



DISCOVER  
GROOMSPORT

# DISCOVER GROOMSPORT



## Trustees' Annual Report 2023 - 2024



## **Second Report of the Trustees**

**For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

Charity Registration number: 109362

Address: 2 Cove View, Groomsport, County Down, BT19 6HR

Discover Groomsport was established at a public meeting in the village on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2023. At that meeting the Constitution was adopted and trustees were elected. The purposes of Discover Groomsport are as follows:

***To strengthen the local community of Groomsport by increasing community participation and to promote social inclusion by encouraging and promoting open and accessible community activities.***

***To celebrate and promote the advancement of the rich history and heritage of the village of Groomsport by organising exhibitions, lectures, guided tours, publications, other educational activities and events by associating with statutory authorities, voluntary and community organisations and the private sector.***

***To help preserve Cockle Row Cottages and some of the other important heritage buildings in Groomsport and to contribute to making the village an attractive and safe place for residents and visitors.***

***To work to ensure that future plans and developments for Groomsport are consistent with its heritage and uniqueness, encouraging residents to take an active interest in proposals for the future of the village and by helping them understand the roles and responsibilities of statutory and other agencies in respect of the village.***

The Trustees who served during the year were:

Elaine Nixon (Chair)

Prof. Ruth Fee (Vice Chair) - resigned 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Geoff McKeown – Vice Chair from 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Peter Gibson (Secretary)

David Martin (Treasurer)

Liz Barron

Rev. Dr. David Irwin

Maureen Irwin

Roy McWhinney

Audrey Thomas

Sharon Goldie – appointed 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Jim McMullan – appointed 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 there were 140 members of Discover Groomsport.

### **Public Benefit**

When we registered as a charity, we identified the following Public Benefits that we would seek to achieve:

- a Advancing citizenship and community development.*
- b Promoting social inclusion.*
- c Enhancing the environment of the village of Groomsport.*
- d Ensuring that the historic Cockle Row Cottages are revived as a resource for village residents and visitors.*
- e Ensuring an increased appreciation of the history and heritage of Groomsport.*
- f Increasing Groomsport's identification with the historic voyage of Eagle Wing in 1636.*
- g Promoting volunteering.*

In their work during this year, the Trustees have had regard to the statutory guidance on Public Benefit and believe that, in 2023-2024, all of Discover Groomsport's activities were in pursuit of the Public Benefits listed above.

## 2 Work undertaken in 2023-2024

Our work during the year, in pursuit of our objectives and public benefit had five elements:

- Community activities;
- History tours and talks;
- Digital archive of the history of Groomsport and its people;
- Ulster-Scots course; and
- Engagement with Ards and North Down Council

## 3 Community activities

We organised three community events during the year. All of these events, which were free of charge, encouraged inclusion promoted community cohesion and provided opportunities for volunteering.

### Coronation Big Picnic



2pm—5pm, Cockle Row, Groomsport

Bring Food, Friends, Family, Fold-Up Furniture



Costume Parade

Prizes Crabbing Cake

Crafts Treasure Hunt Games

Music from The Bangor Ukes

Supported by  
Ards and North Down  
Borough Council



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**The Coronation Big Picnic and Big Clean-up** took place over the Coronation weekend in May. The Big Picnic event, which was supported by a grant from Ards and North Down Council, attracted almost 1,000 people from the village and surrounding areas.

We held a children's activity event for **Hallowe'en** (funded from our own resources), in conjunction with Cockle Row Cottages. This was well attended and appreciated by the children and their parents.



**The Christmas Tree Lights Switch-on** event was held in early December, with financial support from the Council. Some 185 people attended the short Carol service which was held in the Parish Church before the switch-on and about 220 people attended the Parish Hall where food was served and 140 children visited Santa.

### **Link Committee**

During the year we established a "Link Committee" consisting of most of the voluntary organisations and churches in the village. The committee enables the organisations to share their plans for community activities, with a view to avoiding clashes of dates. We anticipate that the committee will meet two or three times per year.

In addition to the above, Discover Groomsport nominated a member to serve on the **Groomsport in Bloom** committee which was established by the Groomsport Village Association. Members of Discover Groomsport helped with weeding and tidying up the village. The Coronation Big Clean-up also contributed to keeping the village tidy. We were very pleased that the village was awarded second place in the large village section of the 2023 Ulster in Bloom competition.

#### **4 History Tours and Talks**

During the year we developed and delivered:

- A Guided History Tour of the village;
- A leaflet for self-guided tours of the village; and
- An illustrated talk on the history of Groomsport.

