



St. Columb's Park House
THE HEART IN THE PARK

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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MEET THE TEAM - HOUSE TEAM



Sharon Doherty

Managing Director



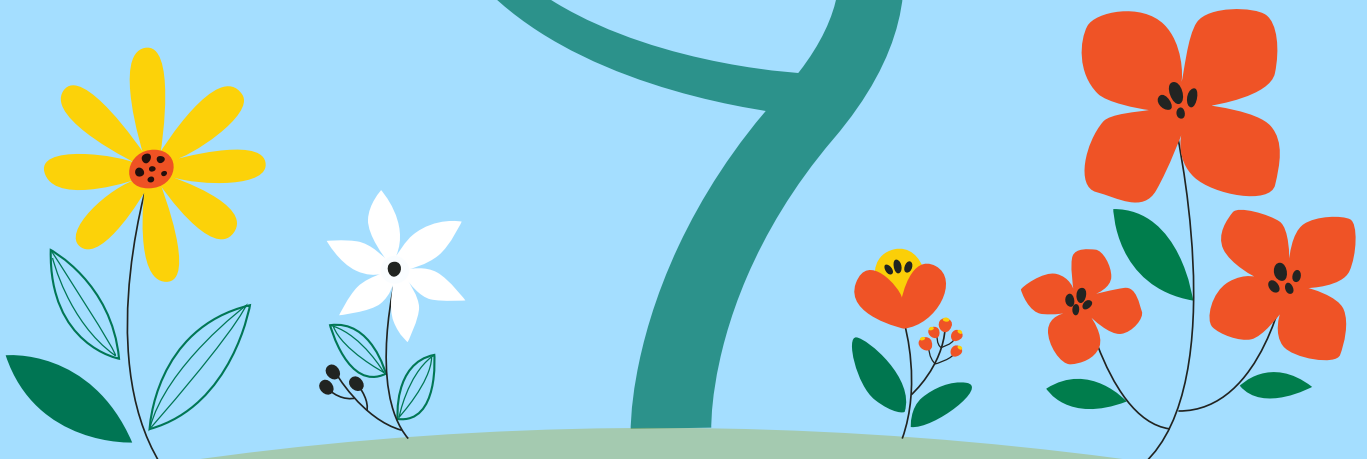
Pat McFadden

Finance Manager



Michelle Logue

Finance Officer



MEET THE TEAM - PROJECT TEAM



Cara McLoughlin

Dare 2 Dream



Becca Bor

Dare 2 Dream



Laura Adair

Dare 2 Dream



Michelle Simpson

IgnYte



Liam Nelis

IgnYte



Donna McFeely

Youth Co-Ordinator



Grainne O'Neill

Commoning Possibilities



Nuala Crilly

Compassionate
Campaigning



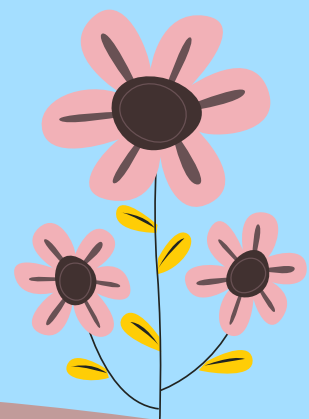
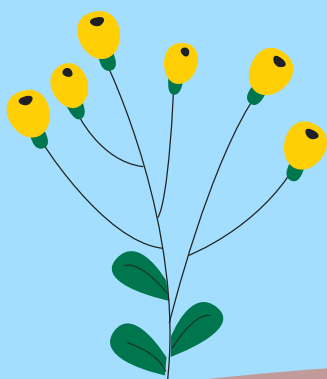
Ruth McCartney

Compassionate
Campaigning



Gretta Donaghy

Currynierin Community
Worker



CHAIRPERSONS ADDRESS

As chairperson of **St. Columb's Park House** it is an honor and a privilege to contribute to this annual report. The last couple of years have been challenging to say the least, with the onset of the Covid Pandemic, the economic crisis and the various uncertainties and challenges that our society is facing at this time. Yet I am very proud of the work and the continued support that we have been able to provide within our communities and for our many programme participants.

