



Trustees' Annual Report

COMBER BRASS

1st January 2023 – 31st December 2023

NIC No. 108370

Principal Address:

Gospel Hall, 2A Cherryvalley Drive,
Comber, Co. Down. N. Ireland. BT23 5BS



Annual Report of the Trustees of Comber Brass - 2023

1. Introduction

This report is prepared in compliance with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 in respect of “Comber Brass”, Northern Ireland Charity No. 108370 and in respect of the financial year 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023.

2. Structure, governance & management

Comber Brass is an unincorporated association, governed by an amended constitution adopted on 27th January 2021. The charity is run entirely by its members on a voluntary basis and is managed by a committee of trustees, which includes a Chairperson, Treasurer and a Secretary, who are elected each year by the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee meets regularly throughout the year to effectively manage its business and presents end of year reports to the full membership at the AGM.

3. Purpose of the charity

The purpose of Comber Brass is the advancement of the musical arts and culture in Northern Ireland, particularly in the North Down area, by:

- a) affording the opportunity for anyone to make music as part of a brass band;
- b) developing musicianship and ensemble playing within the band;
- c) providing the general public with exposure to the brass band repertoire and promoting their appreciation of it;
- d) participating through musical performance in the traditions and culture of the local community.

4. Public benefit

The direct benefit flowing from our purpose is the contribution the band makes to society in having a rich diversity of music to experience from different cultures and origins, and also the benefit derived by those who are provided with an opportunity to make and perform music, particularly as a member of a larger group. These benefits are wide-ranging, universally recognised and well documented in academic research. They include, but are



not limited to, cultural expression and enrichment, emotional and mental wellbeing, cognitive development, socialisation and improved physical health.

The beneficiaries of our purpose are the general public of Northern Ireland and of North Down in particular, both as individuals who are afforded the opportunity to play in a brass band and as audience participants to the public performances that it delivers.

The trustees consider that there is no harm flowing from the purpose of the charity.

A private benefit gained from our purpose is the engagement of professional Musical Directors to conduct the weekly rehearsals and band performances, to develop musicianship and ensemble playing within the band, and to assist in the planning and delivery of the band's annual programme of engagements. This private benefit is wholly incidental and necessary to the delivery of the stated purpose of the band.

The trustees of Comber Brass confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 4(6) of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of Comber Brass in the year to 31 December 2023.

5. Summary of main activities to promote our purpose for the public benefit

Comber Brass is a community brass band whose membership is open to anyone who wishes to make music with the band, regardless of ability or age. The band rehearses in the Gospel Hall at Cherryvalley Drive, Comber under the direction and instruction of experienced and qualified Musical Directors, the senior band for 2 hours on a Wednesday evening and the Youth Band for 1 hour on a Tuesday evening during term time.

Comber Brass regularly participates in the regional festivals, solo and ensemble competitions that are organised by the Brass Band League of Northern Ireland and the North of Ireland Bands Association. The band fulfils several engagements annually on behalf of local councils to perform in public parks and also holds its own concert performances to entertain the general public and to promote their appreciation of this genre of music.

Comber Brass is also regularly engaged to provide music at annual religious services, civic ceremonies, festivals, and other local community and charitable events, particularly in the Comber area.



6. Main achievements in this reporting year

The main achievements in delivering the public benefit in this reporting year are summarised below with reference to the 4 objectives that comprise the band's purpose and the delivery of the public benefit.

(a) Affording the opportunity for anyone to make music as part of a brass band.

Comber Brass continued to function without disruption as a community banding organisation throughout 2023, and remains in good financial standing. It carried out a full programme of weekly rehearsals and performances, and remained open to new members joining. At year end, the senior band retained a strong membership of 35 regular players, whilst the Youth Band had a membership of 17 players.

The good governance of Comber Brass was upheld by the committee for 2023, elected in accordance with the Constitution at the AGM held on 8th February 2023. It met formally on 4 occasions during the year, the business being conducted to a previously circulated agenda and a minute recorded of its deliberations and actions agreed. Members of the committee also met on various occasions for informal briefings and updates.

In addition to routine band administration and normal event planning activities, the work of the Committee was particularly directed to the following:

- a) securing new rehearsal premises on a more suitable and affordable basis going forward;
- b) rollout of new processes for financial management and accounting;
- c) refreshing the band's web-site and adopting free to use hosting services;
- d) further development of the band's marketing and media functions;
- e) rationalisation of the band's extensive music library and compiling an electronic catalogue;
- f) Musical Director appointments to the Senior band and to the Youth Band;
- g) forward planning for participation in the Whit Friday Marches 2024.

(b) Developing musicianship and ensemble playing within the band.

There was good attendance by members throughout the year, resulting in productive rehearsals under the baton of the Musical Director, with the band having several opportunities during 2023 to benchmark current standards through competitive performance.

The Youth Band enjoyed early success with its first participation in the BBNI Solo & Ensemble competition held in February, whilst in April the Senior Band finished disappointingly in last place in the BBNI Spring Festival.



A new Musical Director was appointed to the Senior Band in July and after the summer break, preparations began for the NIBA Championships held in October, the band finishing in a well-deserved 4th place in a competitive field of 6 bands.

