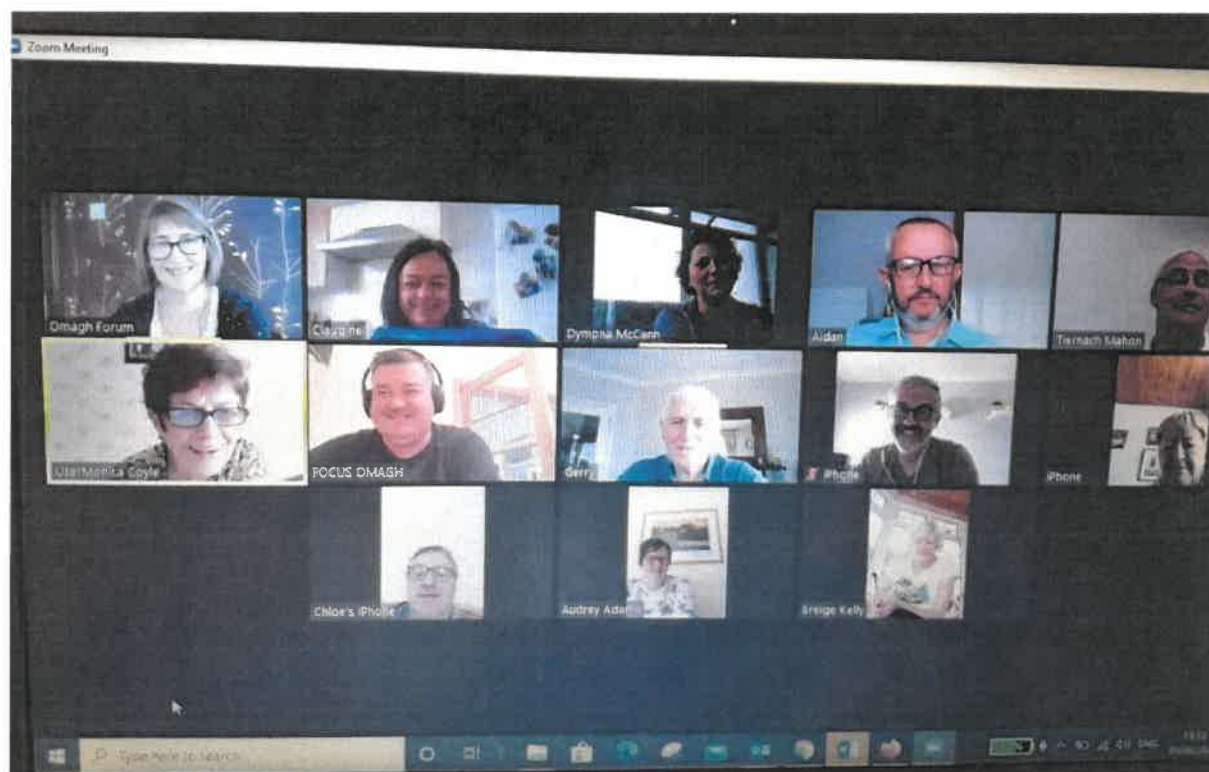


# Annual Report 2019 – 2020



**Annual General Meeting**

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2020**

**Via Zoom**

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## Chairperson's report

My report is written in a time of unprecedented change in our society and indeed the world. Little did we know as we worked away in the early part of the calendar year of 2020, and then had to cancel meetings mid March, that we would experience such challenging and harrowing times owing to COVID-19. Our world literally came to a stand still. Unfortunately this terrible virus took the lives of people we knew and loved and caused havoc in the NHS and in our local communities. Our health care system did an amazing job and our rural communities in Fermanagh and Omagh were second to none in their community response. I am proud, as chairperson of Omagh Forum, to be involved in this community response and to be involved in an organisation who rose to the challenge and took a leadership role at this time. But enough about 2020.

