

Market Development Association Charity Commission Trustees Narrative Report 2022/2023

Introduction

The Market Development Association (MDA) was established in 1995 to promote the well-being of all residents living in the Market area of South Belfast. It aims to develop the community into one where people want to live, work, and socialise. The MDA seeks to advocate on behalf of the Market community on socio-economic issues which impact the residents, by adopting a community development approach. The MDA engages with statutory agencies, government departments, political representatives, the private sector, and other stakeholders to advance the development of the Market area into a vibrant and sustainable inner-city working-class community. The MDA aims to empower the local community through the promotion of active citizenship within the community and in the city of Belfast. The MDA strives for equality, and for promoting a rights-based approach when dealing with the many socio-economic issues that impact the Market community. The organisation works on the following core objectives:

1. Housing
2. Children and Youth
3. Health
4. Community Cohesion, Community Relations, and Community Safety
5. Strategic Planning, Community Infrastructure and Sustainability
6. Education, Training, Employment and Employability

The MDA takes a holistic approach to tackling several, interlinked inequalities the area faces, realising that none of them can be solved in isolation or without the active involvement of residents. This report outlines the progress made on this work for the 2022/2023 financial year.

Community Wealth Building

Our Community Wealth Building strand takes in both physical regeneration and economic development projects, and ranges from support for individuals with employability training, through to spatial planning and the development and delivery of large economic regeneration projects.

- **Regeneration & Economic Development:** we continued to develop wider housing and economic development-led regeneration plans for the area. This included progressing the pre-application discussion (PAD) for the Tunnels Project with BCC planners, refining plans for the heritage centre/tenement museum experience at Sussex Place, and a social economy backpacker hostel. Several funding applications were lodged regarding these projects, and the hostel secured outline planning, as part of a wider parcel of land zoned for community infrastructure, and cooperative and social economy development. We continue to make steady progress on this front.
- **Stewart Street:** a particular highlight to close out the year was securing the large site at the junction of Stewart Street/East Bridge Street for a housing-led regeneration scheme. This site had been a concern for residents for over 50 years, and over the last decade was subject to an extended planning dispute which saw the community go through two planning committees, a judicial review, and an inquiry by the Ministerial

Advisory Group. The housing-led regeneration will go some way to meeting the community's sustainability needs, a wider city housing need, and wider economic regeneration in the area, particularly as it now unlocks the Tunnels Project.

- Employability Training Support: in 2022/2023 92 residents were supported through employability training at a total cost of £33,500. This equates to approximately 4% of the local population or 15% of households. 35 of those supported were women, 38% of trainees, at a cost of £14,700, or 44% of the total training spend. The sectoral breakdown of the training support is as follows:
 - x19 Construction
 - x27 Hair & Beauty
 - x2 Health & Fitness
 - x3 Health & Social Care
 - x3 Science, Math & Computing
 - x28 Security
 - x10 Other

This training allowed residents to access employment opportunities, sustain employment and allowed for career progression. It formed one aspect of the National Lottery Community Fund supported Community Transformation Initiative.

- Rebuilding the Local Economy: A survey was drafted based on a variety of sources, such as YouGov polls and Trade Union surveys. The result was a 170-question survey broken into 10 sections covering a variety of issues relevant to economic life in the area. The survey was produced as a hard copy, and two copies were distributed to each household in the area in a pack along with a cover letter. It was also available online via SurveyMonkey. The survey was launched in October 2022. Survey collection took longer than originally intended, due to adverse weather, resources being redirected to deal with the cost of living etc., and thus extended into the late spring of 2023. At the close of the 2022/2023 financial year survey collection was ongoing.