Competition	Date	Grade Entered	Placing
BBNI Solos & Ensemble 2023	11 Feb 23	Under 10 solo	1 st (6 entries)
BBNI Solos & Ensemble 2023	11 Feb 23	Youth Band	1 st (1 entry)
BBNI Spring Festival 2023	2 Apr 23	2 nd Section	4 th (4 entries)
NIBA Brass Championships 2023	14 Oct 23	2 nd Section	4 th (6 entries)

To support this objective, a programme to service and repair instruments by a local technician continued throughout 2023, maintaining the inventory in good playable condition. Additionally, in March the Youth Band received a corporate donation from 'Action Renewables' to fund the purchase of new music stands and in December, the band received an award of £10,000 from the 'Arts Council Northern Ireland' to fund the purchase of a new Eb bass and a new baritone.

(c) Providing the general public with exposure to the brass band repertoire and promoting their appreciation of it. *(where the band performance was the primary activity at the event)*

There were several opportunities for the band to deliver concert performances for the general public during 2023, helped by the return of the Belfast City Council 'Music in the Parks' programme. The band's largest concert audience of the year was at Knockbreda Parish Church, for their joint performance with the 'Swing Gals'.

Event	Date
Knockbreda Parish Church - Mother's Union Concert	11 Mar 2023
Victoria Park, Belfast – Belfast City Council Summer Concerts	7 May 2023
St Mary's Youth Hall, Comber - Senior & Youth Band Concert	7 Jun 2023
Donaghadee Harbour - Summer Festival Concert	13 Aug 2023
Cherryvalley Gospel Hall, Comber – Youth Band Concert	13 Dec 2023

(d) Participating through musical performance in the traditions and culture of the local community. *(where the band performance was a supporting activity at the event)*

The band performed at a wide range of local cultural and traditional events during 2023, which included civic events, local festivals, church services, and at Christmas festivities. The highlight of these was the Hillsborough Garden Party, attended by King Charles III and



Queen Camilla, on what was their first visit to Northern Ireland since the Coronation earlier in the year. The band was also extensively engaged this year by the Ulster Folk Museum to support their programme of special Christmas events over the festive period.

Event	Date
Dedication of Comber War Memorial 100 Year Anniversary	14 Apr 2023
Hillsborough Castle & Gardens – Sec. of State Garden Party	24 May 2023
Sea Bangor Festival, Bangor Harbour	3 Jun 2023
Andrews Memorial School, Comber -junior brass workshop	7 Jun 2023
Comber Earlies Potato Festival – The Square, Comber	24 Jun 2023
'Tide And Turf' Portavogie Festival	2 Sep 2023
Remembrance Sunday Parade – The Square, Comber	12 Nov 2023
Bangor Indoor Christmas Market - High Street, Bangor	19 Nov 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	2 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	8 Dec 2023
Christmas Service - Ballycrochan Presbyterian Church, Bangor	9 Dec 2023
Strand Cinema, Belfast - Christmas Event	14 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	15 Dec 2023
Christmas Service - Ballyhemlin Presbyterian Church, Newtownards	17 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	19 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	20 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	21 Dec 2023
Christmas Programme, Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra	22 Dec 2023

7. Financial Review


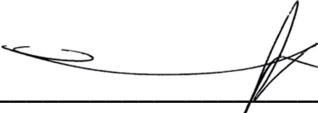

The band's accounts for the year were prepared on a 'receipts and payments' basis as permitted by the relevant charity legislation and were approved at the AGM held on 31st January 2024. A copy of the accounts and the report of the Independent Examiner are available to view on the Charity Commissioner's web-site. At the end of the financial year, the total assets of the band less liabilities was £65,494 (excluding outstanding invoices & grants not yet received), an increase of £2,231 compared to the previous year, with £13,614 being held in cash accounts.



Comber Brass operates a reserves policy of maintaining a minimum cash balance that is sufficient to meet the estimated fixed costs of the band for the year ahead. The accounts show that the funds of Comber Brass at the end of the financial year were in sufficient surplus to allow the activities of the band to continue without disruption.

8. Report approval

This report was approved by the trustees of Comber Brass and the following signatories are authorised to sign it on their behalf.

 _____	Lawrence Baalham (Chair)	Date: 9 th February 2024
 _____	William Gray (Secretary)	Date: 9 th February 2024
 _____	Maurice Baalham (Treasurer)	Date: 9 th February 2024



List of Trustees

The charity trustees on the date the report was approved were as follows:

- Lawrence Baalham (Chair)
- William Gray (Secretary)
- Maurice Baalham (Treasurer)
- Ken Browne
- Denise Gilchrist
- Kirk Lindsay
- Andrew Lawrie
- David McCracken
- Lana Moore
- Jane Smyth

The charity trustees during the year 1st January 2023 – 31st December 2023 were as follows:

- Lawrence Baalham (Chair)
- William Gray (Secretary)
- Maurice Baalham (Treasurer)
- Ken Browne
- Denise Gilchrist
- Kirk Lindsay
- Andrew Lawrie
- David McCracken
- Jane Smyth
- Judith Thompson