



COMHALTAS in Britain

Annual Report
2023/24







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CATHAOIRLEACH (CHAIR) WELCOME

Emigrants, and their descendants, and friends are in many ways the lifeblood of our organisation, moulded by loyalty, experience and volunteerism. We celebrate the many committees of Comhaltas in Britain, and thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to your branch, region and province of Comhaltas.

Investors in People

Well we knew that we have all been devoting a great deal of time and energy to Comhaltas in Britain, but we are delighted and surprised to be the recipient of the Silver Investors in People award this year. We have the most amazing family of volunteers, up and down the country, promoting our music, song and dance traditions. As we are in the final phase of our 3 year strategic plan for the Comhaltas in Britain charity, we will be using the information gained by Investors in People, as well as consulting with members and committees at convention, to inform our 3 year plan going forward. The guarantee from the Irish Government, that we have a funding agreement for the 3 years, has facilitated this further.

Growing numbers and branches.

This year we have continued with the Birmingham branch and the new branch in Ayr, Scotland. We are delighted to welcome our friends from the South west of Scotland, and look forward to their input and friendship.



Theresa C. Gallagher

Cathaoirleach (Chair)

The year of staff changes:

We proudly bid farewell to Siubhan, Patrick and Jude, as they continued their career development following on from the love, support and opportunities of Comhaltas in Britain. We welcome Elske Simpson, who has been with us since July, and Erin Brown who joined us in November. I would like to thank and congratulate Paddy on his well-deserved promotion to Operational Manager. We look forward to continued planning, development and enthusiasm from our warm and friendly team of Officers.

GOAL 1: CELEBRATE IRISH MUSIC THROUGH ALL OUR ACTIVITY

GOAL 2: INCREASE ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND EXPAND OUR WORK
TO INCLUDE MORE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

GOAL 3: TRAIN AND RECOGNISE OUR VOLUNTEERS

GOAL 4: TRAIN AND SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS

GOAL 5: PROMOTE AND DEVELOP THE USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE

GOAL 6: IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS, PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

Main aims going forward:

Develop the skills and confidence of the volunteers, musicians, singers and dancers.

- Provide opportunities to increase the health of musicians, volunteers and communities,
- Support and increase the membership and branches
- Increase resources for the Province to facilitate the delivery of core and infrastructure support to regions and branches.

I look forward to a successful year of music, song and dance, and hope to meet you on occasion at a concert, session or Fleadhanna.





COMHALTAS
in Britain

OUR MISSION

Bringing a community of all ages together to learn, share and experience the music and culture of Ireland.

Our vision is a world where Irish music and culture is open to all, and celebrated as a valued part of Britain's cultural heritage.

OUR VISION



3 YEAR PLAN



GOAL 1:
CELEBRATE IRISH MUSIC
THROUGH ALL OUR ACTIVITY



GOAL 2:
INCREASE ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE AND EXPAND OUR WORK TO
INCLUDE MORE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES



GOAL 3:
TRAIN AND RECOGNISE
OUR VOLUNTEERS



GOAL 4:
TRAIN OUR TEACHERS



GOAL 5:
PROMOTE AND DEVELOP THE
USE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE



GOAL 6:
IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS,
PARTNERSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

UACHTARÁN (PRESIDENT) OF COMHALTAS CEOLTOIRI ÉIREANN

Ba mhaith liom tréaslú le Comhairle na Breataine, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann as Comhthionól Bhliantúil na Breataine a chur ar siúl i Luton i mbliana.

Táim cinnte go mbeidh comhdháil iontach taithneamhach agaibh agus guím gach rath ar bhur saothair.

For a small island on the periphery of Europe, Ireland has had a remarkably global impact regarding its people and its culture and all of you in Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann in Britain have played a seismic part in that story.

Ireland's rich culture in all its distinctiveness and variety is the well spring as our identity as a people. It captures our past, shapes our present and imagines our future. Over the years you have been to the forefront in promoting Ireland's rich cultural traditions - music, singing, dancing, storytelling and the Irish language. It is often the first encounter that people from other parts of the world have with Ireland, and is a powerful point of connection with the diaspora.

Traditional culture, especially as embedded in music, singing, dancing and the Irish language is fundamental to Irish identity and our place in the world.

Tá an-tiomantas léirithe ag Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann don Ghaeilge sa Bhreatain trí chláracha Ghaeilge ag leibhéil éagsúla sa Bhreatain go háirithe ag leibhéil na craoibhe.



Éamonn Ó hArgáin

Uachtarán (President)

The Comhaltas Prospectus 'Connecting Communities Through our Culture' is a blueprint for the next 7 years providing a roadmap that will enhance Comhaltas presence across the island of Ireland and in Britain as well. The Prospectus reflects on the achievements of the past 70 years in restoring and reviving Irish cultural traditions while at the same time building on the global impact it has a national and international movement. As part of the prospectus, it is hoped to develop the Fleadhanna Cheoil into week-long community festivals and to embrace other organisations and activities such as, heritage, environment, climate action, crafts, local history, local customs, as well as traditional sports and pastimes, to be part of the Fleadh.

