behalf of the board by:



Mrs Mary Veronica Devlin
Director