

# Markets Development Association TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

for the financial year ended 31 March 2024

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the unaudited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Trustees' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Trustees' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The trustees of the charity are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the charity's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the trustees of Markets Development Association present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 31 March 2024.

The charity is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and, although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS 102, the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

## Mission, Objectives and Strategy

### Mission Statement

The Association is established to help poverty, relieve sickness and the elderly. Also, to promote the benefit of the inhabitants of the Markets District and its environs (hereinafter described as "the area of benefit") without distinction of age, sex, race, political, religious or other opinion, by associating with statutory authorities, voluntary organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to advance employment, education, and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.

### Objectives

Looking Forward: Plans for the 2024/2025 Financial Year

- **Community Wealth Building: Capital Projects:** we look forward to securing full planning permission on the Tunnels Project in the year ahead; we also aim to advance the hostel project through the planning system and to complete the purchase of the Convent School. We will also commence the community engagement on specific development sites in the community to feed into an area regeneration plan.
- **Housing:** The 94 new homes on the Gasworks site should near completion of the construction phase by the end of 24/25. We will continue to work with residents to identify their housing needs and support them in accessing secure and affordable housing. We will also begin codesign sessions with the community and relevant statutory bodies re the housing led regeneration of the Stewart Street site.
- **Education: STEAM Program:** The MDA are currently meeting with QCAP regarding the plan to re-organise the program for young people aged 8-12, with the aim 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 a young age, building on the success of the 23/24 STEAM Scheme.  
**Community Education Programme:** After the success of the Unblocking Potential 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 similar to the Unblocking Potential course, 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.  
**Creative Communities:** We will launch the exhibition of our Creative Communities programme in April 2024, followed by a toolkit launch and a community play later in the year. Research outputs will also be published as part of the project.  
**The Education Action Group:** the Education Action Group will commence an intensive community codesign process in the 24/25 financial year.
- **Health:** The work strands of the health plan have all been developed and we are well progressed on 5 out of 8 sections. We will continue with this co-creation strategy throughout 2024/25 as we engage with the young people in the community and so expect more resident lead initiatives to spring out of the Health Action Group. 8 Market residents, 2 MDA staff members and 6 Queens staff.  
**Family Support Group:** we have established a group which includes a facilitator and residents who have family members that have problems with substance use. The group have received 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

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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. 10 residents, 1 MDA staff, 3 QCAP staff

- **Community Organising & Engagement:** We will continue to organise and engage with residents in a variety of innovative ways. We aim to secure the funding to commence Phase III of the Community Transformation Initiative.

- **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, as well as accruing a new cohort of volunteers that have actively become involved to help organise and co-design upcoming festivals and events.

- **Partnerships:** We will continue to play an active part in all the partnerships we participate in.

**Queens Communities and Place:** We look forward to continuing our partnership with QCAP, and the year ahead should see a broadening of its output as our Community Wealth Building strand begins a more intensive public phase to compliment the work of the education and health strands.

**Féile na hAbhann:** The Féile na hAbhann committee meets throughout the year, and plans for Féile na hAbhann 2024 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.

**Cromac Regeneration Initiative:** we aim to carry out a condition survey of the CRI building, as well as a SROI on its social impact over the first decade of its operations. This will serve as the basis of developing a strategic plan for the next decade.

**ISBNP:** we will continue to play an active role in the ISBNP, working with our partners in Donegall Pass and Lower Ormeau to advance the quality of life for all the community in this part of the Inner City.

## Structure, Governance and Management

### Structure

The Markets Development Association comprises of 14 Committee Members, 4 Full Time Staff, 1 Part Time Staff (CTI Support Worker) and a pool of 25-30 local volunteers.

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.

### Governance

The responsibilities of the staff members range from engagement, consultation, lobbying, advice and support, organising training and educational programmes, delivering health and well being projects, campaigning for housing, progressing the Market Regeneration Plan, organising public meetings, applying for funding for community initiatives such as summer intervention programmes, seasonal festivities and environmental projects.