This report looks back on the work Omagh Forum did from April 2019 until March 2020. This is our second year delivering the **South West Rural Community Development Service** in Fermanagh and Omagh and I am delighted to report that we have helped many groups in Co Fermanagh and established our name there as a hard working organisation as well as our work in Omagh. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, Mary T Conway and Aidan Bunting as Network Managers, Tiernach Mahon as Rural Development Officer and Claudine Devenney as Administrator. I extend my appreciation to my fellow committee members who all give their time freely and whole-heartedly to lead the organisation and to the volunteers who sit on our South West Rural Community Development Service steering committee to ensure the voice of our Fermanagh members is well articulated. I also extend my thanks to our funders, detailed further in the report, who support the delivery of our work and to whom we are indebted.

Our Annual General Meeting this year is very different. Who ever heard of Zoom before this? It's hard to beat a face to face event but that's not possible at this time so we resort to virtual communication. And indeed this is the 30<sup>th</sup> AGM for Omagh Forum so we are very proud to be able to report on our activities for the year ending March 2020. I would encourage any rural community organisation in Fermanagh and Omagh to get in contact with us to see how we can offer support. For more information on our work please visit our website [www.omaghforum.org](http://www.omaghforum.org) or follow us on facebook or twitter @ofrarsn

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "George Kerr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being more prominent than the last name "Kerr".

George Kerr

29<sup>th</sup> September 2020



The staff team: L-R Tiernach Mahon, Rural Development Officer, Claudine Devenney, Admin Officer, Mary T Conway and Aidan Bunting, Network Managers

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# **Omagh Forum for Rural Associations Trustees Annual Report**

**Period ended 31 March 2020**

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The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report of the charity for the Period ended 31 March 2020.

**Registered charity name** Omagh Forum for Rural Associations

**Charity registration number** 100098

**Company registration number** NI042973

**Principal office and registered office**  
Omagh Community House  
2 Drumragh Avenue  
Omagh  
BT78 1DP  
Tyrone

## **The trustees**

Ann Doherty  
Dympna McCann  
George Kerr  
Monica Coyle  
Briege Kelly  
Cathal McEnhill  
Gerry McCaffrey  
Yvonne Wilson  
Ann McSorley  
Audrey Adams  
Neville Armstrong  
Conor Keys

Appointed 22 January 2020  
Appointed 22 January 2020  
Advisor

**Independent examiner** Nial Colhoun

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## Structure, governance and management

### i) Governing document

Omagh Forum for Rural Associations is a Company Limited by guarantee, incorporated on 16th April 2002, and registered as a charity with the Charity Commission for N Ireland on 30th May 2014. The governing document of the charity is a Memorandum & Articles of Association which sets out the objects and powers of the charitable company.

### ii) Recruitment and appointment of management committee

The directors of the company are also trustees for the purposes of charity law. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the management committee is elected for a year and must have between five and fifteen directors. We seek to have geographical representation across the rural Omagh district.

### iii) Trustees induction and training

An induction pack is available for new directors and they are taken through this prior to him/her joining the management committee. Many new directors will already be aware of the work of the organisation through the regular mail outs to member groups' and one to one support to groups.

### iv) Risk management

The management committee take risk management seriously and have in place a series of policies and procedures about how the organisation should be managed. Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects. Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with health and safety of staff, volunteers and visitors.

### v) Organisational structure

Omagh Forum has a management committee of twelve trustees, eleven of whom are Directors of the company and one is an advisor with no voting rights. The committee meet monthly with the exception of August and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity.