Our world is calling for people to stand together in powerful and creative ways to achieve a peaceful and healthy future. This calls for both innovation and compassion to achieve this. We need to address the whole concept of "Peace Building" through the lens of addressing our mental and physical health as well as confronting the issue of climate justice. Relating to the "natural environment" is part and parcel of the reconciliation work that is now more than ever badly needed in our somewhat fractured society. As a Peace Centre, we are interested in a 'One World' perspective on peace that appreciates the interdependence and connectedness of people and nature. As global issues impact more, we feel the need to collaborate across borders and boundaries, connecting to bigger collective movements of peace and justice.

We need to look at new ways to build a peaceful and shared society where involvement and participation enables everyone to have a say and a

role in the creation of a better tomorrow for all of us.

I'd like to pay tribute to the wonderful work of our staff, some of whom, sadly have finished their projects due to the constraints of funding.

- ♥ **Dare 2 Dream**
- ♥ **Compassionate Campaigning**
- ♥ **Commoning Possibilities**

I would also like to acknowledge the valuable input of our service users, many of whom have reconnected with ourselves since the pandemic, including groups such as *Praxis* and *Green Therapy*. Two of our projects, *Commoning Possibilities* and *Dare to Dream*, which were funded through the Civic Innovation Programme, involved a Participatory Budgeting approach which enabled local people to have their say and to make their ideas happen. The addition of our new outdoor classroom area in the walled garden provides us with more opportunities to be outdoors whatever the weather.

Let's look towards the years ahead as the beginning of a new and exciting phase, not just for ourselves but for the planet as a whole.

Chairman
Jim O'Neill





MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

'Small Acts of good work, when multiplied by many people can transform a community'

HOWARD ZINN

2022 has seen us slowly begin the process of recovery, of reconnection with each other as restrictions were lifted and we began to feel almost normal again.

At St. Columb's Park House we were so excited to see everyone slowly return to walking in the Park, to meeting their friends for coffee, we loved the noise of conversation and of laughter and just that feeling of life returning to the grounds of the House and Park.

In 2022 we've noticed a real sense of value for our natural environment, people enjoying just being able to get outdoors and a new found enthusiasm for getting involved in activities that encourage us to meet our neighbour, to be together as a way of balancing out the impact that the isolation of the pandemic brought about.

The pandemic made us think differently about our approach to peacebuilding and the need to place this in everyday life. Our Strategy of, People Care, Earth Care and Fair Share appreciates the challenges placed on communities today working alongside them to address these and to support communities as they work through them. As a

community still trying to emerge from a troubled past we must recognise that Peace is rooted in our everyday lives. It is rooted in how we care for ourselves and others, in how we share this country and planet that we live on and how we all have the basic right and need to our Fair Share. A balance of all three creates an platform for continued peacebuilding that is real and relevant today.

Our real challenge continues to be harnessing that commitment to each other, to support each other and to see the possibilities that working and living together can bring about.

Managing Director
Sharon Doherty



2022 has been a year to remember! It's been one of restrictions, mask wearing, being able to meet not being able to meet and beginning to readjust to a new way of life.

We have, despite some restrictions been able to achieve quite a bit in 2022. We continued our consultations and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders including local residents, park users, young people, community groups and local resident associations, funders and other peacebuilders to enable us to offer good relations and community building activities post pandemic that are relevant and meet the needs of our local communities.

2022 saw the development of our outdoor classroom facility, the latest addition to the Walled Garden. This space will be a key as we continue to develop our outdoor learning programmes. It provides an additional space for groups and individuals to continue to enjoy the outdoors no matter the weather'

We have also welcomed another new friend to the grounds – let us introduce Hazel Nut, our latest nature art installation.



