



First Report of the Trustees

For the period 28th October 2022 to 31st March 2023

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 28th 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 following Trustees were elected at the public meeting:

Elaine Nixon (Chair)

Ruth Fee (Vice Chair)

Peter Gibson (Secretary)
David Martin (Treasurer)

Etta Halliday – resigned 22nd March 2023
David Irwin
Maureen Irwin
Roy McWhinney
Audrey Thomas

The officers were elected by the Trustees at their first meeting which was held following the public meeting.

At a Trustees' meeting on 17th November 2022, two further Trustees were co-opted:

Liz Barron
Geoff McKeown

On 31st March 2023 there were 129 members of Discover Groomsport.

During the period covered by this report, the Trustees achieved the following:

1. Registering as a charity
2. Developing a strategic plan for activities in 2023-2024, in consultation with members
3. Securing funding for the activities to be undertaken in 2023-2024
4. Facilitating the Council's consultation on the review of the Groomsport Integrated Village Plan
5. Publishing a suite of papers on aspects of Groomsport's history
6. Opening a bank account

1 Registering as a Charity

Our application to be registered as a charity was submitted on 9th December 2022 and we were pleased that our registration was confirmed on 24th January 2023.

We identified the Public Benefits that we would be seeking to achieve are:

- a Ensuring an increased appreciation of the history and heritage of Groomsport.*
- b Increasing Groomsport's identification with the historic voyage of Eagle Wing in 1636.*
- c Ensuring that the historic Cockle Row Cottages are revived as a resource for village residents and visitors.*
- d Enhancing the environment of the village of Groomsport.*
- e Promoting volunteering.*
- t Advancing citizenship and community development.*
- g Promoting social inclusion*

In their work, the Trustees have had regard to the statutory guidance on Public Benefit.

2 Developing a strategic plan for activities in 2023-2024, in consultation with members

The Trustees held a planning session in January 2023 which resulted in the production of a draft plan for 2023-2024. The draft plan was discussed and agreed at a meeting of members on 22nd February.

The plan has two main underpinning strategic themes:

1. We will take a community focused approach to celebrating, protecting and advancing Groomsport.
2. We will consider sustainability (environmental, economic, and social) in all that we do.

There are three main objectives that Discover Groomsport will aim to achieve during the period 2023-2024 in order to establish and embed the charity within the community:

1. Conduct community consultations and a participatory planning session with key stakeholders, along with regular updates through a range of

media, to ensure we are listening to our members and community and responding to their needs in line with our stated purposes.

2. Build the capacity of our members, volunteers and trustees to best support our work and build momentum around the purposes of Discover Groomsport.
3. Plan, review and refine all events and programmes to ensure they are effective, efficient, achievable within resources, and create long-lasting impact on the lives of the Groomsport community.

The main activities of the plan are:

1. Ensure that the views of Groomsport residents are considered in the Review of the Groomsport Integrated Village
2. Coronation Big Picnic Lunch at Cockle Row – Saturday 6th May
3. The Big Help Out for the King’s Coronation 8th May 2023 - Groomsport Clean Up and contribution to In Bloom
4. Create a joint project with Ulster University to develop a digital repository for a heritage project (including oral history)
5. Walking Tours in the summer of 2023
6. Course on Ulster-Scots history and culture (OCN accredited)
7. Hallowe’en at Cockle Row
8. Christmas Celebration and Light Switch On

3 Securing funding for the activities to be undertaken in 2023-2024

In the early months of 2023 we applied for a number of Ards and North Down Council grants that will help us to carry out our plans for 2023-2024. These were:

- Community Development Runnings Costs grant
- King’s Coronation celebrations grant
- Heritage grant – for walking tours leaflets.

We anticipate seeking further grants from the Council, the Ulster-Scots Agency, and others to support other planned activities.

4 Facilitating the Council's consultation on the review of the Groomsport Integrated Village Plan

We were asked by the Council to assist with their review of the actions contained in the Groomsport Integrated Village Plan 2018-2023.

We:

- Made a detailed submission to the Council regarding outstanding actions and any new actions that should be considered.
- Discussed the Village Plan at the meeting of our members held on 22nd February.
- Encouraged members and others to attend the "drop-in" consultation session which the Council held on 2nd March.

The Council also invited Discover Groomsport trustees to meet with the consultant who is drawing up environmental improvements for the area around the harbour. Most of the recommendations made by the trustees were taken on board in the consultant's revised plans. The Council will undertake this work as and when finances become available.

5 Publishing a suite of papers on aspects of Groomsport's history

As an initial step in designing a history tour of the village, we prepared a suite of background papers about those aspects of village history that will be covered by the tour. These papers, which were published on our website (www.discovergroomsport.com) in January, are:

- 1 The Maxwell / Waring Maxwell / Perceval-Maxwell family – a simplified family tree.
- 2 Cockle Island, the harbour and fishing
- 3 The Coast Guard and the Watch House
- 4 Cockle Row Cottages – survivors of the redevelopment of Groomsport
- 5 The Voyage of the *Eagle Wing*
- 6 Lifeboats in Groomsport
- 7 Groomsport House
- 8 The Right-of-Way Dispute
- 9 Groomsport Parish Church

- 10 The Lodge
- 11 The Maxwell Hall
- 12 The Hill, including Providence Place
- 13 Groomsport Presbyterian Church
- 14 The National Schools and Walter Nelson Hall
- 15 Groomsport War Memorial
- 16 The Schomberg Monument

We also published on the website “The History of Groomsport Primary School 1845-2007” which was written by Linda Mehaffey when the Primary School closed in 2007.

6 Opening a bank account

Surprisingly, opening a bank account proved to one of the biggest challenges the Trustees faced in the first few months of the operation of Discover Groomsport. Many financial institutions do not cater for voluntary organisations. Some which previously did so are not opening new accounts. This is recognised as a considerable constraint on the voluntary and charity sectors. Without a bank account, an organisation is unable to receive financial support from funders.

Eventually we established that, because at least one of our Trustees was an existing customer, we could apply to Danske Bank to open an account. This process started in early December 2020 and it was not until 24th February that an account was opened.

The late opening of our bank account meant that in the financial year which ended on 31st March 2023 our income was £0.00. Our only expenditure was the bank’s fee for one month - £2.50.



Elaine Nixon
Chair of the Trustees of Discover Groomsport

13th April 2023