Day to day responsibility for the provision of services rests with the Network Managers who operate on a job share basis to fill the one role, with a Rural Development Officer and an administrator supporting this work. The Network Managers have responsibility for ensuring that the charity delivers the services specified and that key targets are met particularly in relation to the operational plan for services being delivered for the main funder, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

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## **Objectives and activities**

The company's objective and principal activity is to provide development support to rural community groups in the Omagh and Fermanagh district. They do this by:

- a) improving the efficiency of the administration of charities in rural Omagh and Fermanagh in direct pursuance of their objects, in particular by the provision of advice, management and technical support, training facilities and services to charitable organisations within rural Omagh and Fermanagh;
- b) promoting the benefit of people living in socially and economically disadvantaged areas of rural Omagh and Fermanagh by developing their capacity and skills in such a way that they are better able to identify, and help meet, their needs and to participate more fully in society; and
- c) advance any other exclusively charitable purpose as the trustees may decide in accordance with the law of charity in Northern Ireland.

We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities.

## **Achievements and performance**

Omagh Forum for Rural Associations is a membership based network organisation. The principal activity of the charity is providing development support to rural community groups in the Fermanagh and Omagh district council area. The objects of Omagh Forum are to improve the efficiency of charities through the provision of advice, management and technical support, training facilities and services and to promote the benefit of those living in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. We achieve this through our core work in the South West Rural Community Development Service (SWRCDS) funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) through its Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework where we work across Fermanagh and Omagh under three themes, and through our other projects.

### **Theme 1: Support for Community Planning**

- Meeting with community groups and organisations to highlight and promote awareness of community planning and help address any barriers to participation in the community planning process:
- Assisting community groups and organisations to identify development opportunities arising from the community plan.
- Engagement with Council to develop rural support actions within the community plan.
- Representing the voice of rural communities in the development and implementation of community plans.

### **Theme 2: Support for isolated rural people**

Community organisations representing TRPSI Framework target groups supported to build community development capacity.

Rural community groups supported to develop appropriate governance procedures or meet statutory requirements.

Individuals and community organisations signposted and supported to access relevant information/services and funding opportunities.

### **Theme 3: Support for sustainability of Rural Villages**

Applicants to the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 who have received a Letter of Offer supported in the delivery of projects:

Rural villages supported to develop plans which identify service deficits or infrastructure improvement opportunities and develop actions to address these:

Rural villages supported to develop and implement plans for better use of existing facilities through sharing resources, spaces and services:

This report covers the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, the second year to deliver the DAERA SWRCDS tender, and a year which ended like no other with the outbreak of COVID-19. What follows is a short summary of the work carried out by staff during that time and a review as trustees of the year.

The core work of the organisation is our community development support to rural groups and organisations across the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area which is the South West Rural Community Development Service (SWRCDS). This service is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Inclusion (TRPSI) Programme.

Omagh Forum manages two wind farm community benefit funds, Slieve Divena in the Sixmilecross area and Hunters Hill in the Fintona area which enables us to allocate much needed funding to local groups within a certain radius of the wind farms.

We also received funding during the year from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for a training programme and for revenue costs. With funding from the PHA via the Clear project we facilitated yoga and healthy eating classes for men and an innovative intergenerational programme between the elderly and young children entitled A While with the Wee Ones. Both these initiatives took place in Eskra and Seskinore areas.

As a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee we submitted our returns to Charity Commission NI and Companies House.

### **South West Rural Community Development Service (SWRSCS)**

The SWRCDS facilitates three main areas of work: support for isolated rural people, rural villages and community planning. If we take the three themes of our contract (details noted earlier) over this twelve-month period, we supported 88 groups with information on community planning; 249 groups under the theme of isolated rural people and 27 groups in support for sustainability of rural villages in addition to the 155 groups who applied to the RMCDS 2019. Below are examples of the work carried out:

- Carrying out a competency framework with groups to help develop good practice
- Providing one to one support to the group to meet identified gaps in governance
- Providing or buying in training – see below
- Helping groups to register and report to Charity Commission Ni
- Providing Independent Examination of accounts to a small number of groups
- Providing guidance on policies needed for operating
- Ebulletin out to 741 groups and individuals approx. once a fortnight
- Funding opportunities circulated monthly
- Regular engagement with statutory and voluntary organisations and partnerships
- Representation on Easilink Community Transport; Omagh Independent Advice Services; FOCUS; Western Local Commissioning group; Integrated Care Partnership; Omagh Drug and Alcohol Forum; Rural Community Network, CVS Forum, SWAP Inter Agency Forum, NI ICP Chairs Forum, Western Unscheduled Care Network, Delivering Together Implementation Board.
- Structured programme of Outreach One to one governance workshops, see below