Many people over the years have been associated with the success of Comhaltas in Britain and on an occasion such as this we should never forget those who made it all happen.

Since its formation over 70 years ago Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann has elected 22 Presidents - three of them were resident in Britain, Pádraig Mac Suibhne, (2000 – 2003), Jim Teevan (2004 – 2009) and Vincent Jordon (2012 – 2015 and 2018 – 2021). In total 14 years of dedicated service from three wonderful people.

We are all looking forward to the forthcoming season of Fleadhanna Cheoil on the island of Ireland and in Britain and of course to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Wexford from 4 to 12 August where there will be a céad míle fáilte for you all.

I want to send my best wishes to Comhairle na Breataine under the leadership of an Cathaoirleach Theresa Gallagher, an Rúnaí Patrick Ballantyne and your wonderful team, and wish you every success with your deliberations at Convention 24.

Go n-éirí libh agus go dté sibh ar fad slán.

Éamonn Ó hArgáin
Uachtarán, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

TUARASCÁIL AN RÚNAÍ (SECRETARY REPORT)

For this year's secretaries' report (Tuarascáil an Rúnaí), I wanted to reflect on what I personally feel has been a brilliant year for Comhaltas in Britain, and some of the incredible people who have made this possible.

Communication is the crucial means by which a large national body such as Comhaltas in Britain can operate effectively. I wanted to pay tribute to all of the branch and regional secretaries, who keep the ship in full sail from the background. In particular, I want to thank the four regional secretaries - Cathleen, Julie, Carmel and John - for their really positive and inspiring reports. I particularly enjoyed hearing about all the amazing initiatives and events being rolled out, such as the new partnership between Amairgin the Gael and Gwent Music Service and promotion of Irish language and harp playing in the Midland Region. Furthermore, it was great to see representation of Scottish region musicians at Celtic Connections, and the awarding of Frank McArdle with the Gradam Comaoine.

I also wanted to extend my deepest congratulations to St James the Great CCÉ for delivering a hugely successful All Britain Fleadh in Stirling - it was a great weekend, and the Fleadh committee did an excellent job

In the London & Southern region, it was great to see the experiences of branch members presented at the Irish in Britain Oral Histories exhibition at the Hammersmith Irish Cultural Centre, and the continued success of the North London Junior Fleadh.



Patrick Ballantyne

Rúnaí (Secretary)

On communication, 2023 saw the reinvigoration of the monthly Comhaltas in Britain newsletter. This newsletter goes out once a month, and provides a really good overview of developments within the organisation, so if you aren't subscribing to it already, I'd thoroughly recommend you do so! As a tool for engagement, I feel that the newsletter is really powerful, and it also means the volume of correspondence in circulation between branches, regions and the province is much lower, and easier to manage. I would like to thank Elske Simpson, Community Project Officer for Comhaltas in Britain, who has been leading on this newsletter. Furthermore, I would also like to thank John Goulding, who prepares a fantastic regional newsletter, keeping us all up to date on what's going on in London & Southern Region.

Looking ahead, there are lots of exciting things in the pipeline for our members. The continued success of the Caroline Fegan TTCT scholarship and new accreditation for the SCT course will, we hope, provide a new challenge for teachers and pupils across Comhaltas in Britain. We are also looking forward to welcoming you all to St Helens for this year's All Britain Fleadh, which is one of the most important events in the Comhaltas in Britain calendar. Reflecting on where we were as an organisation last year, and what we achieved since, it makes me so proud to be a volunteer for Comhaltas in Britain. Having the opportunity to work alongside a dedicated team of volunteers, and three excellent staff - Paddy, Elske and Erin - is a privilege and an honour!

Slán go fóill!
Patrick Ballantyne
Rúnaí, Comhaltas in Britain




COMHALTAS
in Britain





COMHALTAS
in Britain



P.R.O. REPORT

The past year has highlighted that we continue to be an organisation proud to share Irish traditional music, language, dance and culture.

At the heart of our organisation are the branches which demonstrate to the public our respectful, welcoming environment especially towards youngsters. No matter what level of skill or ability, everyone is equally valued. I believe that the parents regard the music classes and Fleadhs to be a worthwhile endeavour for their children.

It is this ethos which makes Public Relations a living process in our day to day activities.

Our All Britain Fleadh was successfully hosted by the Scottish region in June on the campus of Stirling University. It was well organised and supported by other regions. A big thank you to the regional committee which received positive feedback on the venue and their organisational skills.

Comhaltas In Britain is continuing to promote education and the teaching of Irish music. Apart from a teachers forum we have the Caroline Fegan scholarship to enable a member of Comhaltas In Britain to attend the TTCT teacher training course in Ireland.



