

Rathfern Community Regeneration Group

Reference and Administrative Details

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Trustees | Ms Anna Bond |
| | Mr Alan Crawford |
| | Mr George Hill |
| | Mr John McCleave |
| | Ms Stephanie Mewha |
| | Ms Gladys Maguire |
| | Ms Kathy Godfrey |
| | Ms Dineen Walker |
| | Mr Thomas Kirkham |
| Secretary | |
| Charity Registration Number | 107372 |
| Company Registration Number | NI660274 |
| Principal Office | The charity is incorporated in Northern Ireland. |
| | 43 Knockenagh Avenue |
| | Newtownabbey |
| Independent Examiner | Co Antrim |
| | BT36 6BE |
| | TB Millar & Co |
| | Independent Examiner |
| | 6 Doagh Road |
| | Ballyclare |
| Co Antrim | |
| BT39 9BG | |

Rathfern Community Regeneration Group

Trustees' Report

The trustees, who are directors for the purposes of company law, present the annual report together with the financial statements and auditors' report of the charitable company for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Objectives and activities

Objects and aims

The charity's objective is that all residents living in the Macedon ward of Newtownabbey enjoy a high quality of life, are able to achieve their economic, social and educational goals, and are part of a strong, prosperous and caring community. In order to achieve its objectives the charity aims to:

- manage a community building which provides high quality facilities and a range of activities which are accessible to the local community
- continuously develop and update the building to meet the changing needs of the users
- develop activities that increase participation in civic life including opportunities for self-development, volunteering and involvement in local decision-making.

Public benefit

The charity has added value by increasing the quality of life for residents in Rathfern. It has developed a master plan for the area as a whole working with the community through community consultation and public meetings. Programmes are run which develop employability skills, build social cohesion, improve the general area and empower those living in the area to create a better environment in which to live. The centre is becoming the focal point for community activities and is used by a wide range of users and statutory bodies. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council contributes to the running costs of new and existing community projects in line with Council's Community Development grant aid programme.

Rathfern Community Regeneration Group

Trustees' Report

Achievements and performance

During the past twelve months, The Sovereign Complex has had a busy time. We have had changes to our Board, with three new members who had previously been volunteers with us. The Board of Directors has generally played a more in depth role in the development of the Complex and collectively we have enjoyed lots of good news from funders and user groups.

We managed to encourage new users to the centre and we also introduced a small increase in room hire to keep up with inflation.

The Board, Staff and volunteers have been focusing on saving on our expenditure and working to keep our energy bills down to the minimum. We set up four sub groups to deal with HR, Finance, the Youth Project and Sustainability and Succession planning. Some of the highlights during the past year have been the Kings Coronation and the event that we had for the Rathfern Community to celebrate the day.

The Board agreed to the refurbishment of the portacabin out the back for the sole use of the Rathfern Junior Hill Wardens. This would give them their own space and help to keep the centre clean when they have been out on the Hill for activities. Hill Warden trips for the previous six months were to places like the Silent Valley, HMS Caroline, Carrick Castle, Marble Arch Caves, Rathlin Island, the Gobbins Path and Armagh Planetarium.

Staff members worked tirelessly to turn the smaller shed out the back into a Sensory Room for the use of any groups attending the Complex with children on the Spectrum.

Our staff at present are a part time Manager, one full time and two part time Youth Workers, two part time receptionists, one part time community mentor and one domestic.

The Board of Directors had a residential in Antrim which was facilitated by Audrey Murray MBE. Changes implemented from this included the introduction of a small staff room with lockers, a change in holidays to term time, which is expected to save £1,000 to £2,000 per annum. It was decided to introduce regular staff meetings to keep everyone up to date.

We continue to monitor how staff are doing through six monthly reviews to encourage re-focus on the tasks ahead and team work.

We will continue with our recruitment drive for volunteers to help out in the centre and specifically the Youth Club.

We held our normal Senior Citizens Christmas dinner, and over the Christmas period we raised £215 for tools for the Men's Shed which was doubled in kind by Andy's Stores and Councillor Foster in kind with tools. The Junior Hill Wardens raised £244 for future trips and the Senior Citizens raised £322 to use towards outings.

To complete the Years achievements we have secured our Green Flag status for our environmental achievements which is now the fourth year in a row.

Financial review

The Charity had an overall surplus of £23,076 in the year. Restricted reserves had been built up since Covid -19 with a lot of these being used during the year. The charity's principal sources of funding on the period were

- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Children in Need

Rathfern Community Regeneration Group

Trustees' Report

Plans for future periods

Aims and key objectives for future periods

To kick-start a new idea we received a grant of £4,999 from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to pursue proposals for additional fund raising activities related to our land out the back; this piece of work would start in April 2024. Ed Hanna has been tasked to do the business plan and proposals, which will follow in the summer of 2024.

To keep up with inflation we raised the costs of our Birthday parties, as the minimum wage is to be increased in April 2024 and our costs for electricity and gas are ever increasing. To this end all Staff and Volunteers are on an economy drive to keep costs down as best we can.

As Chairperson of Rathfern Community Regeneration Group I want to say how honoured I have been to lead this group, in what has been our greatest year to date. In January 2023 we opened our new complex, a £1 million state of the art centre, which was officially opened by the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Alderman Stephen Ross and the Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim Mr. David McCorkhill, also present was our good friend Mrs. Jacqui Dixon MBE as the then Chief Executive along with members of the Council.

This investment will see us looking forward to the next ten years and it is up to us to be diligent and use the new complex to its best potential for the benefit of the entire community. I have a strong Board working with me whose interest is in the community along with staff members and volunteers who continue to provide us with feedback as to the community's needs. We also need to look at our venture in the business sense to ensure we meet all of our expectations and pay our bills on time. Of course we are always looking to improve our organisation in a way that would be an advantage to our young people and especially some form of training sessions for young Mothers returning to work. Personally I would like a more hands on approach in the marvellous work going on and I will soon make a change to live closer to Rathfern. I have a particular interest in the work of the Youth Club as in my own personal upbringing it was the local club Managed by David Jeffries who helped define who I am today. We continue to lobby for better facilities and to this end our Rathfern Play area is in need of refurbishment, not through vandalism I may add but through continual usage every day. We have been told that we are on the list of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for the work to be done in June 2024. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in our Rathfern project in the hope that they too can strive to be the jewel in the Community Development Crown.

Small companies provision statement

This report has been prepared in accordance with the small companies regime under the Companies Act 2006.

The annual report was approved by the trustees of the charity on 14 June 2024 and signed on its behalf by:



.....
Mr George Hill
Trustee