Housing

- 94 New Homes Secure Planning: linking in with the regeneration outputs above, the most significant housing outcome for this financial year was securing 94 new homes in the area at the BCC planning committee in June 2022 for the vacant land between the community and the Gasworks business park, which had previously been the site of some of the oldest housing constructed in the Market area. Residents had been campaigning for a housing-led regeneration of the site for over two decades, and it represents one of the largest social housing developments in the Inner City for decades. It will have a significant impact on reducing the local housing waiting list.
- Resident Support: we completed cases with 61 residents during the reporting period with housing specific requests. This included a wide variety of issues, damp on walls, roofs leaking to more serious cases like homelessness and environmental health threats. In all cases the residents attempted to resolve their concerns through the relevant agencies, mostly Housing Executive, but met such obstacles that they required our advocacy to find resolution. We use established links within and knowledge of the relevant agencies systems to help residents overcome the hurdles they encounter.

Education

- **Community Education Programme:** Building on the success of Phase 1 of our Community Education Programme, the Market Development Association ran OCN Levels 1, 2, and 3 in Community Development and Capacity Building, which helped build residents' skills to develop projects, organise events, apply for funding and lobby statutory and political representatives. The OCN development course has been remarkably successful amongst residents with spaces being filled very quickly with a total of 13 completing at least one level, and 36 qualifications being gained in total. The completion of all 3 has provided a pathway for residents to go on and complete the Community Development degree at Ulster University, which 5 of them started in September 2022.
- **Education Action Group:** The Education Action Group has met throughout the year, the group is made up of staff, volunteers, residents, education providers, youth providers and QUB researchers. The aim of the action group is to develop a place-based approach to education locally to build on educational attainment and educational opportunities locally.
- **SureStart Play Area Upgrade:** we helped to secure £20,000 in funding from All State as developer contributions. This was used by BCC to upgrade the outdoor play area of the local Market Sure Start Facility. The Market Sure Start services are a vital provision in the area, for children, young people and families and plays a key role in child development and family support. This funding transformed a disused space into one where children are now spending a lot of their time. The restoration creates additional resources for our young people and improves the services which Sure Start can provide. The MDA campaigned for the development of a standalone Sure Start facility, which was delivered in 2015; the allocation of funding to further develop its outdoor play facility was most welcome.
- **Enrichment Activities:** Following on from the initial planning meetings with the MDA, we supported St Malachy's GAC in developing and delivering Gaelic games fundamentals training. This has been highly successful with weekly sessions with around 40 children attending each week aged from 5-8 years old. The club has recruited 5 volunteers to run the camps and initiated parent-to-coach workshops which have resulted in some local parents getting involved in the sessions, these involved theoretical and practical training which equipped the parents with the experience to help run and eventually take over the sessions. We also supported the club in running a weeklong Cúl Camp in August 2022, which was attended by 50+ children.

Health:

- **Market Health Action Group:** The Market Health Action Group was established at the end of 2022, with monthly meetings taking place from then on, resulting in a steady momentum of programs and research developing. The Action Group is made up of 7 Market residents, 2 MDA staff members and 6 Queens staff. The first steps taken were to create a Health plan which has resulted in 6 fundamental areas of focus.
- **Substance Use Education program:** The Action Group has moved carefully through 2 separate co-creation sessions with 35 residents. The goal is to develop a programme that enhances the community's understanding of the issue, learn ways to address them, and then design solutions that fit the Market community and residents' own personal circumstances. Many people taking part have had firsthand experience with family members suffering from substance use and have used this to inform us along the way. We will have further codesign sessions after this reporting period with the aim of launching the program in early 2024. 35 residents participated in 2 workshops with 6 QCAP staff and 4 MDA staff.

- Therapies: From January to June 2022 the MDA hosted 3 health therapists in the Community Centre every Monday morning. Residents were invited to book a slot and benefit from free advice and treatment from experts. We offered reflexology, physiotherapy, massage, and aromatherapy. This involved 10 residents getting treatment every Monday, the project allowed for 90 different residents to benefit from the treatments during the reporting period. The project was funded through the Housing Executive and Urban Villages as a trial run which will hopefully lead to more being offered as part of a wider health initiative in 2023.
- Resident Support: We had 15 residents whom we assisted with health issues. This included help registering with the correct medical facilities, finding mental health services etc.