THE HOUSE

We have been really encouraged by the return of our many guests and conference users and to experience their delight at being able to be back in St Columb's Park House and the Park. Our customers are telling us of their need to be back out and about, being able to meet their friends, to attend events and mostly glad to be outside and in nature.

We were delighted to see some of our regular groups return to stay with us in the later half of 2022 and many are booking forward already for 2023.

Our History group continue to make good progress on uncovering and documenting the history through the ages of the House, compiling a detailed family tree and the various other roles that the House had had in its lifetime eg nursing home

Despite the uncertainty and the challenges experienced during the year as we began to learn to live with COVID, St Columb's Park House had a great year. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that we work with for your continued support and patience this year and we are so looking forward to a busy year in 2023.

TRANSITION WITH NATURE

Transition with Nature gave us the opportunity to work directly with **524** children and young people throughout 2020-2022; to provide spaces for them to heal, connect and build their physical and mental health during the many stages of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Being exclusively outdoors, meant they learned about the natural world, the skills needed to grow food, to cultivate crops and to care for living things. They learned the importance of community, teamwork and learned that their voice matters and that they can make a **Our Wee Muckers Club**, **Curiosity Club** and **Guardians of the Park** groups embarked on a 10 or 20-week programme designed for their needs that incorporated resilience building, problem solving and compassion-based practices using outdoor play and learning approaches.

Using nature as our teacher, we helped children to process change, set goals and take action so that they felt connected and felt a sense of belonging to their community and to the natural world. They learned how to use tools, how to safely light and be around a campfire, how to listen to others and how to listen to nature.

They organised events and showcased their learning to others. They cleaned the park, they planted for pollinators and learned about invasive species while trying to rid the park of them. Importantly, they



learned social skills and interpersonal skills in a time when their social interactions and experiences were limited. They developed self-awareness through taking risks and challenging themselves and the child-led nature of the programme meant they explored and expressed themselves, building emotional intelligence as well as improving their physical and mental health.

40 young volunteers (aged 13 – 21) engaged in up to 40 hours of voluntary experience throughout Transition with Nature, they worked with children and young people and gained hands-on experience of nature play and outdoor learning. They have become advocates for the park and have strengthened their voice for Nature, taking part in events like *NW ECO FEST*, *The Gathering* and *Fridays for Future*, they are actively involved in the movements that exist to protect our planet.





PROJECTS

COMMONING POSSIBILITIES

WHAT IS COMMONING?

Commoning is a practice of collaborating and sharing to meet everyday needs and achieve well-being of individuals, communities and lived-in environments.

AIM

To explore and develop the concept of 'the commons' using participatory budgeting in two different localities centred in St Columb's Park and Garvagh Forest with local citizens..

VISION

Citizens are enabled to participate, cooperate and sustainably care for their natural resources including forests and parks.



WHAT DID WE DO?

- ♥ Developed a partnership between Garvagh Peoples Forest & St Columb's Park House
- ♥ Set up a Citizens panel to help promote and guide the project
- ♥ Supported groups, families and individuals to generate and develop ideas that could take place in the forest and park, that would benefit the wider community and connect us to our natural environment
- ♥ Promoted these ideas via an online voting platform and paper ballot, encouraged the idea generators to promote their idea to the wider community and to hopefully secure votes
- ♥ Set up Community Voting week enabling both online votes and paper ballots to be counted
- ♥ Supported bid winners to implement their ideas
- ♥ Celebration Event – seeing is believing tour around all the ideas