We set up a steering group in June 2019 with representatives from Fermanagh groups to enable us to build on the support already provided and give a focus to our work in Fermanagh. The group met several times over the year, rotating to their venues, with our staff and Directors, representing groups from the Omagh area. These meetings were very useful and assisted our ongoing work in both engaging with and supporting Fermanagh groups. We had discussed reciprocal site visits between Fermanagh and Omagh with dates suggested as April-May 2020 but this was impossible, unfortunately, due to COVID-19.

## Training Events

Our training programme began in April 2019 with Basic Finance delivered to a number of groups hosted by Eskra Community Association. Reporting to the Charity Commission training took place on October 2019 in Omagh Community House closely followed by First Aid in Newtownsaville Orange Hall and good governance training in October. The three October training sessions were primarily focused on older people to tie in with Positive Ageing month, a series of events co-ordinated by South West Age Partnership (SWAP) and the Council Age Friendly staff. Basic Finance for charities took place in Fermanagh House in February 2020; Risk assessment made easy on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and Foundation Certificate in Food Safety in Tempo on 9<sup>th</sup> March. We had to cancel Cyber Security, scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> March owing to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council helped with grant aid towards our training.



First Aid participants in Newtownsaville Orange Hall, February 2020

## **AGM and Community Awards Presentation 2019**

Our AGM and Community Awards Ceremony took place in the recently opened and excellent facility of Drumquin Youth and Community Centre on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019. There was a range of guest speakers; the talk from Rural Support outlined the help offered to farmers and farm families on financial problems, physical and mental health concerns, family pressures etc. The Community Awards event always provides interesting and poignant stories about the work of both individuals and groups in their local communities. Those groups who received awards are as follows: Drumquin Community Youth Centre, Cycle of Hope, Mountfield Community Association, Drumduff/Drumnakilly Community Association, Drumquin Young at Heart. Those individuals who received awards: Concepta Skelton, Drumquin Youth and Community centre, Olive Breslin, National Autistic Society West and Marie Carland, Mountfield Community Association.



Councillor Diane Armstrong, Vice Chair Fermanagh & Omagh Council pictured with George Kerr, Chair of Omagh Forum and Omagh Forum staff at the 2019 AGM in Drumquin Youth and Community Centre.



Participants from Cycle of Hope receiving their Community Award at 2019 AGM & Community Awards Event

We were involved in discussions on the DAERA Rural Policy Framework looking at future direction of services, which include TRPSI and the Rural Development Programme. Staff were involved in the Rural Society Employability working group, one of the five working groups looking in detail at various aspects of rural society. Staff also attended a DAERA stakeholder engagement event on 16th January in Loughrey College.

Directors and staff visited Fermanagh on 26<sup>th</sup> July and met representatives from the ARC Healthy Living Centre, Irvinestown, as well as enjoying the delights of the County on land and water including Devenish Island and Enniskillen.

Staff attended two FODC funders fairs, firstly in the Tara Centre, Omagh on 21<sup>st</sup> January and then on 23<sup>rd</sup> January in Enniskillen library. This is a good opportunity to meet new groups and engage with other support organisations.



Omagh Forum share a table at Funder's Fair January 2020

### One to one governance workshops

We organised a number of one to one support sessions with rural community and voluntary groups across the Fermanagh and Omagh district in January – April 2020, this was a follow on to the success of 2019 where 80 groups were supported across 18 venues. These take the form of going through a good practice framework document and any number of the committee can attend, in some cases up to five of a group attended. A range of different issues were highlighted such as low capacity; inadequate insurance provision; succession planning; Treasurer's not reporting back to full committee and safeguarding. Omagh Forum staff continue to help these groups on an individual basis as well as providing training on the different topics highlighted as needs be.