John Goulding

P.R.O.

Comhaltas In Britain have adopted the quality mark 'Investors In People' and in the spring questionnaires were circulated for completion. Many were returned and the province was granted silver.

2023 was the 50th anniversary of Irish In Britain who organised volunteers to conduct oral histories from persons with an insight to share. I contacted IIB and passed on six names of members of Comhaltas In Britain who were prepared to be interviewed. An exhibition took place at venues in London and England.

Our permanent staff Paddy Callaghan as Operations Manager, Elske Simpson as Community Project Officer and Erin Brown as Outreach and Development Officer. are proactively promoting our ethos.

Provincial Council Officers including Gaelige Officer Evin Downey, Ambassador Orlaith McAuliffe and Youth Officers Calum McGregor & Mairi Docherty are augmenting their work.

Everyone brings diverse life experience and insights with the common goal outlined in my first sentence. Going forward I hope to increase my support to the Province in it's endeavours, in addition to my duties as regional secretary for L&S region.

John Goulding. Provincial PRO



YOUTH OFFICERS REPORT

Hello everyone, it's nice to be back after another successful year in the organisation. COVID is finally starting to feel like more of a distant memory, and it's great to see so many of our branches back on their feet and thriving at promoting and teaching the Irish Culture, Music and Language in our communities.

Taking us all the way back to last year's convention, we can all agree that it was an incredibly productive weekend that was enjoyed by all. The workshop hosted by Rebecca McCarthy Kent was a massive success and created great connections between musicians from all of our regions, and beyond. We can't thank Rebecca enough for creating such a memorable performance for us all, and we'd be very interested in continuing this idea in the future, possibly at another convention or Fleadhanna.

Our focus this year was promoting Ambassadorship throughout the organisation, and giving younger musicians role models and people to look up to. We were lucky enough to have Orlaith McAuliffe agree to take on the role, and the help she has given over the past year has been phenomenal. We'll give a couple more insights into the great work she's done later.



Calum McGregor



Mairi Docherty

Youth Officers

After a successful convention, we found ourselves in competition season with our members finding incredible success at the regional fleadh. We then had our All Britain Fleadh in Stirling, hosted by St James the Great CCE. A great effort was made by the provincial council to isolate all the trophies that had gone missing over the years, and a trophy amnesty at the All Britain proved extremely fruitful. We've also now moved onto a digital system, to ensure that we can always keep track of trophies to ensure our competitors get a physical token of their attainment. The weekend was extremely well attended and was a great display of all of our branches' hard work.

Rounding out the year, we were extremely excited to present a Fleadh Workshop, hosted by our Comhaltas in Britain Youth Ambassador - Orlaith McAullife. This was a great opportunity for all of the youth to find out information about entering the Fleadh, what's expected of you, and what to expect on the day. The session was extremely well attended, and many of the participants took the opportunity to ask questions, which even covered some of the topics we hadn't necessarily realised that some of our newer members wouldn't know much about. Participants ranged in age, ability, and experience, and it also gave us a chance to see some faces that we perhaps hadn't before, while also letting people know who we are. We're hoping to create a series of sessions covering different topics in line with our pilot session, as we received great feedback.

We're both incredibly excited about convention this year, as it's giving us a great chance to reflect on the previous year and look forward to the future, and what we can do to continually improve the experience and representation of our youth in Comhaltas in Britain

Go raibh maith agaibh,
Calum and Mairi



**Join us for the All-Britain Fleadh
on 29th & 30th June 2024
in Carmel College**



COMHALTAS
in Britain



Scottish Region Report



December 2022

The Irish Minstrels branch had a very enjoyable Christmas night, and there were Christmas parties in St. James the Great, St. Patrick's, and Johnny Doherty's Christmas ceili, all very successful nights. Mark Cassidy from the St. Patrick's branch, won the Comhaltas Christmas card competition The branch held a Christmas jumper session

January 2023

The Irish Minstrels branch held their annual Winter School, with a concert

on the Friday night, and workshops on Saturday and Sunday. Everyone joined the Super Session on Sunday to bring the event to a close. Various members from the region performed at Celtic Connections, with Rory and Tarran from the St. Patrick's branch winning the Battle of the Trad Bands. Congratulations!

February 2023

The Glasgow Feis was held over two days, in St. Columbkille's Church Hall in Rutherglen. As a region, we are very fortunate to have this wonderful competition, which brings branches together, and is a precursor to the Scottish Fleadh. St. James the Great branch held their usual celebratory party after the Feis.

