







## **COMPANY INFORMATION**

at 31/3/2020

### **Directors**

C Chisholm  
A Crean  
E Cunningham  
R Drew  
N Enright  
N Fraser  
C Hamill  
D Kinahan - Co-opted  
V McAuley  
I McCurley  
A McFarland – Co-opted  
M Morgan

### **Independent Chair and Director**

D Flinn

### **Company Secretary**

J Bradley

### **Treasurer**

P McCloskey – Co-opted

### **Company Number      Charity Ref Numbers**

NI053189              XR70288      NIC100859

### **Auditors**

MTS Accountants  
1 Lanyon Quay  
Belfast  
BT1 3LG

### **Bankers**

First Trust Bank  
35 University Road  
Belfast  
BT7 1ND

### **Solicitors**

Cleaver Fulton Rankin  
50 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7FW



## CHAIR'S REPORT 2019-20

This began as a year to consolidate and take stock after a period of major works such as the Landscape Partnership Scheme. It was also, however, a year of successful projects and works.

### **Resilience Strategy**

With support from the Lottery Heritage Fund, we began work on a Resilience Strategic Plan designed specifically to review what we were doing, where we were heading and how to make ourselves best prepared for whatever lay ahead. With lots of input and hard work from all our members and partners, this came up with a wide array of positive recommendations but in summary emphasised the need for the Partnership to retain its particular strategic role. In particular we all need to renew our commitment to working together strategically to build on our strengths such as our volunteer and education programmes, our communications and also look at the potential for new strategic land acquisition in the Belfast Hills to achieve our objectives. As well as these general recommendations there were also specific suggestions such as ensuring we were more cyber resilient at a time when online threats continue to multiply.

### **Ongoing project works**

The Resilience work of course did not mean that our more immediate project work faltered, with our array of biodiversity, community, health, events and contract work continuing to be delivered. I'll refer to just two examples of this work – our growing Exploring the Belfast Hills health walks programme for adults with learning disabilities and the Our Bright Future work with young people culminating in our involvement in youth consultation events up at Stormont feeding into the Northern Ireland Environmental Strategy, making sure young people get their voice heard in shaping what is their future environment.

### **Consultations**

This year has been a particularly busy year for responding to consultations as Councils' Local Development Plans reached various stages. As well as responding to these we shared our input into other plans such as the Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and also their Open Space Strategy.

### **Funding**

As well as securing funding for the Resilience Strategy, we were awarded 3 years' funding from the Ernest Cook Trust to support our

volunteering and environmental education plus within year additional funding from NIEA to carry out a range of practical projects such as new wildlife ponds, carbon estimation on upland sites and the installation of our new Tree and Wildflower Nursery adjacent to our offices. We also began discussions about a possible partnership with the Woodland Trust to carry out a new Woodland Project in 2020-21.

### **Covid 19**

Of course across the world every Chair's 2019-20 report will end on the same topic – Covid 19. I believe that our Resilience work earlier in the year couldn't have been better timed and, in the longer term, will point us on the road to recovery. Many of you will appreciate that those last two weeks in the year are crucial in completing projects such as the In Year additional works. The fact that we completed virtually all of our targets is a great tribute to our staff and the partnership and an indication that we will weather this storm together.

I therefore thank both the staff and yourselves for the excellent efforts of all to keeping up the good work being done across the hills. Can I express our gratitude in particular those who have moved on during the year, including board members Damien McCallin, Laverne Fawthrop, Tim Morrow, Jim Bingham and Steven Corr and staff member Lisa Critchley, who together have given so many years of service to the Partnership.

David Flinn



## MANAGER'S REPORT 2019-20

While this was a year of settling into our project work after the end of our Landscape Partnership Scheme and the start of our next 3 year round of Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) funding, it was a year with lots of staff changes, established staff moving on and new staff coming in.

Nevertheless we managed to not only carry out a substantial Resilience Review which pointed us positively in new directions for 2020 and beyond, but also managed to deliver on a range of 'In Year' additional works funded by NIEA such as our new Tree and Wildflower Nursery, a new major wildlife pond at Colin Allotments and carry out a new carbon field survey establish baseline figures for how much carbon we have up on Divis and Cave Hill.