Community Organising & Engagement:

- Community Transformation Initiative: The Community Transformation Initiative is an ongoing community development programme aimed at generating transformative change in the Market community of Inner South Belfast. The Market is one of the most deprived communities in Belfast, featuring in the top 10% of the various NISRA Multiple Deprivation Measures. Many of these inequalities are rooted in the structural marginalisation of the area through urban development practices over the last 50 years. The CTI was designed through reflection on both the community's historical experience and the day-to-day reflection of community development practitioners on trying to link the systemic challenges the community faces with the daily challenges experienced by residents. The CTI has three broad strands: 1. Organising & Engagement 2. Education & Skills 3. Economic Development & Employability Training. Much of the other aspects of our work covered in this report are the outworking's of these strands.
- Community Action Groups: The core of the Action Groups is the existing community infrastructure of MDA committee members and staff working on that theme, joined by residents interested in the area of work and starting to become more active in the community via the organising efforts of the Action Groups, and established community stakeholders, such as the Primary School for the Education Action Group, and external specialists with expertise in the area concerned. The latter has been assisted by the establishment of a partnership with Queens University, Queens Communities and Place (QCAP), of which more is written below.
- Community Clean-ups: at the end of September 2022 our Market Clean-up crew organised an area-wide clean-up. 50 volunteers took part, and there was a visible difference in the area afterwards. We also worked with the Housing Executive to get damaged walls and footpaths repaired.
- Cost of Living Support: In the build-up to Christmas the MDA took referrals for 100+ families in the area to support them during the current cost of living crisis. This was delivered in conjunction with the Inner South Neighbourhood Partnership with funding from Belfast City Council via the Department for Communities. 120 households were supported with utility vouchers, to a total value of £12,485, while an additional 26 households were supported with food vouchers, at a value of £2600.

- Christmas Hampers: We delivered over 170 food hampers to every family in the Market with a child under the age of 18. These were funded by the MDA and our partners in QCAP at Queens University. This cost £4,833.10 and was a real-time response to feedback given by families as part of the research for the Growing Up in the Market (GUIM) longitudinal study being conducted by QCAP.
- Resident Support: We assisted 70 residents with a wide range of issues, from filling in passport forms, support with employment training etc. We assisted residents in 32 cases which involved the Department for Infrastructure. These included reporting blocked gullies, trip hazards on footways, pest infestations etc. We helped 12 residents with benefits advice and referred a further 20 to South Belfast Advice service.

Festivals & Events:

- Summer Intervention Programme: The MDA have continued to organise positive alternatives at contentious dates over the summer months. This summer intervention includes an away day on the 1st of July, 12th of July and 8th of August to decrease the chance of anti-social behaviour in the area. On July 1st, the MDA organised a trip to Spruce Meadows activity farm for young people aged 11-18 to take part in various activities such as archery, tractor & and train rides, junior & and senior quad biking, clay pigeon shooting, paintballing, and bubble footballing & footgolf. This trip successfully decreased ASB in the area with none occurring in and around the area at this time. The trip was funded £1500.00 by Belfast City Council - Micro Grant.

On July 12th, the MDA arranged a family trip for 150 local adults and children to go to Tayto Park, County Meath. This included entry to the park and transport there and back. Tayto Park offers many activities to suit all ages, including fairground rides, roller coasters, cinemas, flight simulators, many play parks, circus activities, shops, restaurants, a zoo, and a farm which makes for an enjoyable family day out.

In August 2022, the MDA organised a trip to Funtasia Theme Park for 170+ residents as an approach to reduce bonfire related activities locally. It was a positive alternative as it included play areas, crazy golf, bowling, an arcade, sky climbing, wall climbing, zip lines, fairground rides as well as a waterpark. These trips were part of the Summer Intervention programme and successfully, there were no disturbances locally in July or August 2022. Both trips were funded £2500 each by Belfast City Council's Medium Grant and the remaining balance was family contributions.