March 2023

The Johnny Doherty branch held a very successful and busy St. Patrick's night ceili, in St. James' Coatbridge. St. James the Great also hosted a St. Patrick's night ceili, which was very well attended The St. Patrick's Day Festival Family Day was held in the Merchant Square in Glasgow, with members from the Irish Minstrel's Big Band and Louise Hunter's Southside Fiddlers providing some of the music. Members from St. Patrick's CCE attended and participated in the Scotland GAA memorial mass in St. Augustine's Chapel. The branch was well represented at the St. Patrick's Festival Dinner in Coatbridge. Two of their musicians led the St. Patrick's Dignitary Parade.

April 2023

On Sunday 23rd April, Frank McArdle won the Gradam Comaoine (Outstanding Contribution) award at a ceremony in the University Concert Hall in Limerick. He was joined by his wife Marie and daughters for the event, along with some members from the branch. Congratulations Frank, a very deserving recipient!

A very successful Scottish Fleadh was hosted by the Johnny Doherty branch this year, and was held in Taylor High School on 30th April. The St. Patrick's branch hosted their first Afternoon Tea event, which was very well attended. They also hosted an exchange visit from the Kilkenny Craobh Osrai CCE, and were joined for an evening of music and fun at the Bank's Club by members of the three other branches.

May 2023

The St. James the Great branch organized an exchange weekend at the end of May, with the Cloughaneely branch of Comhaltas in Donegal, run by Teresa Kavanagh. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed a weekend of hospitality, music in various different venues, and even sessions on the beach

June 2023

The All Britain Fleadh was held in the lovely setting of Stirling University, and was hosted by the St. James the Great branch of Comhaltas. The branch worked very hard to ensure that the fleadh would run smoothly, and their efforts were not in vain. It proved to be a great weekend, with the region being particularly successful. Danny McKendry Senior from St. James the Great CCE and Yvonne Morris from St. Patrick's CCE received Gradam Awards at the Fleadh. Congratulations!

August 2023

The All Ireland Fleadh was held in Mullingar again this year. Congratulations to Michael Dudgeon, Patrick Deveney, April McAuley, Cara Conway and Calum McGregor, who all won solo medals. Nuala Marie and Bronagh McKnight also received medals, coming second in their duet.

Classes resumed for all branches after the summer break The Johnny Doherty branch resumed the set dancing classes, under the stewardship of Jim McKenna. The Irish Minstrel's branch held their annual Winner's Concert in Hutcheson's Grammar School, with Ciara McElhinney winning The Young Musician of the Year.

October 2023

The St. James the Great branch held a very successful Halloween fundraising ceili. All branches held Halloween themed classes. Irish Minstrel's CCE held a very enjoyable fundraising quiz night in St. Columbkille's, hosted by Kevin Murphy.

Scottish Region Committee, elected November 2022

Cathaoirleach na hAlbain Jim McKenna Johnny Doherty CCE
Leas-Chathaoirleach Paul McCormack St. Patrick's CCE
Runaí Cathleen Armstrong Irish Minstrel's CCE
Cisteoir Noreen Hughes St. Patrick's CCE
Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí Lyn Crumlish Irish Minstrel's CCE
Oifigeach na Gaeilge Eimhín Ó Dúnaigh St. James the Great CCE
Oifigeach Óige Aoibheann Crumlish Irish Minstrels CCE
Iniúchóir Amháin Angela Moreland St. James the Great CCE
Iniúchóir Dhá Davy Johnstone Johnny Doherty CCE

Cathleen Armstrong
Rúnaí
Réigiún na hAlban





A BREATH OF FRESH AYR



This year we are delighted to welcome a new branch to our family: Ayr CCÉ from south-west Scotland bringing our Scottish Region it's 5th Branch.

Formed in December 2023, and very much driven by new branch cathaoirleach Fabian Greenan, the branch have been meeting weekly since January and have seen more and more members signing up each week.

We would like to wish Ayr CCÉ the very best wishes as they continue to grow, and we will be watching their progress and offering any assistance we canto support them moving forward



Members of Ayr CCÉ Joined by supporters from the Province of Britian and Scottish Region



Northern Region Report



We were able to host this year's Regional Fleadh at Bolton University at which we had a good turnout.

Liverpool CCE is doing well with new families joining the branch and attending regularly and enthusiastically. Also former adult members in the Lowland Fiddle Association have re-enlisted.

The branch held workshops on Whistle, Guitar and Bodhrán in conjunction with the John McSherry Trio, these were highly successful for those who attended. They are hoping to run further workshops for intermediate and advanced players before Easter.

They have a meeting planned with the Liverpool Irish Festival director to ensure Comhalts is represented at the next festival.

The branch also lost a lifelong member Dr Ursula Burke who sadly passed away on 18th November 2023. Ursula was one of the finest traditional singers and a generous and devoted teacher of traditional singing for many years. Her death, after a long illness, has been a heartbreaking loss for the Branch and her many friends within.

Middlesbrough CCE continue to be involved with the North East Irish Network providing information for articles in a newsletter and also helped distribute a small Christmas gift bag to over 100 Teessiders and have also hosted Newcastle's ROSS events for the older Irish community in the North East. They have also held a Trad for Trocaire charity session and made £165 for the charity.

Leeds CCE have had another busy and successful year with their U12 and 15-18 ceili bands being runners up at the All Britain and performed in Mullingar for the second year running.

They work closely with the Leeds Irish Centre and provide a monthly session on the first Saturday of the month which attracts a great crowd. They held a Class Fleadh in March with Angela Usher adjudicating which gave great experience for their younger players who did not have experience of a fleadh competition.

They continue to develop and expand teaching music to their pupils on a Tuesday evening; and they are introducing a session night to encourage the children to play together.

St Wilfrid's CCE resumed their classes at The Irish World Heritage Centre and stated it was lovely to see everyone back together again. They played at the launch night of the Forgotten Irish Group with musicians from Manchester and Ireland which was a great night. They also played at a charity event for the Friends of Lightoaks Park which was an outdoor event and they were delighted to join other groups from the local community. The Branch nominated their Youth Officer Patrick Gallagher for Gradam na nÓg. He was put forward for this for the great work he has done representing the branch and taking part in Comhaltas events. Patrick won the Regional Youth Award and also the overall Gradam na nÓg Award.

Ashton CCE memberships have increased due the implementation of junior classes and also the ceili dancers now signing up. They have started to collect a good selection of resources for the Irish Language classes, and Danny McGowan has worked very hard in engaging the juniors in a multitude of ways to help them to learn basic Irish language skills. They have had a good attendance at branch events throughout the year. St Patrick's Day Parade and session was well attended by both junior and senior members. They have appeared on Irish in the UK TV as part of a feature about the Brian Boru Club with members being filmed and interviewed about Comhaltas in Ashton-in-Makerfield. They have also been approached by St Helens council regarding attending events prior to the All Britain Fleadh to help promote the event, Irish music and culture in the local area.

Tara O'Carolan CCE have weekly music lessons throughout the year at St Ann's Parish Centre in Stretford. Their members have continued to regularly attend music sessions across Manchester and have played at some external events such as going into the local primary schools to play for their St Patrick's Day celebrations. They hosted a 'round the fire' afternoon of Irish music, song and dance with the local Irish dancing school attending and providing some dancing and their Gaelic Officer Barbara Aherne provided some lovely Irish songs. They are hoping to host regular 'round the fire' sessions to generate funds and encourage new members to join.

JULIE O'HARE
RÚNAÍ
NORTHERN REGION CCE



Midlands Region Report



Branch news

It is good to report that there are seven very active branches in the Midland Region.

Many of the branches in the Region are having regular music classes, sessions, concerts and ceilis. Cambridge celebrated 30 years as a branch last November and Nottingham will be celebrating their 50th next year (2025). Coventry continue their very strong link with the Letterkenny branch,

Leamington Spa Comhaltas hosted a harp workshop open to everyone with tutoring from harpist Janet Harbison, Leicester and Birmingham are doing a lot of work in promoting the Irish language and Amairgin the Gael have seen the branch return to their roots in the Gwent Local Authority Area under a new joint initiative developed between the Branch and the Gwent Music Service. These are just highlights – all of the branches have many activities going on. St. Patrick's weekend is already starting to fill up with many events. A lot of interbranch support is prevalent, which is particularly useful for the smaller branches. The branches support the Regional meetings and keep everyone updated with how things are going on in their detailed branch reports.

Provincial Convention in Kenilworth (February 2023)

This was supported by the Midland Region. Jarlath Mulhern and Michael Nixon were awarded the Gradam Seirbhíse (Long Service Award) and Michael Fitzgerald was presented with an award for completing the TTCT teaching diploma. All three were from the Coventry branch. Anu Regmi from the Leamington branch and Amy Carter from the Leicester branch received a Gradam na nOg award for their involvement in their branch and active participation in many Comhaltas events.

Midland Regional Fleadh (April 2023)

This took place on 23 April at St. Anthony's School in Leamington. The Fleadh was still a relatively small affair but had more competitors than last year and more branches taking part. Hopefully this is part of an upward trend for the Region. The venue was much smaller than on previous occasions and was obtained at a notably cheaper cost, so we will be moving to a larger venue in Birmingham this year. Members from every branch in the Region qualified through to the next round.

Fleadh Cheoil na Breataine (June 2023)

Thanks to St James the Great and the Province for hosting this event. Competitors from many of the branches in the Region qualified for the All Ireland Fleadh.

Highlights

- Members from the Midland Region gave a great account of themselves at the All Ireland Fleadh in Mullingar, with a 3rd place going to Marianne McAleer of the Amairgin the Gael branch, a third place going to Maitiu Gaffney of the Birmingham branch and a second place going to Katie Stevens, also of the Birmingham branch.
- Cambridge celebrated 30 years as a branch and had many visitors who were connected with Cambridge Comhaltas from over the years and also had great support from some of the branches in the Midland Region. Congratulations to Cambridge.
- Leamington Spa Comhaltas hosted a harp workshop open to everyone with tutoring from harpist Janet Harbison. It was a very successful day and will hopefully eventually lead to a resurgence of harp playing in the Midland Region.