Much of this work relied on the unstinting help of our volunteers who turned up every week, rain or shine, to dig, weed, clean, plant and build across sites in the hills. We therefore work hard to deliver the highest standards of care for and management of our volunteers as proved by our receiving another Volunteer Now's Investing in Volunteers (liV) award in January 2020.

As well as these highlights, other key works we carried out are outlined below:





## IMPROVING – making positive changes on the ground

We have continued our programmes of improvements across a broad range of habitats, species and our local landscape:-

**Trees and hedgerow shrubs-** 4,015 planted by volunteers

**Ponds** – Two wildlife ponds created at Colin Allotments and Black Mountain Quarry  
Three more wildlife ponds cleared out at Carnmoney Hill, Ballysillan Allotments and Limestone Quarry

**Lowland Meadows-** 800 m<sup>2</sup> of scrub has been cleared from 3 grassland sites at Ballyaghagan, Slevenacloy and the Limestone Quarry that were scrubbing over, threatening the loss of biodiversity

**Woodlands-** 2 new areas were created at Ligoniel, one at Black Mountain, one at MacWills and an area restored at Glencairn - all totalling 942m<sup>2</sup>

**Hedgerows** – 626 metres of new link hedgerows as part of our hedgerow restoration plans

**Community Orchards** – 3 planted comprising 9 Irish Heritage Apple Tree varieties

**Wildflowers** – 2 sites totalling 982 m<sup>2</sup> created at Valley Park

**Invasives** – controlled or removed at least 6 invasive species including Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Laurel, Winter Helleborine and Snowberry at 9 sites totalling 1,560m<sup>2</sup>

**Black Honeybee Project** - 1 No Beehive kit, 2 training courses and 2 beekeeping suits and other equipment delivered to St Enda's.

**Tree Nursery** – Construction of the new tree and wildflower nursery was finished in February 2020 and with the help of the volunteers we collected and then propagated, approx. 200 oak, 100 hazel, 50 rowan, 30 thorn and 20 guelder rose not to mention several wild flower species.



## INVOLVING – getting people directly involved in managing their places

We have engaged directly with a wide range of people to ensure they appreciate, use or help to manage areas in the Hills:-

**Field Volunteering** – 30 regular volunteers take part in our regular weekly volunteering programme and 54 in one off corporate/group volunteering work. This was the equivalent to over £19,950 of work

**Volunteer Rangers** – recruited and trained 8 volunteers to act as wardens for both public and Wildlife Connections sites across the Hills, regularly reporting back issues or sightings

**School Grounds** – engaged with 139 pupils from 3 schools and 1 scout group, helping them to improve their own local environment & school grounds while making sure they understand how their patch links in with the Belfast Hills

**Trainee Rangers** – 11 young people took part in a 16 week training programme to introduce them to careers in the Environmental Sector



**Health** – carried out a series of 38 Exploring the Belfast Hills walks for adults with learning disabilities from 4 day centres

**Wildfires** – recorded 4 wildfires (significantly lower than the previous year) with many of these being reported via social media via our Facebook page

**Training** – trained 65 volunteers and members of the public in topics such as Bird ID, Moth ID, pond creation and maintenance, habitat condition assessment.



## LEARNING – gathering and disseminating more information to help engage people and make changes

1. Firstly we must tell people about the Belfast Hills and our work, which we have done through:-

**Our Bright Future** – during this year we engaged with over 2,750 young people

**Trash Fashion** – 20 young people designed and modelled their own waste related fashion

**Longstone school project** – Whole school involved in planting school garden while eco club went on a range of walks in the Belfast Hills

**STEM event** – 300 pupils attended over 2 days learning about science through a range of fun activities

**Anti-litter campaign** – involving 137 pupils in across 3 participating schools

**Youth consultation** – 200 pupils from a wide range of schools, groups and individuals took part in a consultation about their thoughts/concerns relating to the environment

**Events Programme** – holding a wide range of events themed around 'Take 5 steps to wellbeing' with a total of 128 participants.



2. We also involve people in surveying and monitoring programmes in the Hills so that we have the raw data to show what's good and also what threats we should prioritize and protect the hills from:-



**Mapping Wildfires** – we mapped 4 wildfires in the hills (a relatively quiet year). Social media via photos or video continues to be invaluable.

**Biodiversity Surveys** – surveys were carried out of 6 priority or protected species and 5 priority habitats in 2019. Healthy populations of badgers were found on Cave Hill Country Park and excellent numbers of Narrow Bordered 5 Spot Burnet Moth at Ligoniel Dams.

