Agenda and papers for Annual General Meeting

Thursday 12th November 2026

at 7.30pm in the Parish Halls, Main Street

Contents

- Agenda for this AGM
- Minutes of the AGM held on 7th November 2025
- Annual Report of the Trustees for 2025-2026
- Audited Annual Accounts for 2025-2026 – version to be submitted to the Charity Commission
- Summary of Annual Accounts for 2025-2026
- Independent Examiner's Report on the audited accounts.

Fourth Annual General Meeting

Thursday 12th November, 2026

in the Parish Halls, Main Street, Groomsport at 7.30pm

Agenda

1 Apologies for absence.

2 Minutes of AGM held on 7th November 2025 (previously circulated)

3 Remarks by Chair

4 Trustees' Report for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 (previously circulated) - Secretary

5 Audited Accounts and Independent Examiner's Report for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 (previously circulated) - Treasurer

6 Motion 1: That the Trustees' Report, the Audited Accounts and the Independent Examiner's report be accepted and submitted to the Charity Commission.

7 Motion 2: That Frances McCormick, County Down Rural Network, be re-appointed as the Independent Examiner of Discover Groomsport's accounts.

8 Oral report on activities since 1st April 2026 – Trustees

9 Open discussion

10 Election of Trustees – Frances McCormick to chair

Motion 3: That the following ten existing Trustees be re-elected:
Prof. Ruth Fee, Peter Gibson, Sharon Goldie, Rev. Dr. David Irwin, Maureen Irwin, David Martin, Jim McMullan, Roy McWhinney, Elaine Nixon and Audrey Thomas.

Possible identification of members who would be willing to be co-opted as Trustees.

12 Any other business

Refreshments will be served at the end of the meeting.

Registered Charity NIC 109362

Minutes of the third Annual General Meeting
held on Friday 7th November, 2025 in the Parish Halls, Groomsport at 7.30pm

17 members were in attendance (see attendance sheets). Also present were Frances McCormick, County Down Rural Community Network, Councillors Eddie Thompson, James Cochrane and Hannah Irwin and MLAs Alan Chambers, Connie Egan and Andrew Muir.

Apologies for absence were received from the following members: Roy McWhinney, Ruth Fee, Jim McMullan, Rev Paul Dalzell, Catherine Dalzell. John Crockard, Rosemary Lightbody, Stephanie Jamison and Jim McAuley. Apologies were also received from Stephen Dunne, MLA, Councillor David Chambers and Sharon Cummings (Groomsport Village Association).

1 The minutes of the Annual General meeting held on14th November 2024 were agreed and signed.

2 In her remarks, Elaine Nixon, Chair, said that 2025 has been another excellent year for Discover Groomsport, although were were sorry to lose one of our Trustees, Geoff McKeown. Elaine thanked him for his hard work. Elaine also paid tribute to all the Trustees and their families for their time, energy, talents and tremendous contributions to Discover Groomsport throughout the year – without them none of our activities would have happened. Thank you all very much.

Elaine said that Discover Groomsport would like to extend their gratitude to ANDBC, Ulster Scots Agency, Ulster Scots Network, County Down Rural Network, University of Ulster, The Stables, Groomsport Spar, Groomsport Inn, SYSCO and Andy Goldie, Coop Ballyholme and Groomsport Football Club for their sponsorship and financial support throughout 2025.

She concluded by saying that our successes are also directly linked to the support of Discover Groomsport members and we hope this will continue in the future as we look forward to 2026.

3 Peter Gibson (Secretary) spoke to the Trustees's report for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 which had previously been circulated to members.

The work during the year, in pursuit of Discover Groomsport's objectives and public benefit, had the following elements:

- Holding an Eagle Wing Celebration in September 2024;
- Community activities - Big Picnic and Clean-Up, Hallowe'en event, Christmas afternoon tea for older people, a ceilidh and a Link committee of village oprganisations:
- History tours and talks and the production of a guided walking leaflet;
- Contributed to the marking of the RNLI's 200th anniversary:
- The further development of the digital archive of the history of Groomsport and its people; and
- Engagement with the officers of Ards and North Down Council regarding community development, tourism, heritage and regeneration.