In addition the MDA is represented on a variety of Boards including Sure Start, the Housing Community Network, the Inner South Belfast Neighbourhood Partnership and the Cromac Regeneration Initiative, which is a cross community enterprise with the Market, Donegall Pass and the Lower Ormeau. The MDA works for the betterment of the Market area through partnership working and co-production of plans, projects and programmes with the Market residents.

### Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance

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 2023/2024 financial year.

### Community Wealth Building

Our Community Wealth Building strand takes in both physical regeneration and economic development projects, and

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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:** Steady progress was made on the regeneration front this year with commencement of construction on 94 new homes to the south of the area (see housing, below). The Tunnels project also made headway as a full planning application was lodged in October 2023 with Belfast City Council, and an updated Outline Business Case for the project commissioned that December. The project board meetings have also recommenced.

A Preapplication Discussion on the concept plans for a backpacker hostel at the junction of Cromac Street/Ormeau Avenue was also lodged with Council planners. Meanwhile a commitment for a £500,000 investment toward the purchase of the Sussex Place Convent School was secured in January 2024 via the Belfast City Council Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

- **Employability Training Support:** the amount of residents supported through employability training dropped off precipitously this year from an average of 60 – 70 residents to a dozen. This was due to the ending of the grant to enable the support and the ongoing application for successor funding. We are confident in securing additional funding as the demonstrably transformative effect the programme has had on peoples lives is easily demonstrable. For instance, a review of the programme by Queens Communities and Place indicated that for every £1 invested in the programme, an additional £3.68 was generated in social return.

- **Rebuilding the Local Economy:** we closed off the collection of the Rebuilding the Local Economy survey early in the 23/24 financial year. We collected 307 surveys in all, which equates to 12% of the local population or 49% of households. This is a comprehensive dataset for the area, and the responses to the 170 questions are a tremendous resource for future organising and programme interventions in the community.

### Housing

- **94 New Homes begin construction:** as noted above, the new housing development in the south of the community commenced construction in August 2023. We have been working closely with the developer, Radius Housing, and contractor, Kelly Bros., to communicate with residents, as well as leverage in training and employment opportunities.

- **Resident Support:** throughout 23/24 housing remained a key area of support to our residents. We supported 184 residents on a variety of housing issues, which included repairs, transfers, homelessness and accessing housing.

### Education

- **Community Education Programme:** in partnership with Ulster University we ran a 10 weeklong course on Unblocking Potential, a qualification which is designed to develop confidence and maximise learning potential. This course creates a direct pathway into the Community Development Degree at Ulster University, in June 2023, 10 residents completed this course with 6 of them progressing onto the degree in September 2023. There are now currently 10 students across first and second year, building skills and knowledge around developing projects, facilitating events, apply for funding opportunities, and creating opportunities for themselves in terms of self-development and education.

- **Education Action Group:** The Education Action Group has continued to meet and in the 23/24 financial year has begun to convene an Education Providers Forum with local schools and other education stakeholders. It has also been planning a series of thematic co-design workshops to engage the wider community on key aspects of education.

- **The MDA have liaised with construction staff of the Kelly Brothers,** who have been developing the houses on the Gasworks site. The firm have agreed to carry out in-kind maintenance jobs on the schools and Sure Start to carry out repairs and upgrade local facilities whilst they are working within the community.

- **IT OCN/Course with W5:** MDA and residents met with W5 LIFE to co-develop an accredited OCN program in IT. Residents that are attending the Community Development Degree took part in the codesign and completed the course. Residents identified their individual needs and how they can be supported with their studies. The pilot program will continue into the next financial year.

- **STEAM Program:** In partnership with partners at QCAP, the MDA organised a dedicated week long program focused on young people and STEAM subjects. The program was aimed at 8-12 year olds, who otherwise would not have the opportunity, to access the world of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths. The week included, trips to Queen's University Belfast exploring robotics, sound and music, medical laboratories, sea laboratories and mechanical engineering; as well as trips to the Marble Arch Caves, the Aquarium, the beach and to finish the week off, all children involved were given the opportunity to officially graduate from Queen's University Belfast for completing the program. This gives young people a chance to start exploring pathways from a young age and in a fun way, explore educational opportunities.