- Summer Festival: The Summer Festival 2022 was a successful week-long programme with activities for all ages. The week included a party in the park; including bouncy castles, face painters, rides and food and drink with an attendance of approximately 250; a cinema trip, attended by 90 people; a pensioners outing to Newry and Warrenpoint to visit various shops and markets, attended by 60 senior citizens; an outing to Let's Go Hydro for young people aged 11-18; 45 young people took to the waters and a family trip to Newcastle where families took part in independent activities; attended by 70 residents.
- The Market – A People's History: The MDA and Pangur Bán partnered to launch the first volume of history of the Market in October 2022 in St George's Market with the

historian Kieran Glennon. Kieran's remarkable research tells the story of the Market during some of the most turbulent years in modern Irish history, from 1920 – 1922, against the background of a City reeling from the aftermath of World War One, the ongoing Irish Revolution, and the reaction to it that would lead to the partition of Ireland. Forthcoming titles in *The Market: A People's History* will cover the area's boxing history, its experience of an Gorta Mór, Irish language heritage, and much more besides.

- **Halloween Party:** On 31st October 2022, the MDA hosted a Halloween Party in the Market Community Centre. The party included arts and crafts, games and activities, pumpkin carving, refreshments, and music.
- **Christmas Celebrations:** In December 2022, the MDA hosted two Christmas celebrations in the community. The first was a Christmas Dinner for the Senior Citizens of the area which included a 3-course meal, tea/coffee, music, ballots, and bingo with the aim to reintegrate local pensioners into the community post-Covid. The event was funded by MDA's unrestricted funds. Secondly, the MDA organised a Santa Claus visit in the local playground for families and young people to enjoy. The event included Santa and his grotto, a visit from Santa's reindeer and friends, a Christmas train ride, and refreshments. This event was funded by the Belfast City Council - Park Event Grant.
- **St Patrick's Day:** The MDA St Patrick's Day event is an annual activity in St Malachy's Youth Club, which is a fun day which includes face painters, hair braiding, traditional Irish music, inflatables, food, and refreshments. The event was funded in-kind with An Droichead providing elements, volunteers and committee providing activities and inflatable provision donated as a one-off gesture.

Partnerships:

- **Queens Communities and Place (QCAP):** our QCAP partnership with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) continues to prosper. The Market is the community, place based QCAP approach is being piloted and is uniquely placed to use the expertise and influence of QUB to fundamentally change outcomes in the area. The work of QCAP is particularly aligned with the health, education, and work strands above, and has played an active part in the community action groups. As a research-based project, much of the work will take time to bear fruit; of particular note for 2022/2023 was the launch of the Growing up in the Market (GUIM) study. This extensive, longitudinal study involves over 60 children and their parents, and is tracking the children's progress over several years in relation to key transition points in their educational and post-educational life. The study will help identify what works and what does not in the local educational landscape, as well as making real time interventions in areas of pressing concern. The project completed its first year of participant interviews in the summer of 2022.
- **Inner South Belfast Neighbourhood Partnership:** The MDA is a board member of the Inner South Neighbourhood Partnership, along with groups from Donegall Pass and the Lower Ormeau. We assist with the running of its 4 sub-group:

1. Building Communities

2. Economic Development
3. Education & Youth
4. Health & Wellbeing

The cross-community body meets throughout the year to share information & coordinate activities between the 3 areas with some recent highlights being the Fuel Support scheme that saw many Market families benefit in difficult financial times. Four MDA staff members are involved across the subgroups, along with one resident. 24 meetings organised during the year involving 68 members, 41 of whom are community and 27 statutory representatives.