4 David Martin (Treasurer) spoke to the audited Annual accounts and the Independent Examiner's Letter for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, both of which had previously been circulated to members. During the year, Discover Groomsport had income of £7,775 and expenditure of £5,093, with a surplus of £2,682. The reserves, at year end were £4,210. David stated that the reserves, created by surpluses, enable the charity to self-fund some activities and provided a financial cushion should sources of grant-aid be reduced or withdrawn.

5 On the proposal of Rev Dr David Irwin, seconded by Anne Blachford, the meeting agreed to adopt the Trustee's Report, the audited accounts and the Independent Examiner's letter.

6 On the proposal of Sharon Goldie, seconded by Audrey Thomas, the meeting agreed to re-appoint Frances McCormick of County Down Rural Community Network as Independent Examiner.

7 Elaine Nixon asked a number of the trustees to update the meeting on activities since the end on the 2024-2025 financial year.

- Audrey Thomas spoke about the VE Day Commemoration in May and the recent successful Halloween event.
- Sharon Goldie detailed the activities that had taken place during the second Eagle Wing Celebration, in September.
- Peter Gibson mentioned the guided history tours and the series of leaflets – "Little bits of Groomsport history" which had been published in the summer.
- Elaine Nixon gave notice of the Christmas Lights switch-on on 5th December and a coffee morning for seniors on 13th December.

8 Frances McCormick, County Down Rural Community Network took the chair to conduct the election of trustees. Frances offered her congratulations on a successful year.

On the proposal of Rev. Elliot Swattridge, seconded by Rosemary Adams, the ten retiring trustees were re-elected: Prof. Ruth Fee, Peter Gibson, Sharon Goldie, Rev. Dr. David Irwin, Maureen Irwin, David Martin, Jim McMullan, Roy McWhinney, Elaine Nixon and Audrey Thomas

9 Any other business

- John Weir of Groomsport Village association spoke about the work and successes of the Groomsport in Bloom group and it recognition through success in Northern Ireland-wide competition. He said that more volunteers were always needed.
- Ornithologist Anthony McGeehan spoke about the plight of the Arctic Terns which, for the past three years, have failed to breed successfully on Cockle Island. He has been encouraging the relevant authorities to take action to stop rats swimming over to the island to take eggs and chicks.

10 The business of the AGM concluded and refreshments were served.

_____
Chair

_____
Date


Discover
Groomsport
Trustees' Annual Report
2025-2026
DISCOVER GROOMSPORT

Fourth Report of the Trustees

For the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

Charity Registration number: 109362
Address: 2 Cove View, Groomsport, County Down, BT19 6HR
Independent Examiner: Frances McCormick, County Down Rural Community Network

Discover Groomsport was established at a public meeting in the village on 28th October 2022. 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.*

*T**o 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)
Jim McMullan (Vice Chair)
Peter Gibson (Secretary)
David Martin (Treasurer)
Prof. Ruth Fee
Sharon Goldie
Rev. Dr. David Irwin
Maureen Irwin
Roy McWhinney
Audrey Thomas

On 31st March 2026 there were 150 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.*

The Trustees have had regard to the statutory guidance on Public Benefit and believe that, in 2025-2026, all of Discover Groomsport's activities were in pursuit of the Public Benefits listed above.

Work undertaken in 2025-2026

The work of Discover Groomsport falls into two categories:
1 Sharing the story of Groomsport at home and across the world, via our website: www.discovergroomsport.com.
2 Organising events for residents of Groomsport and visitors to the village.
Our annual Eagle Wing Celebration falls into both categories.

Therefore, our work during the year, in pursuit of our objectives and public benefits had five elements:
1. Eagle Wing Celebration;
2. Community activities;
3. Increasing knowledge of the history and heritage of Groomsport; and
4. Engagement with Ards and North Down Council
5. Raising awareness of concerns for Arctic Terns on Cockle Island

1 Eagle Wing Celebration

We organised a weekend of events from Friday 65th to Sunday 7th September 2024 to celebrate the 389th anniversary of the voyage of *Eagle Wing.* The ship set out from Groomsport on 9th September 1636 to take 140 Presbyterians to Massachusetts, where they hoped to find freedom to practice their religion.