First main upcoming event for 2024 for the Midland Region

Birmingham Newman University in Bartley Green, Birmingham has been booked for 21st April, 2024 to host the Midland Regional Fleadh. This is our third move in three years and hopefully we will keep this venue for the next few years and possibly use it for the All Britain Fleadh in 2025

Carmel Burke

Midland Regional Secretary

February 2024





London & Southern Region Report



The Regional Fleadh was held on Sunday 26th March at Loreto College, St Albans. This was the first time that the venue was used and St Albans branch organised it well. Support was provided by members of all branches in the region

Comhaltas In Britain have adopted the quality mark 'Investors In People' and in the spring questionnaires were circulated for completion. Many were returned by members of the region and the province was granted silver status.

The region was represented at the All Britain Fleadh hosted by the Scottish region at Stirling University in June.

Some persons qualified for the All Ireland Fleadh in Mullingar in August.

This year is the 50th anniversary of Irish In Britain who organised volunteers to conduct oral histories from persons with an insight to share. I contacted IIB and passed on the following 3 names of members of the region who were prepared to be interviewed; Pat Connolly, Marian Turner and Mike Nevin. An exhibition took place at the Hammersmith ICC at the beginning of November.

North London hosted a Junior Fleadh in November at Salvatorian College which is becoming a popular venue. It was well organised with positive feedback from parents of youngsters

The 5 branches in the region have the following activities;

St Albans:
Music lessons are held every Thursday, term time only at Nicholas Breakspeare School, St Albans.
All welcome.

North London

Lessons are delivered by Colette Keaveney

- St George's school, Sudbury, Thursday at 4pm
- Sacred Heart Parish Centre, Bushey, Friday at 3:30pm

Lessons are delivered by Karen Ryan

- London Irish Centre, Camden Sunday 3pm to 9:30pm
- London Irish Centre Monday 6pm to 10pm.

Junior Fleadh November each year

West London

The West London Branch of CCE was the first branch in England formed in 1957. For over sixty years, it has continued to pursue the aims of CCE and hopes to promote the rich culture of Ireland in the branch for years to come. All musicians and listeners are welcome to join our branch, members are invited to represent the branch in London & Southern Regional, All Britain and All Ireland Fleadhs. Whilst we do not host a music school we do host annual celebrations. We would encourage anyone wanting to attend a music school to contact our friends at East London or North London Comhaltas branch.

East London

East London branch serves E London and Enfield in North London where most of our members reside. The branch holds a session on the last Friday of every month at the Rose & Crown in Clayhill, Enfield.

Hastings

The branch was formed 8 years ago, is involved in the community with tuition and live sessions. It has also hosted a number of fleadh and hopes to revive the fleadh in future years.

John Goulding.

Regional Secretary





WE INVEST IN YOU!



In February 2023 we were reviewed by Investors in People having had our first review 3 years earlier in 2020. The process of review involves an extensive consultation and survey carried out across every level of our organisation with committee members of branches, the regions and Province all taking part with 89 survey responses being recorded!

The thought behind this is to gather information from our people as to how well they understand us as an organisation, how well we work for them, find out what we are doing well, and find out what isn't going so well so that we can evolve to suit our members better in the future.

In 2020 we were awarded the standard level of accreditation, however, we are delighted that in 2023 we received an upgrade to silver status which is a massive stamp of approval that we are heading in the right direction - one that is shaped by our members, and it gives us confidence that our members are with us on this journey.

We aren't resting there though! The Investors in People report comes with clear recommendations as to how we can progress even further, so this valuable insight will help us to focus our efforts in the future to achieve this!

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®

We invest in people Silver

REPORT FINDINGS



Whats going well and where we scored highest:

88.8% of our people strongly agree and agree that the organisation has clear values.

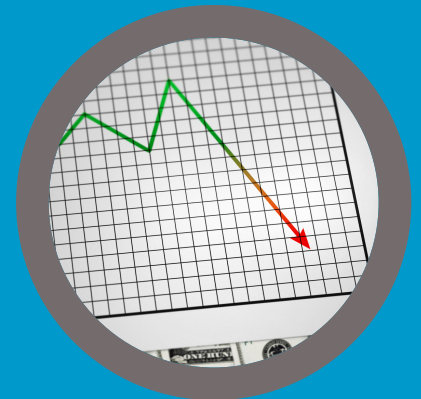
92.2% of our people strongly agree and agree that they share the organisations values