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## Health:

The Health Action Group has continued to meet, and has overseen the work outlined below:

- 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 were involved in 2 workshops with 6 QCAP staff and 4 MDA staff –

1. 4 community engagement workshops
2. Tackling Substance use co-design workshop in
3. Further meeting on how to promote and generate interest

The full schedule has now been made out for the program to run from 9th April 2024 to 3rd December 2024 inclusive of 8 sessions.

- Family Support Group - The Family Support Group meet on a weekly basis and are supported by a professional facilitator from Queens University Belfast. The facilitator brings in guest trainers and speakers every 2 sessions. Members have received training on 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 in Spring 2024. The group are also assisting us with setting up a male only Family Support Group which we hope to have started by early Spring 2024.

- Community Wellbeing Kitchen - Another big part of the health plan is to promote healthy eating and home cooking in the district. 8 residents and 3 MDA staff members completed a 2-day Public Health Agency "Cook It" program which enables them to safely instruct other residents in good home cooking. Ahead of the programs roll out the team met to try out the cooking stations kindly purchased by QCAP. These work strands of the health plan have all been developed these past 12 months with consistent input from residents guiding their creation. We have run practice sessions with small groups of residents which have been very successful. We have secured to start in May 2024 for funding to sustain the project from The Public Health Agency, full program will go live from June 2024 running as 4 week blocks with 4 residents involved in each block.

- Therapies: From April 2023 to March 2024 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 150 different residents to benefit from the treatments during the reporting period. The project was funded through Inner South Healthy Living Partnership.

- 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.

- The other section of the Health Action Group plan which we will get started on in the next 2 years are:

1. Community Health Resource – QR codes, app etc.
2. Young people's health program co design workshops
3. Young women's mental health program

Another point of note is that since the start of the action group and going into the future our University partners have been running a Scoping Review - Assessing Impact Community/Academic Partnership which will give annual data reports on the success and viability of all the program sections.

- Enrichment Activities: we continued to support St Malachy's GAC with its renewal, helping to leverage in funding for a Cúl Camp for 59 children in August 2024, as well as supporting their youth development programme every Thursday evening.

## Community Organising & Engagement:

- Community Transformation Initiative: in 23/24 we began the process of closing off Phase II of the CTI, and are actively pursuing funding streams to commence Phase III. QCAP carried out a review of the impact of Phase II, which was overwhelming positive in its conclusions.

- Community Action Groups: The Health and Education Action Groups continued to meet, plan and deliver interventions in their respective areas, as outlined elsewhere in this report.

- Christmas Hampers: We delivered over 175 food hampers to every family in the Market with a child under the age of 18. These were donated by Kevin McKay of Strabon Ltd, in conjunction with Slims Healthy Kitchen. The hampers included all healthy options for dinners across the Christmas holidays and included the recipes for families to follow. The need for these hampers are identified due to the ongoing cost of living crisis and were greatly appreciated by the community.

- Resident Support: We assisted 180 residents with a wide range of issues, from filling in passport forms, support with employment training etc. We assisted residents in 22 cases which involved the Department for Infrastructure. These included reporting blocked gullies, trip hazards on footways, pest infestations etc. We helped 55 residents with benefits advice and referred a further 30 to South Belfast Advice service.

- Creative Communities: in conjunction with our partners in QCAP, we delivered a pilot Creative Communities project entitled Using the Arts to Empower Communities to Break Cycles of Silence. This worked with two groups of residents – youths and parents – to explore issues of community, place, trauma and addiction. Through a series of creative workshops and discussions, including drama and photography sessions, the residents put together a joint

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exhibition to be launched in April 2024.

### 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 12th of July and 8th of August to decrease the chance of anti-social behaviour in the area. On July 12th, the MDA arranged a family trip for 170 local adults and children to go to Emerald Park, County Meath. This included entry to the park and transport there and back. Emerald 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 2023, the MDA organised a family trip to Dublin Zoo for 170+ residents as an approach to reduce bonfire related activities locally. It was a positive alternative as it includes activities and restaurants, as well as the animals. These trips were part of the Summer Intervention programme and successfully, there were no disturbances locally in July or August 2023. 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 2023 was a successful week-long programme with activities for all ages. The week included a fun day; 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 lunch in the community centre 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 the Ark Open farm where families took part in various activities; attended by 70 residents.