The weekend's programme was as follows:
Friday 5th September



An evening with David Lennon and friends.

Saturday 6th September



Seafarers' Breakfast at the Parish Halls.



An introduction to Ulster Scots language and culture with Dayna Jost of the Ulster Scots Community Network



Line Dancing with Gillian Quinn

Scottish Country Dancing with Patrick Brunskill

Valhalla Street Theatre Company performed a dramatised account of the voyage of Eagle Wing at Cockle Row Cottages.

A Guided History Tour with Gavin Walker and Jim McMullan.



“Two families of Groomsport: the gentry and the fisherfolk”, a talk by Peter Gibson

Sunday 7th September



A Seafarers’ Service, led by local clergy, with music by Cottown Pipe Band.

It was planned to hold this event at the harbour but, because of persistent rain, it was held in the Presbyterian Church.

The weekend celebration was enjoyed by all who attended the various events. Discover Groomsport is grateful to the Ulster Scots Agency for their generous grant which supported the celebration.

2 Community activities

In addition to the *Eagle Wing* Celebration, we organised four other community events during the year. All of these events, which were free of charge, encouraged inclusion promoted community cohesion and provided opportunities for volunteering.

With the help of grants from Ards and North Down Council and the Coop Community Fund, we arranged a weekend of activities to mark the **80th Anniversary of VE Day.**

On Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th we held a photographic exhibition of **Groomsport during World War 2**.

On the Sunday we held a short **Act of Remembrance** at the War Memorial. This was followed by our annual **Big Picnic**, which had a World War 2 theme.



Mrs Catherine Champion, Vice Lord Lieutenant of County Down, cut the commemorative cake that was baked by Groomsport resident, Valerie McCutcheon.

These events were very successful and were attended by some 500 people.



We held a children's activity event for **Halloween** (funded from our own resources), in conjunction with the Council's Cockle Row Cottages.
This was greatly appreciated by the children and their parents. About 200 people attended the event.

On 5th December, with the help of grant aid from the Council, we arranged the **Christmas Lights Switch-on** The tree was switched-on in short order, on a rainy night after a short Carol Service in the Presbyterian church. Those attending then made for the shelter of the Walter Nelson Hall where there were refreshments, activities and a visit from Santa. The poor weather resulted in fewer number attending that is usual, but those who did brave the elements enjoyed the evening.





On Saturday 13th December, with support from the Coop Community Fund, we held a **Christmas Coffee Morning** that was attended by some 40 people

In addition to the community activities above, a member of Discover Groomsport continued to serve on the Groomsport Village Association's **Groomsport in Bloom** committee. Members of Discover Groomsport helped with weeding and tidying up the village. We were pleased to learn that Groomsport was judged to be the Best Kept Large Village in Northern Ireland.

Link Committee
The Link Committee, which we established in early 2024 met on a number of occasions. It consists 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.

3 Increasing knowledge of the history and heritage of Groomsport

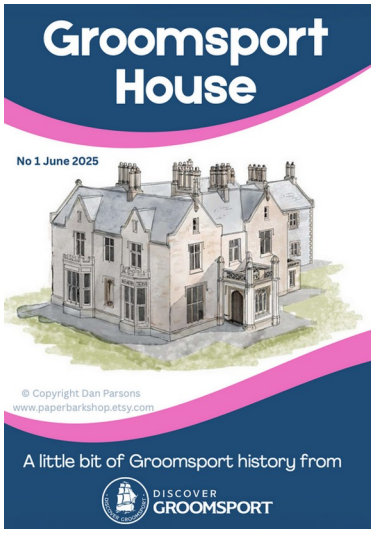
In addition to the *Eagle Wing* Celebration, the trustees sought to increase knowledge of the history and heritage of the village in a number of ways:

- Guided History Tours of the village;
- Map and Guide for self-guided tours of the village;
- Illustrated talks on the history of Groomsport;
- Creating the Digital Archive of Groomsport; and
- During the year we published further history papers on our website: www.discovergroomsport.com:
  "The early history of Groomsport" (up to the 1600s);
  "The population of Groomsport 1821-2021"; and
  "The residents of Groomsport in the 1860s".