The onset of COVID-19 deterred our plans somewhat for 2020 but we were able to complete some of the latter meetings over zoom technology. A total of 27 groups were supported in eight venues across the Council area, starting 28<sup>th</sup> January: The Patrician, Carrickmore; Beragh Swifts FC; Camgart Hall, Clabby; Derrygonnelly Harps GFC; St Mary's Parochial Hall, Maguiresbridge; Belcoo Community Centre; Fermanagh House; Ecclesville Orange Hall, Fintona as well as 9 groups assisted over zoom. A further 10 venues were scheduled from 19<sup>th</sup> March until 28<sup>th</sup> April but had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. Feedback from the events was very positive. Groups appreciate that we are coming out to them in their local venue and they value the tailored support they get from our staff, one group told us: "Omagh Forum helped clear the fog and now we know the direction we must head." This was particularly true of the Fermanagh area where we were successfully building our reputation as a relatively new organisation in the area. We can devise a training programme based on identified need at the sessions and we have much follow on work with the groups in attendance. It doesn't just stop there.

## **Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme**

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2018 finished up in this financial year, with all claims being sent to DAERA by mid-May for payment. A total of 84 Letters of Offer were issued and 80 proceeded to finish their projects.

The Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2019 closed on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with 155 applications, a larger than anticipated intake. This followed four information workshops held across the district and many were first time applicants. There was a lot of work involved in supporting groups through this process and checking the applications for eligibility and we appreciate the volunteers who helped us in this process. Total grant requested was £186,809 and there was a wide variety of applicants with good geographical spread across the district. After eligibility checks we issued 149 Letters of Offer to successful groups and we held six Letter of Offer workshops in December as this was mandatory for successful applicants.



Recipient of the RMC GS 2019 Altamuskin Community Association who installed a new kitchen. Pictured L-R: Mary T Conway, Omagh Forum; Gerard Treacy, DAERA and Rosemarie Shields, Altamuskin Community Association

## **Community Wind Farms funds**

Slieve Divena was open for applications with a closing date of 17<sup>th</sup> May and Hunters Hill, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The awards ceremony for both funds took place on 26<sup>th</sup> September with projects being developed on a range of areas such as: improvements to community facilities, support to Seniors, Playgroups, Schools, Sporting Organisations, Women's groups, Arts & Cultural Organisations, Orange Halls and Churches. Following successful completion projects submitted their claims for Hunters Hill by 30<sup>th</sup> November and for Slieve Divena by 31<sup>st</sup> January.

## **Health and Well Being**

We made enquiries into joining the Healthy Living Centre (HLC) Alliance in June 2019 owing to the lack of services for community health initiatives and Social Prescribing in the Omagh area. We have since been accepted in May 2020. The Omagh Health Engagement Event

on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 organised by WHSCT and Council provided new energy to investigate the possibility of community health promotion and plans were discussed to take this further.

We were successful in an application to the Clear Project (Public Health Agency) for £3,324 to deliver a series of health programmes in the Eskra and Seskinore areas. Included in this was an eight week programme of yoga for men; a nutrition information session for men and an intergenerational programme with children from Playtime Eskra and older members of the community. This was an excellent programme entitled “A While with the Wee Ones” based on the Channel Four series “Old Peoples Home for Four Year Olds”

We ran an information event on 21st November 2019 for Care Homes in conjunction with the Public Health Agency and the Integrated Care Partnership. The event was successful in linking various organisations such as Western Trust, RNIB, Volunteernow, Shopmobility, Easilink, Action on hearing loss, PCC, OVC, SWAP, Alzheimer’s Assoc., Make The Call etc. with local care homes, a total of 16 groups from the c/c sector were involved and 5 care homes. It also allowed the opportunity to consider support available in local communities that care homes and residents could avail of and to look at ways that care homes and their residents could become a more integral part of community life.