PROJECTS

BID WINNERS

- ♥ **Planting for Pollination** – a home growing idea to bring colour and plants to waste areas in Strabane
- ♥ **Head Shed for Gardeners** – a natural shelter at the allotments in St. Columb's Park for people to 'grow' themselves
- ♥ **Living Sculptures** – bringing cut tree stumps to life using plants and art
- ♥ **Vintage Tea Party** – engaging local citizens in an afternoon tea and history event
- ♥ **The Secret World of Bees** – to create a viewing area for people to get up close to and view the private world of bees
- ♥ **Climate Ambassadors** supporting a group of volunteers learn more about caring for the planet
- ♥ **Meeting Outdoors** whatever the weather outdoor- equipment and cover to allow groups to meet in all weathers
- ♥ **Spark Youth** – equipment for young people to meet, to cook, to understand safe fire building for outdoor cooking
- ♥ **Rewilding Radius** – rewilding a common garden area and building a pond at a support living accommodation
- ♥ **Tree Times as Curious** – researching the trees and origins, folklore surrounding them and developing information signage with this information on it
- ♥ **Toy Library** – Establishing a Toy Library in the City to share new toys with children each month, contributing to zero waste and access
- ♥ **Community Tree Nursery** – setting up a tree nursery to improve local biodiversity, capture carbon and provide food for pollinators.
- ♥ **Playful Spaces** – outdoor play equipment for young children to engage in outdoor 'dirty' play
- ♥ **Nollaig Na Mban** – a womans based storytelling event to connect with our heritage, the land and other women



COMPASSIONATE CAMPAIGNING

A YEAR OF GATHERING

Campaigning to challenge or change societal structures or systemic failings needs time to embed, gain traction and move forward. Compassionate Campaigning has laid a very strong foundation for driving change and some great successes have been achieved. The focus of the Compassionate Campaigning Project has shifted largely towards environmental campaigning and activism at a genuine grassroots level. This year we're delighted to have supported campaigns, made impacts within government and organised successful Gathering events, even taking The Gathering on tour!

The number of groups who we have engaged with and supported throughout the lifetime of Compassionate Campaigning has been growing. We now have over 70 groups involved. These groups span a wide range of issues and are both local, national and international in scope. Local people have come forward to seek support primarily in the field of environmental protections, to save trees and hedgerows.

'The Gathering' is the collective name given to those groups and individuals who are working tirelessly to protect our local environment. Compassionate Campaigning continues to support the The Gathering to continue to challenge, to ask questions of those in positions of power, to gather information to



present to local councils, local government departments and ministers.

The Gathering also supported the submission of a motion on Rights of Nature to Derry City and Strabane District Council. This has been followed by similar motions across the island of Ireland and led to development of an All Ireland Rights of Nature movement with regional and global links

The Gathering secured speaking rights at the Public Accounts Committee on the 10th of March 2022. This was really significant in getting the voices of local people heard. The report published on 24th of March this year showed clear evidence of the impact of The Gathering submissions.

PROJECTS

GATHERING IN PERSON AND TRAVEL TO ROSTREVOR

THE GATHERING ON THE MOVE

At the beginning of the year we held a beautiful Gathering on The Politics of Seeds with some wonderful guest speakers. Connor 'O Kane of Social Farms and Gardens, Joanne Butler of OurGanic Farms and Gardens, Sean Barr of Letterkenny Community Gardens and Eamonn Mc Cann. This was such an educational session with each speaker bringing their expertise and insight beautifully. Everyone was gifted seeds, Cherokee Trail of Tears, and had a chance to plant organic, saved seeds in recycled containers and organic compost.

In the summer we travelled to An Cuan in Rostrevor to try out our first travelling Gathering in collaboration with RARE, EJNI and Friends of the Earth and it was a huge success. With activists from all over the island, we gathered and heard stories of protected land, fairy mounds, forests and holy wells as well as updates from some of our sub-groups on the progress made since the last Gathering. A huge sense of community and unity was felt by all in attendance and the youth activities, kindly and creatively facilitated by Donna and Grainne, were a beautiful addition; meaning there was space for anyone needing time in nature and a dedicated space for young voices.



DARE TO DREAM

Dare to Dream supported the residents of Currynierin and Tullyally to achieve their vision of a vibrant, safe community where local people are valued and have opportunities to thrive. The project was a collaboration between St. Columb's Park House, the Currynierin Community Association and the Tullyally Community Partnership, supported by Community Foundation NI, and funded by the Paul Hamlyn and Esme Fairbairn Foundations.