In the summer of 2025, we held our 90 minute **Guided History Tours** twice a month, on Saturday afternoons, during June, July and August, during the *Eagle Wing* Celebration and for the European Heritage Open Days in September. In conjunction with The Stables restaurant, we held three tours for organisations who had refreshments after their tours.

The **Digital Archive of Groomsport and its people,** which we launched in June 2024, continues to expand as more items are submitted to be scanned and preserved on the website.

In June 2025 we published a series of 10 **"Little Bits of Groomsport History"**. The four-page booklets cover:



- Groomsport House
- Groomsport Parish Church
- Groomsport Presbyterian Church
- The Watch House and Coast Guard
- Groomsport's Lifeboats
- The voyage of *Eagle Wing*
- Cockle Row Cottage
- The Duke of Schomberg
- Groomsport's Schools
- Groomsport's Harbour

The publication of these leaflets was made possible by a Heritage Project Grant from the Council.

4 Engagement with Ards and North Down Council

We are grateful to have benefitted from Council grants towards our running costs, for some of our community activities and for the "Little Bits of Groomsport History" leaflets.

We work closely with staff in the Visitors Information Centre at **Cockle Row Cottages**. Council tourism staff agreed to sell tickets for the *Eagle Wing* events that were ticketed. Our guided tours on Saturdays use the cottages as a starting point and they complement the activities which the Council arranges for Sundays at Cockle Row. We hope the future of the cottages as an information centre and small heritage centre is assured.

We have also benefitted form a **Neighbourhood Tourism Grant** that enabled us to purchase of branded uniforms for the use trustees and volunteers at community events and taking walking tours, a new corporate roll-up sign and a public address system for use at community events.

We responded to the Council's consultation on its **Local Development Plan 2032** and expressed our support for the continuation of the rural landscape wedge between Groomsport and Bangor as it helps the village to keep its identity.

We engaged with the consultant's who had been commissioned by the Council to examine **commercial vacancies and dereliction** in the Borough's towns and villages.

We met with council staff who have been preparing an updated **Village Plan for Groomsport** and we will carefully consider the plan when it is published.

5 Arctic Terns on Cockle Island

At Discover Groomsport's Annual General Meeting on 14th November 2024, ornithologist Anthony McGeehan made us aware of the challenges faced by the Arctic Terns that travel many thousands of miles every year to breed on Cockle Island. The trustees subsequently met with Anthony and raised the matter with public representatives.



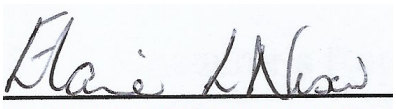
Melena Quinn and Will Hawkins, National Trust, Andrew Muir, DEARA minister, Harry Patterson, Cockle Island Boat Club, Anthony McGeehan, Peter Weir MLA and Jim McMullan, Discover Groomsport

A meeting was held on the quay, overlooking Cockle Island, on 20th March 2026. It was attended by Andrew Muir MLA, the DEARA minister and his officials, Peter Martin MLA, the National Trust, Cockle Island Boat Club, Anthony McGeehan and Discover Groomsport. At the meeting the National Trust announced actions that could assist the Arctic Terns to have a more successful breeding season in 2026 – a nesting raft and a monitoring camera.

Summary of Finances

Details of Discover Groomsport's finances are available in our audited accounts for 2025-2026 – our third full year of operation. In summary:

- Our income was £7,517. The main sources of income were grants from Ards and North Down Council for a number of our projects, the Ulster Scots Agency for our Eagle Wing Celebration and donations from individuals and organisations, mostly in respect of our guided history tours and illustrated talks.
- Our expenditure was £7,077 and our surplus for the year was £440.



Elaine Nixon
Chair of the Trustees of Discover Groomsport
27 October 2026

Discover Groomsport	NIC109362	

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	01/04/2025	To	31/03/2026	

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Ticket Sales	306	-	-	306	1,193
ANDBC Grants	-	5,001	-	5,001	3,385
Ulster Scots Grant	-	1,351	-	1,351	130
Co-op C/F from 2024/25	-	60	-	60	1,524
Donations - Talks/Tours	557	-	-	557	777
Donations - General/Raffle	242	-	-	242	766
C/F 2024/25		-	-	-	856
		-	-	-	
				-	
A1 Sub total *(Gross income for the Annual Return)*	1,104	6,412	-	7,517	8,631
A2 Asset and investment sales *(see tables 1 and 2 in section 7 of the guidance).*					
Proceeds from sale of fixed asset		-	-	-	-
Loan repayments received		-	-	-	-
A2 Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	1,104	6,412	-	7,517	8,631
A3 Payments					
Halloween & Christmas Activities	488		-	488	463
Community Festival	39	1,000	-	1,039	1,149
Christmas Festival	-	571	-	571	-
Community Projects	-		-	-	908
IT Equipment		-	-	-	70
Running Costs	110	1,057	-	1,167	1,163
Heritage Project	-	515	-	515	549
Tourism Programme		1,759	-	1,759	-
Eagle Wing Celebrations	-	1,538	-	1,538	792
A3 Sub total	638	6,439	-	7,077	5,094
A4 Asset and investment purchases *(see tables 1 and 2 in section 7 of the guidance)*					
Purchase of investments	-	-	-	-	-
Loans made	-	-	-	-	
A4 Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	638	6,439	-	7,077	5,094
Net of receipts/(payments)	467	- 27	-	440	3,537
A5 Transfers between funds				-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,537			3,537	
Cash funds this year end	4,004	- 27	-	3,977	3,537

Discover Groomsport - NIC109362 Period end date: 31/03/2026

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £	Total funds to nearest £	Last year to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current account	4,004	- 27		3,977	3,537
	Deposit account				-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
	Total cash funds (agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	4,004 OK	- 27 OK	- OK	3,977 OK	3,537 OK

B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £	Total funds to nearest £	Last year to nearest £
			-	-	-	
			-	-	-	
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-	-
				Total	-	-

B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	Last year
		-	-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
		Total	-	-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)	Last year
					-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
			-	-	-
		Total	-	-	-

B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	When due (optional)	Amount due (optional)	Last year
				-	-
				-	-
				-	-
				-	-
			Total	-	-

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature: dmartin

Print Name: DAVID MARTIN

Date of approval: 27/10/26

Independently examined by

County Down Rural Community Network

Signed: Frances McCavinde

Date: 27/10/26

Summary of Annual Accounts
2025-2026

Income	2025-2026 £	2024-2025 £
Grants from Ards and North Down Council	5,001	3,515
Grant from Ulster Scots Agency (Eagle Wing)	1,351	0
Grant from Coop Community Fund	0	1,524
Ticket sales / Donations – Eagle Wing Celebration	305	1,193
Donations – Walking Tours / Talks	557	777
Donations – General / Raffle	301	766
Total Income	**7,517**	**7,775**
Expenditure		
Community Festival (VE Day / Big Picnic)	1,039	1,149
Eagle Wing Celebration	1,537	792
Christmas Events	928	372
Halloween Event	131	91
Heritage Project	515	549
Tourism grant (Uniforms, PA system and sign)	1,758	0
Community Projects (Coop grant)	0	908
IT equipment	0	70
General Running Costs	1,167	1,163
Total Expenditure	**7,077**	**5,093**
Surplus for year	**440**	**2,682**
Reserves (accumulated surpluses)	**3,977**	**3,537**

Extracted from accounts that were prepared by David Martin, Treasurer, and audited by Frances McCormick, Independent Examiner, County Down Rural Community Network.

County Down
Rural Community
Network
Ballywalter Village Hall
49-51 Main Street
Ballywalter
BT22 2PQ
Tel: 028 9182 8884

DISCOVER GROOMSPORT

Unqualified report for a charity that is not a company and has an income of £250,000 or less.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Charity Trustees of Discover Groomsport.

I report on the accounts of Discover Groomsport from its formation, covering the period 1st April 2025-31st March 2026 which are set out attached.

Respective responsibilities of Charity Trustees and Examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65 (9) (b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act

2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Frances McCormick
Rural Development Officer
CDRCN

Independently examined by

County Down Rural Community Network

Signed: Frances McCormick

Date: 27/10/26