- Féile na hAbhann: along with our community partners in the Short Strand and Lower Ormeau Road, we delivered the third annual 'Festival of the River.' This was a tremendous success, and is growing year-on-year, quickly establishing itself as a highlight of the summer months in Belfast, despite its recent provenance and the inability to organise it in what would have been its second year in 2020 due to the threat of the covid-19 pandemic. The highlight of the programme was the carnival along the towpath itself on Sunday 7th August, attended by more than 10,000 people. This was followed by a traditional music concert in St George's Market on Monday 8th August with some of Ireland's finest musicians. The concert sold-out, with over 300 people in attendance. Féile na hAbhann offers a diverse, enjoyable, and accessible programme for Inner City communities, including the Market, for whom such activities are usually an unaffordable luxury. Its continued success demonstrates the appetite for such activities within the community if they are made accessible and affordable.

Looking Forward: Plans for the 2023/2024 Financial Year

- Community Wealth Building: We will close off collection of the Rebuilding the Local Economy survey and digitise the paper copies returned. This will help inform the work of the Community Wealth Building Action Group.
- Housing: We look forward to the commencement of the construction of the 94 new homes in the year ahead and will work to maximise community benefit throughout the life of the scheme.
- Education:
STEAM Program: The MDA are currently meeting with QCAP regarding the plan to organise a science-based summer scheme for young people aged 8-12. The aim of this is to introduce young people, who otherwise would not have the opportunity, to delve into the world of science, technology, engineering, arts, and maths creating pathways into education and employment from an early age.

Community Education Programme: After the success of the Community Development OCN students attending the degree in the University of Ulster, we hope to continue with this type of educational work. We are currently exploring other pathways for residents to get back to and build on their education and exploring opportunities for residents to take part in courses like the Community Development OCN and degree.

The Education Action Group aims to meet on a bi-monthly basis and continue to work on a local education strategy and work with QCAP to develop a place-based approach to providing opportunities.

- Health: The work strands of the health plan have all been developed these past 12 months with consistent input from residents guiding their creation. We will continue with this co-creation strategy throughout 2023/34 and expect more resident lead initiatives to spring out of the Health Action Group.

Family Support Group: we made plans to establish a group which will include a facilitator and residents who have family members that have problems with substance use. The aim is for the group to receive training and capacity building so they can become self-sustaining. We hope leaders will emerge from it to help establish further groups over the next few years. Meeting on a weekly basis & supported by a professional facilitator the members will receive training in how to cope better with family members who have substance use issues. The group have also been co creating on the health plan and will support the creation of a second family support group. The group will also assist us with setting up a male only FSG which we hope to have started by early Spring 2024.

- Community Organising & Engagement: We will continue to organise and engage with residents in a variety of innovative ways.
- Festivals & Events: The MDA has pursued various funding streams to continue the annual festivals and programmes with the aim to build on existing programmes and grow bigger, including Christmas, Halloween, Summer Intervention, Summer festival and St Patrick's Day.
- Partnerships: We will continue to play an active part in all the partnerships we participate in.

Féile na hAbhann: The Féile na hAbhann meets throughout the year and plans for Féile na hAbhann 2023 have commenced with the initial funding application being submitted and projected costs and activities in place. Again, this is something that the partnership aims to grow on a yearly basis.

Creative Communities: QCAP has submitted a funding application to the Arts, Humanities and Research council for a Creative Communities programme - this will aim to tackle issues surrounding legacy, trauma and substance use using art.

Core Projected Budget 23/24

<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>FUNDER</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
SALARIES	DFC	£82,295.15
RUNNING COSTS	DFC	£1500
SALARIES	INNOVATE UK	£19,167
RUNNING COSTS	INNOVATE UK	£3833
SALARIES	THE NATIONAL LOTTERY	£29,029.92
CAPACITY COSTING	BELFAST CITY COUNCIL	£31,100
	<u>TOTAL</u>	£166,925.07