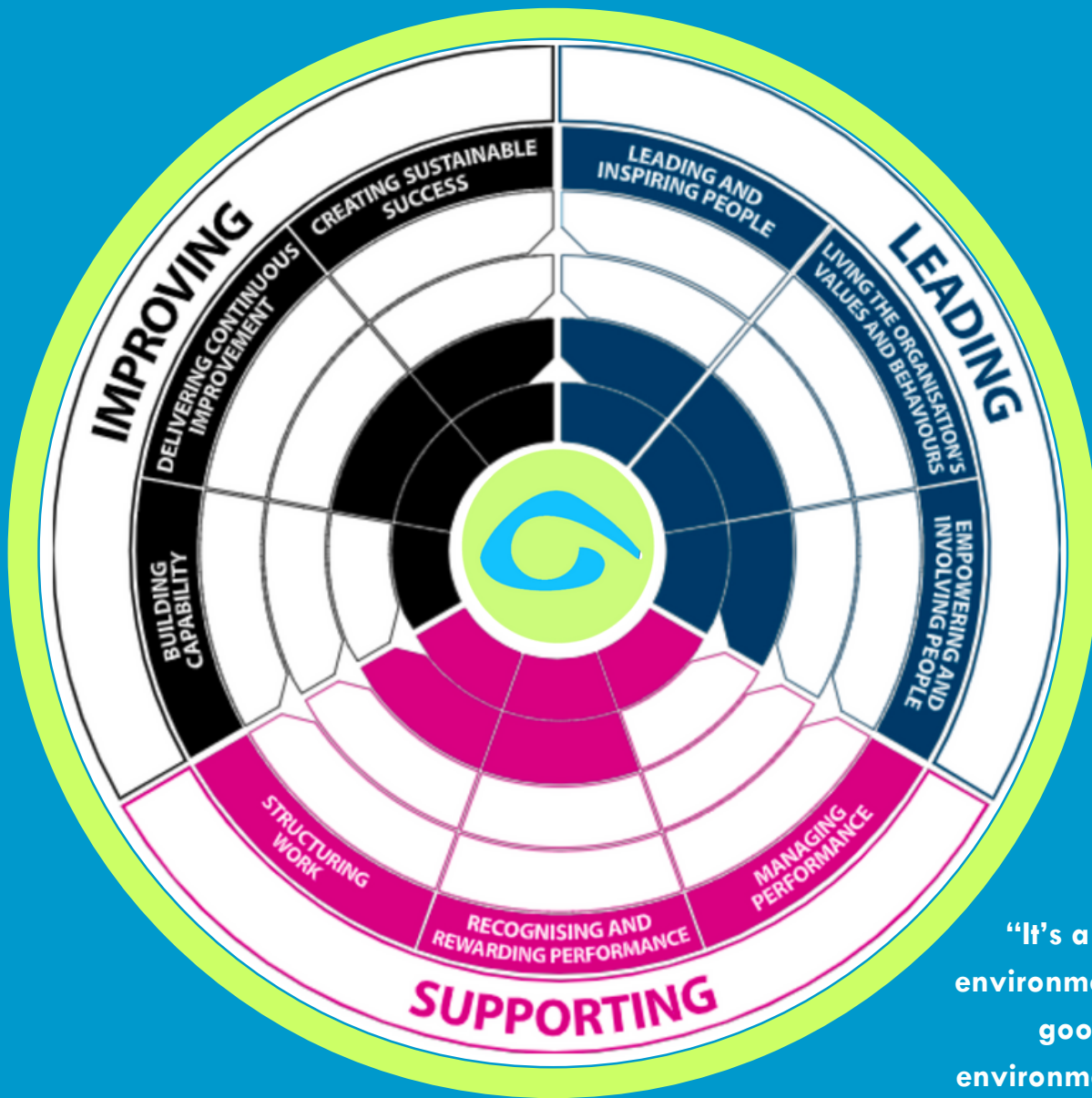
89.9% of our people strongly agree and agree that their behaviour reflects the values of the organisation.

Where we are looking to improve - the areas we scored lowest:

84.3% of our people strongly agree and agree that they are encouraged to perform to the best of their abilities, with 4.5% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 3.3% disagreeing

68.5% of our people strongly agree and agree that their unit leaders help them improve their performance with 15.7% neither agreeing or disagreeing and 5.6% disagreeing.





INV
IN
MAKE

“It’s a good social environment as well as a good musical environment. It’s a joyful organisation and fantastic at what it promotes.”

INVESTORS PEOPLE WORK BETTER

“We are a friendly organisation and very encouraging to get involved. You don’t need to have an Irish background to get involved.”

“It’s about the ethos of the organisation, volunteers and parents are young people that have come up through the music. The value is in the appreciation we show to each other and what we are giving back to the community.”