Christmas Celebrations: In December 2023 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, and develop a safe and social space for our elderly to engage. Secondly, the MDA organised a Santa Claus visit in the local community centre for families and young people to enjoy. The event included Santa and his grotto, a visit from the Grinch, hot chocolate making, reindeer food making, arts and crafts, Santas Snow Globe, and refreshments. The events were funded by Radius Housing.

- 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, ride along, baby soft play and food and refreshments.

### 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 utilise 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. Other positive outcomes from the partnership, such as the Creative Communities programme, are listed elsewhere in this report.

- 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,

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along with one resident. 24 meetings organised during the year involving 68 members, 41 of whom are community and 27 statutory representatives.

In December of 2023 the MDA along with 4 other major Inner South groups organised the Partnerships first ever joint festival, Christmas Fest 2023. The event was funded jointly by the NI Housing Executive and 4 Social Housing providers from their executive Office budget of shared neighbourhood funding. It was a family focused event beside the new MDA led housing development beside the Gas Works and included a large stage, 10 performers, 15 entertainers, food vendors and brought in over 1000 residents from the 3 nearby districts into Inner souths first ever large scale cross community event

- Cromac Regeneration Initiative (CRI): is a social economy project co-owned by the Market Development Association, Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group and Donegall Pass Community Forum, as the lead community-based regeneration leads in their respective communities. It transforms a historic interface site at the junction of Donegall Pass/Ormeau Road into a cross-community project where residents and organisations from the three areas work, organise and educate together.
- Féile na hAbhann: along with our community partners in the Short Strand and Lower Ormeau Road, we delivered the fourth 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 6th August, attended by more than 10,000 people. This year, the event was extended onto the Gasworks Land, increasing the capacity of the day, increasing activities and engaging more local people. There were added educational activities such as an Irish Language learning village, STEAM workshops, holistic therapies and arts and crafts.

This was followed by a traditional music concert in St George's Market on Tuesday 8th August with some of Ireland's finest musicians, such as Kíla. The concert sold-out, with over 400 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. This years event was bigger and better than ever as two new groups joined the partnership with St Malachy's GAC running the bar & An Droichead organising all the artists.

600 Market residents – 4 staff – 22 volunteers – 3 partner organisations from locality – 100 non-residents volunteers from other areas.

### Financial Review

The results for the financial year are set out on page 13 and additional notes are provided showing income and expenditure in greater detail.

### Results and Dividends

At the end of the financial year the charity has assets of £12,074 (2023 - £47,802) and liabilities of £3,474 (2023 - £1,300). The net assets of the charity have decreased by £(37,902).

### Reserves Position and Policy

Reserves are needed to bridge the gap between spending and reviewing income, to cover unplanned emergency repairs and other unforeseen expenditure. In the Trustee's view, the reserves should provide the charity with adequate financial stability and the means for it to meet it's charitable activities for the foreseeable future.

The unrestricted reserves of Markets Development Association as at 31st March 2024 are £193.

The charity has restricted reserves totalling £8,407 as at 31st March 2024.

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## Trustees

The trustees who served throughout the financial year, except as noted, were as follows:

Mrs Áine Brady (Chairperson)  
Ms Bernadette Dobbin (Vice-Chairperson)  
Mr James Mooney (Treasurer)  
Ms Anne Campbell (Secretary)  
Ms Geraldine Freel  
Ms Tracy Conlon  
Ms Ann Donnelly  
Ms Frances McNally  
Ms Barbara Leathem  
Ms Eimear Hargey

In accordance with the Constitution, the trustees retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

## Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards

The charity engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Markets Development Association subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2006
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

## Volunteers

Markets Developments Association is run on a day to day basis via paid staff. However, due to the nature of the organisation being established by and for the community, the charity relies on unpaid volunteers to help with the smooth running of events via promotion, attendance and hands on help. This culture of volunteering is always encouraged by charity as we view the project as a citizen's project.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 18/11/2024 and signed on its behalf by:

  
Mrs Aine Brady (Chairperson)  
Trustee

  
Mr James Mooney (Treasurer)  
Trustee