The main goal was to make the voices of the residents of Tullyally and Currynierin heard by those in power. It operated under two core principles:

- ♥ All decisions would be resident led
- ♥ Priorities would be identified and agreed by participatory engagement.

Dare to Dream used Participatory Budgeting to ensure that those most affected by a decision are the ones involved in making it, and for the communities to experience real investment in the area. Participatory Budgeting means that the decision about how to spend an amount of

money is made by a community itself.

Dare to Dream is an excellent example of the that happens by committed volunteers who organized themselves across the interface to support this project as a means to bring in resources to the whole area. They wanted to use this project to allow everyone in the area to play an active role in creating a shared strategic vision for their area. Dare to Dream was a roadmap drawn by residents to support them to move towards a stronger and brighter community future. The direction of that journey, its speed and its ultimate destination were always in the hands of residents themselves.

The massive investment in the areas through the Big Spend would not have been possible without the incredible investment of time, energy, patience, creativity, and love of these volunteers. Thank you to Agnes Killen, Annie Mitchell, Caroline Thompson, Chelsea Lamrock, Elisha Thompson, Gretta Donaghy, Marie Melaugh, Monica Quinn, Natasha Durham, Owen Brolly, Sara Jayne Peoples and Susanne Watson.



"If it feels like we have decided ---- it's PB. If it feels like someone else has decided, it isn't."

(Brazilian Resident)

Dare to Dream has been a resounding success. There were two rounds of “*The Big Spend*” in each community, with 73 ideas (*bids*) submitted by residents themselves, to be put to a vote by people connected to **Currynierin** and **Tullyally**. Despite the challenges of COVID, a total of 1750 votes were cast, and 34 ideas were funded. This result and the overall success of this project are the result of the creativity, generosity, hard work and community spirit of the residents themselves.

Winning bids included ideas as diverse as:

- ♥ Fun Days
- ♥ Christmas events
- ♥ TV and media equipment for the youth clubs
- ♥ Art supplies for the arts and crafts group
- ♥ Days away for the youth club, the Tullyally Women’s Group, and the crochet club
- ♥ New picnic tables and an awning for the Currynierin centre
- ♥ A mural for Ashlea P.S.
- ♥ New allotments at both Ashlea and Glendermott P.S.
- ♥ Funding for new uniforms for the Glendermott Flute band
- ♥ Equipment for the GAA club
- ♥ As well as recognition for volunteers.



Pictured above: Rhonda Thompson, organiser of the Jubilee Street Party; Freya England who put in a bid to support winter training at Ardmore GAA club; The Glendermott Valley Flute band; Una Kelly and Shakira Kular, organisers of the Currynierin Family Fun Day.

One of the truly unique aspects about the PB processes in Tullyally and Currynierin was the commitment to empower and support local residents to design and lead the PB process. This required space for challenging community conversations, forging new relationships, courage and trust in each other and in the power of PB from all parties. Dedicated time has also been allocated to reflect with the communities on the key learning, positive impacts of the process and crucially, to celebrate what has been achieved.”

Dr Louise O’Kane, PB Works, Community Places.



Pictured above: Pupils from Ashlea P.S. visiting the garden centre. Glendermott pupils planning their garden and making decisions on what to grow,

“We have been looking for an opportunity for the students to engage in more gardening activities, and the Big Spend allowed them to take ownership that opportunity. The children can have a lot going on in their lives and when they get overwhelmed at school, we want them to have an outdoor sanctuary. We wouldn't have gotten started on all this without the Big Spend.”

Connor Duddy, Principal of Glendermott P.S



Pictured above: Members of the Tullayally Women's group at their, 'Bake Off; Finale. (Left) The Currynierin Crochet group who had such a good time on their day trip that they forgot to take a picture!

PROJECTS

COMING TO A PARK NEAR YOU ...