**Ash dieback surveys** - commenced with Cave Hill which was showing signs of dieback in young Ash saplings. Other surveys included wildfire, dipper and river invertebrate surveys.

**Fixed Point Photography** – we completed 4 seasons of Fixed Point Photography visits, taking repeat images from 6 locations to record long term changes and impacts.



## **PLANNING – working out how to manage the hills better in the future**

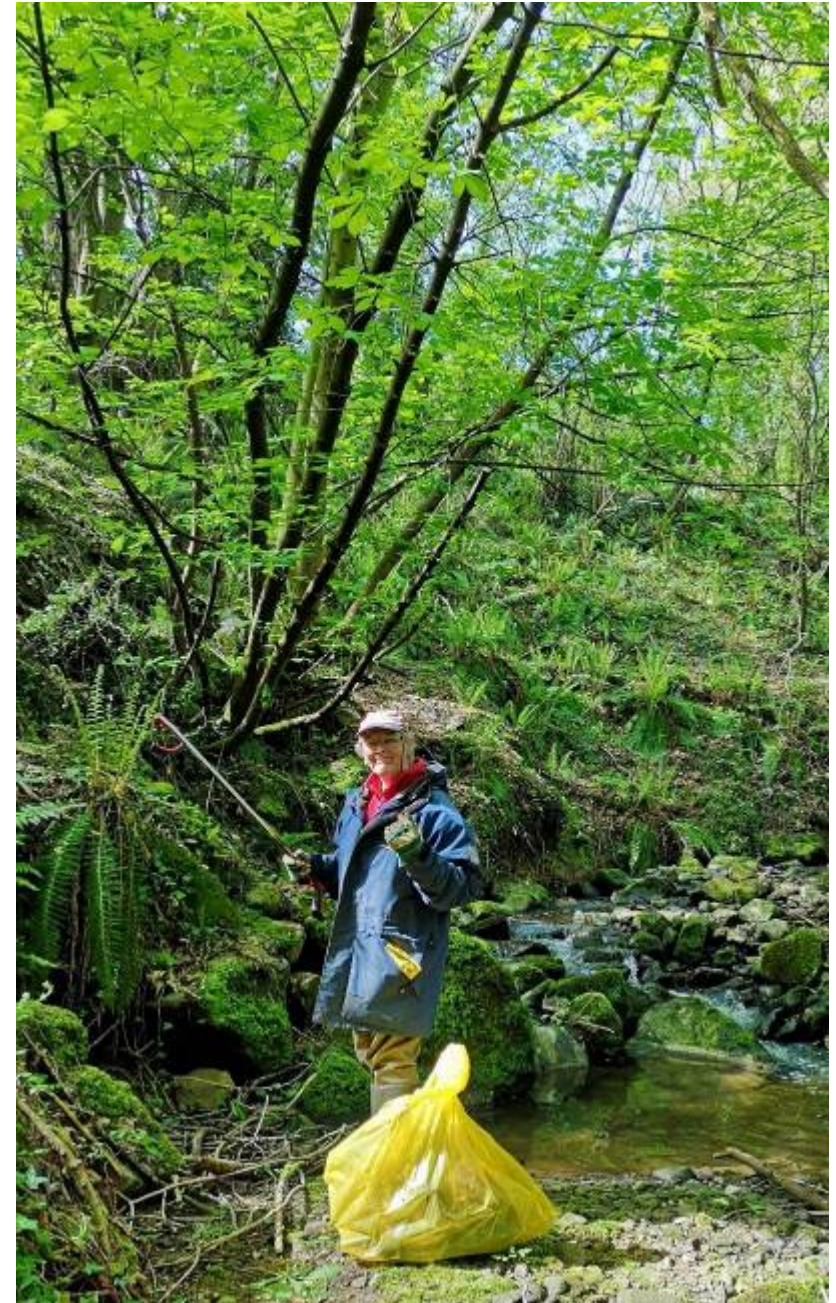
As well as producing and carrying out our more general strategic plans, we have taken part or assisted in forward planning in the following ways:-

**Environmental Farming Scheme** – our staff retrained as EFS Planners and carried out EFS surveys and farm management plans for 2 upland farms.

