



Trustees' Annual Report

COMBER BRASS

1st January 2024 – 31st December 2024

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 - 2024

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 2024 to 31st December 2024.

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 2024.

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 2024, remaining in good financial standing and open to new members joining. The Senior band carried out a full programme of 48 rehearsals and 26 performances throughout the year, retaining a strong membership of 36 regular players. The Youth Band continued with its weekly rehearsals during school terms and had several opportunities to perform in public and for family & friends during the year.

The good governance of Comber Brass was upheld by the committee for 2024, elected in accordance with the Constitution at the AGM held on 31st January 2024. 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.

As well as routine band administration and normal event planning activities, the work of the Committee included:

- a) organisational planning to compete in the Whit Friday Marches 2024 in Manchester;
- b) installation of a band hall PC and extended use of its Google Workspace account for key document cloud storage and facilitating remote access for members;
- c) establishing a formal Sub-Committee to manage the Youth Band, allocation of a budget and refresher training in 'Safeguarding' for key staff;
- d) establishing a Music Sub-Committee to support the Musical Director in the selection of library music and in acquiring new repertoire.

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

There was good attendance throughout the year, with an average of 27 members attending the Senior Band rehearsals on Wednesday evenings. This helped to facilitate productive rehearsals under the baton of the Musical Director, with the band continuing to be challenged with new repertoire and to further improve all aspects of its playing.

During 2024 the Senior Band only entered one local competition delivering a very creditable performance in the BBNI 'Brass In Concert' contest, but also enjoyed considerable success when it again competed in the Whit Friday Marches in Manchester, picking up several top 3 placings in their Section, including a 1st at Dobcross to win the 'Coffee Cup' trophy. Further



details as shown, for the Whit Friday Contests overall placings amongst all bands competing at any level (including Championship) are shown.

The Youth Band again enjoyed success in the BBNI Solo & Ensemble competition held in February, both as an ensemble by winning the Youth Band section, and by gaining 1st place in the Under 12 yrs solo, and 2nd place in the Under 10 yrs solo competitions.

Competition	Date	Grade Entered	Placing
BBNI Solos & Ensemble 2024	10 Feb '24	Under 10 solos	2 nd (6 entries)
BBNI Solos & Ensemble 2024	10 Feb '24	Under 12 solos	1 st (8 entries)
BBNI Solos & Ensemble 2024	10 Feb '24	Youth Band	1 st (1 entry)
BBNI Brass In Concert 2024	2 Mar '24	2 nd Section	3 rd (5 entries)
Denshaw (Whit Friday Contests)	24 May '24	3 rd Section	19 th (78 entries)
Dobcross (Whit Friday Contests)	24 May '24	3 rd Section	20 th (70 entries)
Friezland (Whit Friday Contests)	24 May '24	3 rd Section	3 rd (42 entries)
Greenfield (Whit Friday Contests)	24 May '24	3 rd Section	35 th (62 entries)
Uppermill (Whit Friday Contests)	24 May '24	3 rd Section	31 st (52 entries)

Supporting this objective and assisted by a grant from Arts Council for Northern Ireland, the band made a significant investment in new instruments during the year with the purchase of an Eb bass, a baritone and a flugel horn. Subject to available funding, this is a longer term goal to continually improve the overall quality of the band's inventory by replacing older worn-out instruments, and to increase the availability of suitable instruments that could help support any requirements of the Youth Band.

(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)*

The band enjoyed several opportunities to perform for the general public during 2024 with some notable highlights. The year began with a special 'Family & Friends' night at which both the Youth Band and Senior Band delivered separate performances, following which the band acknowledged the contribution made by several long serving members with a presentation of awards made by the Mayor of Ards & North Down.



The band also celebrated its 75th Anniversary in July with an outdoor public concert at Lower Crescent, Comber and later in September, teamed up with their friends from Laganvale Metal Technology Band to deliver a joint concert at Rosetta, Belfast.

Event	Date
CSB Parents, Family & Friends Night – 2 nd Presbyterian Church, Comber	24 Feb 2024
Summer BBQ - Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Comber	15 Jun 2024
Park Life 2024 – Moat Park, Dundonald	7 Jul 2024
75 th Anniversary ‘Music in the Park’ Concert – Lower Crescent, Comber	14 Jul 2024
Summer Festival – The Harbour, Donaghadee	28 Jul 2024
Summer Parks Concert - Lady Dixon Park, Belfast	18 Aug 2024
‘Brass in Partnership’ – St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Rosetta	14 Sep 2024
Youth Band Parents & Family Concert - Gospel Hall, Comber	10 Dec 2024

(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 in support of several cultural and traditional events during 2024, including local festivals, church services, and Christmas festivities. A particular highlight for the band was again the Hillsborough Garden Party, attended this year by the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, with Prince Edward personally taking time to congratulate the band and the Musical Director on their entertaining performance, but politely declining (in good humour) an invitation to conduct. The band again finished off the year with a very busy programme supporting the Ulster Folk Museum with their Christmas events.

Event	Date
Easter Church Service - Non Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Comber	14 Apr 2024
Comber Earlies Potato Festival (Senior band) – The Square, Comber	22 Jun 2024
Comber Earlies Potato Festival (Youth band) – The Square, Comber	22 Jun 2024
Hillsborough Castle & Gardens – Sec. of State Garden Party	10 Sep 2024
Harvest Church Service- Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Comber	20 Oct 2024



Event	Date
Remembrance Sunday Parade – The Square, Comber	10 Nov 2024
Christmas Lights Switching - Bangor City Hall, Bangor	23 Nov 2024
Christmas Programme - Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra (over 4 weekends)	December 2024
Christmas Church Service - Ballyhemlin Presbyterian Church, Newtownards	15 Dec 2024


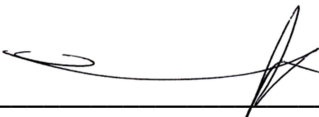

7. Financial Review

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 29th January 2025. 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 £75,724 (excluding outstanding invoices not settled in this reporting period), an increase of £10,230 compared to the previous year, with £12,924 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: 5 th February 2025
 _____	William Gray (Secretary)	Date: 5 th February 2025
 _____	Maurice Baalham (Treasurer)	Date: 5 th February 2025



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)
- Jane Smyth
- Andrew Lawrie
- Libby Young
- Lana Moore
- Matthew Lawrie

The charity trustees during the year 1st January 2024 – 31st December 2024 were as follows:

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