THE BLOOM PROJECT

St. Columb's Park Reconciliation Trust are delighted to announce their latest project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The BLOOM project will

Build Local Outdoor Opportunities to Meet

The project will see the grounds of the House animated for the local community, bringing people together in nature to continue to build positive community relationships, connect generations, restore health & well-being and just get outdoors and enjoy nature together.

The programme will include a range of activities as well as volunteering opportunities, family events, outdoor learning for the kids, natures calendar of monthly events and a monthly market place. So there is something for everyone



**Keep an eye on our
Facebook page for
all the exciting
details**

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The young people participating on IgnYte have been learning basic carpentry skills, building window boxes, raised beds, Wooden Christmas trees, wishing wells etc and participants would now like to develop a social enterprise programme which will allow them to develop skills in administration, ordering and money handling while running a small business.

The young people have been participating in a Horticulture programme within the grounds of SCPH, enabling them to benefit from being outdoors, learning new skills and connecting with the wider community. They took part in a cooking programme, that helped them to learn to cook healthier meals on a budget. This included cooking with their vegetables and fruits from the garden.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Participants have enjoyed placements across a range of sectors and have been able to use their World Host qualifications in the Retail, Food and Events industries. They were also able to volunteer for DCSDC at the Clipper event in the city as a result of gaining their Spectator Safety qualification. They have also volunteered at an older peoples residential living community, helping them to dig out and plant out a pond area for residents to enjoy.

We are incredibly grateful for the partnership and ongoing support we receive from International Fund for Ireland as this allows us to provide tailor made programmes to suit the young people and allow them to progress at their own pace while ensuring that they achieve their goals and reach their full potential.



GARDEN GUARDIANS

The Garden Guardians are a group of enthusiastic local volunteers who have been involved in the design, maintenance and nurture of the Walled Garden and grounds surrounding the House since 2019.

They have been involved in the co-design process of developing the garden and wider grounds and have supported SCPH to consider how best to use the various spaces around the House to meet the needs of our local community.

The Guardians are supported by the work of the Probation Board in the general maintenance of the grounds and without their combined efforts the grounds and gardens would not be where there are today. The Board of St. Columb's Park House want to extend our gratitude and sincere thanks to these brilliant volunteers who have invested so much into the gardens in the last number of years.

Hours Volunteered	4000 hours in 2022
Rose Bushes Planted	60
Fruit Trees Planted	30
Bulbs Sown	250
Seeds Harvested	2500
Green Houses Built	3
Plants swapped and shared	85
Visitors to the Garden	2500
Fatballs Made	300
Window Boxes made and shared	60



PROJECTS

CURRYNIERIN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

2022 saw a new and exciting opportunity for St. Columb's Park House to continue to support the great work being done by the Community Association in Currynierin. We were able to secure funding for a 3-year Community Development Worker through the Start Here programme funded by the Rank Foundation.

The Community Development Worker role will include

- ♥ Advocating for and representing the Community locally and regionally
- ♥ Building relationships with key stakeholders
- ♥ Building relationships with their neighbours in the greater Waterside area
- ♥ Developing a programme of activity within the centre for all residents

Already we have seen some major changes in the physical infrastructure of the centre with the renovation of the disused garage into a purpose-built Youth Wing. Funded in part by Awards for All the centre now has a structured youth provision 2 nights per week facilitated by the YMCA and a drop in facility for older young people.

Programming delivered in 2022

- ♥ Summer Scheme
- ♥ Family Fun Day
- ♥ Santa's Grotto
- ♥ Crochet Club
- ♥ The Luncheon Club
- ♥ Sure Start
- ♥ Messy Play

The Community Development Worker has been involved in the co-design process for the new PEACE Plus programme advocating for the Playpark at Currynierin as a key project for the area. They have been working closely with the Waterside Neighbourhood Partnership, Derry City & Strabane District Council, and the Community Foundation for NI to reconnect and establish links and partnerships, raising awareness of need within the area.





St. Columb's Park House
THE HEART IN THE PARK

PARTNERS & FUNDERS



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