**Local Development Plans** – we responded to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council's Local Development Plan Draft Strategy. We also responded to both the Blue and Green Infrastructure Plan and the Open Space Strategy linked to Belfast City Council's Local Development Plan.

**Other Consultations** – we took part or responded to a number of consultations on issues including Single Farm Payments, proposed Petroleum Licences and DAERA's Environmental Strategy.

**Planning Proposals** – we responded to 9 key planning applications in the Belfast Hills area and also reported on a number of potential breaches of planning usually relating to construction soil dumping. We were also consulted at pre-application stages on a number of planning proposals in and around the hills.



**BELFAST HILLS PARTNERSHIP  
INCOME & EXPENDITURE  
2019-2020**



	<b>2019-2020 £</b>	<b>2018-2019 £</b>
GROSS INCOME	294,852**	418,026**
GROSS EXPENDITURE	386,131	329,163
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(91,279)	88,863
TOTAL YEAR END RESERVES	530,139	621,418

\*\* This summary is based on the Independent Assessment for 2019-2020 carried out by MTS Accountants. (See full Assessment for details)



## **PARTNERSHIP STAFF & DIRECTORS**

at 31/3/20

### **Staff**

Dr Jim Bradley	Partnership Manager
Dr Lizzy Pinkerton	Scheme Manager
Michelle McClafferty	Administrative & Finance Manager (PT)
Sara McCloskey	Administrative Officer (PT)
Judy Meharg	Hills Project Officer (PT)
John McLaughlin	Volunteer and Outreach Officer
Jo Boylan	Youth Outreach Officer
Laura Shiels	“ “ (Maternity Cover)
Patricia Deeney	Youth Development Officer
Noel Rice	Wildlife Connections Officer

### **Directors**

The Directors on the Board and the bodies to which they belong are as follows:

**Independent Chair**     David Flinn

### **COMMUNITIES / USERS**

#### **Communities**

Aidan Crean (*Friends of Falls Park*)  
Niall Enright (*Upper Springfield Development Trust*)

#### **Local Conservation Groups**

Cormac Hamill (*Cave Hill Conservation Campaign*)  
Maria Morgan (*Ligoniel Improvement Association*)

#### **Recreation Groups**

Alan McFarland *Co-opted (Northern Ireland Sports Forum)*

### **LANDOWNING / MANAGING**

#### **Farmers**

Eugene Cunningham (*Ulster Farmers Union*)



Neale Fraser (*Ulster Farmers Union*)

#### **Local Economic**

Russell Drew (*Belfast Hills Waste Management Operators*)

#### **Quarries**

Craig Chisholm (*Mineral Products Association NI*)

#### **Nature Conservation**

Ian McCurley (*National Trust*)

### **STATUTORY**

Cllr. Victoria McAuley (*Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council*)

Vacant (*Belfast City Council*)

Vacant (*Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council*)

Danny Kinahan (*Co-opted Director*)

#### **Treasurer**

Peter McCloskey (*Co-opted Director*)







## BHP MISSION & OBJECTIVES

The mission for the Belfast Hills Partnership is to

- Provide a practical and integrated management mechanism for the Belfast Hills thereby contributing to the conservation, protection and enhancement of its natural, built and cultural heritage and providing for responsible countryside enjoyment.
- Contribute to the quality of life of communities on the fringes of the Belfast Hills, rural residents of the area and to the wider urban & rural environment.
- Work in partnership with others towards the realisation of the Belfast Hills vision, within a Belfast Hills Integrated Management Plan.



Core funded by:

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Belfast City Council  
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council  
Northern Ireland Environment Agency (Department of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs)

The strategic aims of the Partnership are to

- Conserve, protect and enhance the natural, cultural and built heritage of the Belfast Hills.
- Encourage individuals, communities and organisations to care for the Belfast Hills.
- Raise awareness of the value of the Belfast Hills and of issues relating to their protection.
- Manage existing recreational use of the Belfast Hills.
- Support and assist farmers and landowners under pressure from urban development, and from inappropriate forms of countryside recreation.
- Contribute to the economic regeneration of communities in the Belfast Hills and adjoining city.
- Contribute to a positive image of Belfast, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Antrim through an attractive, well managed and functioning visual backdrop to these areas.

9 Social Economy Village, Hannahstown Hill, Belfast BT17 0XS  
Tel: (028) 90603466



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[www.belfasthills.org](http://www.belfasthills.org)



thanks the following funders:-