Your overall survey score - 2023 benchmark

Benchmark



- YOUR BENCHMARK
- **763**
- AVERAGE IIP BENCHMARK *
- **728**
- AVERAGE INDUSTRY BENCHMARK
- **706**
- Showing results for Arts, Entertainment and Recreation

Survey Response Rate

Overview

TOTAL RESPONSES

89 responses out of 133 (67%)



RESPONSE METHOD



Email link: 89 responses out of 89

Open access: 0 responses out of 89

By Team

LONDON & SOUTHERN REGION

17 responses out of 26



MIDLANDS REGION

23 responses out of 37



NORTHERN REGION

20 responses out of 30



PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

10 responses out of 10



SCOTTISH REGION

19 responses out of 30



AROUND THE BRANCHES

A small snapshot of some of the events and activities across our Branch network this past year!

Amairgin the Gael Branch:

Since forming a closer alliance with Gwent Music Service early in 2023 and moving to their headquarters in a primary school location in Gwent, South Wales, the Branch have doubled our numbers with up to eighteen regular attendees at our beginner and intermediate classes

In December, Branch Members performed at the at Consulate General of Ireland's Christmas Reception to an appreciative audience in the Temple of Peace in Cardiff



Irish Minstrels Branch:

Every January for 28 years now we bring a group of world class Irish, English and Scottish musicians to Glasgow for our winter workshops which take place over a weekend in St Aloysius School in the town centre

This is a band of 40 fabulous young musicians aged 14-20 years old have performed at a number of events last year and are going from strength to strength as they continue on their musical journey this year. These include Celtic Connections where they played for over 2000 school children at Glasgow Royal Concert Hall



In November, the branch held a huge "session" night, however, unbeknownst to Chair Frank McArdle, we were also celebrating his prestigious win at the Gradam Cheoil Awards in Limerick.

Many of us wanted to be there to support Frank, Marie and their family. So instead we invited past students and current members to an absolutely wonderful night where we embarrassed the life out of Frank with speeches and poems and presented him with a stunning portrait of himself by Michael Dudgeon of The Saint James the Great branch

Leicester Branch:

Leicester CCÉ have hosted a number of exciting projects alongside their usual branch classes including a Families Irish Language Day, a Young Ones Music Session, Sean Nós Dancing Classes, Storytelling events including one to honour St. Brigid and an ESP supported event called Lá Gaelach which had attendees from across the Midlands Region.



Nottingham Branch:

In March, Nottingham CCÉ branch musicians entertained attendees at a St. Patrick's Day themed community meal and they also played on stage in the Old Market Square for the Nottingham St. Patrick's festival. In February, the branch supported local homeless charity Emmanuel House as part of their Nottingham Light Night. The branch have also hosted successful summer and christmas sessions



St. James the Great Branch:

The branch hosted the All-Britain Fleadh in June which was a huge success! The branch visited Cloughaneely CCÉ in Donegal for a great weekend of music including a session on the beach. The branch have also started a monthly session to add to their calendar which includes a halloween ceili, St. Patrick's ceiling and Christmas party. In October a group from the branch waled the Camino de Santiago from Valenca Portugal to Santiago de Compostella in Spain.





St. Wilfrid's Branch:

The branch have played at a number of events including the launch night of the Forgotten Irish Group, a memorial mass to remember lost members of the community, and a charity event for Friends of Lightoaks Park.

The branch also played for the Claddagh Dancers on a few occasions as they were preparing for a dancing competition.

These are just a few of the stories from across our branch network which goes from strength to strength. In the last year, most of our branches have hosted weekly classes, weekly or monthly sessions, including other events such as workshop weekends, exchange visits, Ceilithe and concerts.



WE ARE



COMHALTAS
in Britain





Provincial Council 2023/24

Back Row L-R: Evin Downey (Treoir na Gaeilge / Irish Language Officer), Michael Fitzgerald (Treasurer), Theresa C. Gallagher (Cathaoirleach / Chair), Patrick Ballantyne (Rúnaí / Secretary), David Browne (Leasathaoirelach / Vice Chair), Calum McGregor (Youth Officer)
Front Row L-R: John Goulding (P.R.O.) Mairi Docherty (Youth Officer) Julie O'Hare (Auditor), Moira Callaghan (Auditor), Michael Nevin (Delegate to Ard Comhairle)

Our Staff

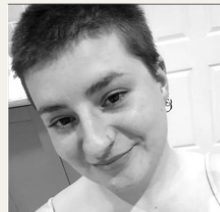
Paddy Callaghan
Operations Manager

Elske Simpson
Community project Officer

Erin Brown
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A WORD OF THANKS

We are indebted to the Government of Ireland, who, through their Emigrant Support Program (ESP) are our largest funder.

Their continued support allows us to thrive as an organisation and work on behalf of our members across Britain.

Their trust in us - underlined by our new multi-annual funding agreement - signifies the strength of our partnership and one which we hope will continue for many years to come.



**Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme**



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



Irish Abroad Unit



An Roinn Gnóthai Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



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Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

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