All of the above were based on papers about the history of Groomsport which had been published on our website [www.discovergroomsport.com](http://www.discovergroomsport.com) .

The 90 minute **Guided History Tour** was run on nine Saturday afternoons in July and August and on both days of the European Heritage Open Days in September. Each tour had 20 places and all 11 tours were fully booked. In addition, a further 3 tours were run, on request, for the following organisations:

- North Down and Ards Family History Society
- Bangor Historical Society
- Columbanus Walkers

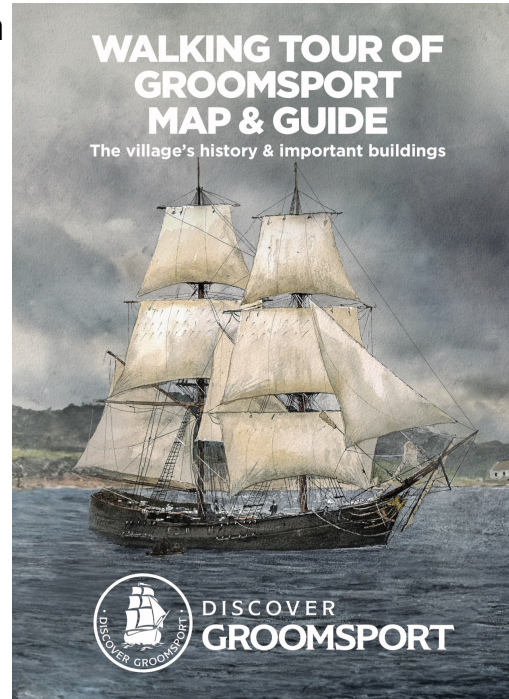
The guided tours attracted people from the village and from local towns (Bangor, Donaghadee and Newtownards) as well as a few from further afield. The tours were very well received and many people commented that they had not been aware of the importance of some of the buildings and locations visited on the tour.

An illustrated talk – “**Aspects of the History of Groomsport**”, based upon the tour was written. The talk was given to the following 6 organisations:

- Donaghadee Historical Society
- Cockle Island Boat Club

- Hollywood U3A History Group
- Bangor Abbey Mothers' Union
- Ballyholme Probus Club
- Bangor Probus Club
- Bayburn Historical Society

With the help of a Heritage Project Grant from Ards and North Down Council, we produced 2000 leaflets – “**Walking Tour of Groomsport – Map and Guide**”. This was generously designed by Dan Parson, a member of Discover Groomsport and an artist. The leaflet incorporated a QR (Quick Response) code to enable users to access further information on our website. These leaflets are available, all year round, from a display outside Cockle Row Cottages. As with the guided tour, the Map and Guide has been widely praised.



## 5 Digital Archive of Groomsport and its people

Through the good offices of one of our trustees, Prof. Ruth Fee, we had assistance from Ulster University’s Science Shop to help us establish a digital archive of the history of the village and its people. Three students worked with the trustees to create a website that will be the basis of the archive, on which the trustees will build. We anticipate that the digital archive will “go live” during 2024-2025 and that the project will take several years to complete.

## 6 Ulster-Scots Course

In conjunction with the Ulster-Scots Network, we ran a four week course “Introducing Ulster-Scots’ in September 2023. The course is at OCN level1. It was attended by 12 people and the feedback was very positive.

## 7 Engagement with Ards and North Down Council

We have acknowledged, above, that we benefitted from Council grants when delivering community activities and the walking tour leaflet.

In addition to this, we have worked with the Council's tourism and regeneration staff.

For the first time in several years, the Council, with our encouragement agreed to staff the Visitors Information Centre at **Cockle Row Cottages** and to organise activities on Sundays. Council tourism staff supported our guided history tour by providing training for guides and letting us use the cottages as the starting point of the tours. The tours were scheduled for Saturdays to complement the other Sunday activities.

We understand that the reopening of the cottages was a success and hope that their future as an information centre and small heritage centre is assured.

We also worked closely with Council regeneration staff who are revising the **Groomspoint Village Plan** for 2018-2023. We look forward to further engagement when a draft revised plan is issued.

## 8 Summary of Finances

Details of Discover Groomspoint's finances are available in our audited accounts for 2023-2024 – our first full year of operation. In summary:

- Our income was £4,685. The main sources of income were grants from Ards and North Down Council for a number of our projects, general donations and donations from individuals and organisations in respect of our guided history tours and illustrated talks.
- Our expenditure was £3,157, leaving a surplus for the year of £1,528.



Elaine Nixon

Chair of the Trustees of Discover Groomspoint

11 September 2024