We helped National Autistic Society West to make application to Building the Community Pharmacy Project to have a pharmacist support both the group and families of autistic children. The application was successful and the project was due to begin in February 2020.

Our Manager applied for a Community & Voluntary vacancy on the Western Local Commissioning Group in January and was notified of a successful outcome after the financial year end. This will help Omagh Forum to engage more fully in health in the West and enable a channelling through of related support and information to our member groups.

## **Good Relations**

### **Building Community Relations in Rural Communities**

We secured funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs for this programme as a follow on from a successful programme completed in 2018. The programme was due to start in March 2020. However, with Covid-19 all activity was postponed and we are tentatively planning a restart at a suitable time.

### **Council tender for Shared Space Programme**

We submitted a tender to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 to deliver a programme of shared space in rural areas with delivery over a short timeframe. We were successful in the bid but work was unable to start because of COVID-19. This project is due to recommence in autumn as a distance learning programme.

## **Financial review**

Against the backdrop of limited resources and insecurities over funding it has been difficult to plan ahead. However securing the DAERA tender for three years has helped us develop our services. Thankfully we have money set aside in reserves but the organisation must continue to look for new income streams and cost saving measures.

## **Principal Funding Sources**

The main source of funds for the organisation is by way of tender income from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The organisation has always sought and secured funding from other sources to assist with ongoing expenditure by way of local authority grants and pieces of work from the health authority. We currently manage two community wind farm grant schemes with a small management fee and we generate additional income through tendered pieces of work and sponsorship as we see fit.

## **Reserves Policy and Going Concern**

The trustees have examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risk to the organisation, namely the availability of funding from third parties, and agreed that the unrestricted funds not committed should be between 3 to 6 months of the charity's annual expenditure. The reserves are needed to bridge the gap between the receiving and spending of income and to cover unplanned emergency spending. Given ongoing funding uncertainties trustees have committed to necessary cost savings should the level of funding be reduced.

## **Plans for future periods**

These continue to be challenging times for rural communities however they have proved themselves to be strong and responsive in times of crisis, such was the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural people came together in collectives and supported each other with great success.

We face many difficulties in the foreseeable future: a possible reoccurrence of COVID-19 which poses significant health challenges; corresponding cuts facing health among other public services, uncertainty around Brexit and the potential knock on effect on the voluntary /community sector. The problems facing rural communities are well documented including fuel poverty, rural transport, unemployment, social isolation and access to services. Omagh Forum will continue to lobby to ensure our local rural areas get the resources they need to continue to be vibrant, caring and active communities.

## **Small company provisions**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees.

## **Acknowledgements & Thanks**

We wish to express our thanks to our Funders during the period April 2019 – March 2020.

### **Core funding:**

- The Rural Community Development Support Service is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) - Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI).
- Fermanagh & Omagh District Council – Community Services and Training Grants.

### **With project funding coming through**

- ESB International
- Greencoat
- Public Health Agency, Clear project
- Department of Foreign Affairs

Charity Commission Helper Group

Rural Micro Capital Grants Scheme

Good Relations

Health & Well Being

Community Development

Wind Farm Community Grants

South West Rural Community Development Support Service



**OMAGH FORUM**  
FOR RURAL ASSOCIATIONS



Omagh Community House,  
2 Drumragh Avenue,  
Omagh,  
Co Tyrone,  
BT78 1DP

The Hub, Fermanagh House  
Broadmeadow Place,  
Enniskillen,  
Co Fermanagh,  
BT74 7HR

Telephone: 028 82 251559

Email: [info@omaghforum.org](mailto:info@omaghforum.org)

Website: [www.omaghforum.org](http://www.omaghforum.org)



omagh forum for rural associations



@ofrarsn

Registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for NI - NIC100098

Company Ltd by guarantee - NI42973



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí