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UVF-linked band gets lotto and Ulster-Scots body cash

By Claire Simpson

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Paramilitary insignia: The Pride of Ardoyne flute band – pictured on a Twelfth of July parade in 2004 – marches with a banner bearing an emblem of the UVF's youth wing

A 'BLOOD and thunder' band with links to the youth wing of the UVF is among dozens of loyalist bands to receive funding from the Ulster-Scots Agency and the National Lottery.

Sixty-five flute, accordion and pipe bands were given funds totalling more than £166,100 last year.

More than £4,600 of lottery money went to Pride of Ardoyne, which takes part in a contentious parade past the Ardoyne shops in north Belfast each year.

The funding, administered through the Arts Council, was for new instruments.

The band marches with a banner bearing an emblem of the Young Citizens Volunteers – the UVF's youth wing – and the names of two former band members, UVF man Sam Rockett, who was killed by the UDA during the 2000 loyalist feud, and William Hanna, killed by the British army in 1978.

A spokesman for the Arts Council said that although it "monitors the artistic quality of applicants and is aware of its obligations under 'Good Relations' and Section 75 legislation, we are not proscriptive on grounds of an applicant's political or religious background".

"We respect their organisational independence, at the same time actively encouraging applicants to develop and expand their audiences and to break down barriers in society, in line with the aspirations of the Good Friday Agreement," he said.

Among the bands given funding by the Ulster-Scots Agency was Mourne Young Defenders Flute Band which received £1,800 for musical tuition and a further £1,219 for an 'Ulster-Scots summer school' run by its members.

Mourne took part in the 2006 Love Ulster parade in Dublin which ended in clashes with gardai and republican protesters. The band was set up in memory of Alan Johnston, an Orangeman and UDR member who was killed at

his workplace in Killeel, Co Down, by the IRA in 1988.

The Arts Council gave about £102,500 to 24 bands, mostly for musical tuition.

The Ulster-Scots Agency gave about £56,500 to 38 bands for instruments.

The Big Lottery Fund gave £6,980 to three bands under its Awards for All scheme.

The figures were released in response to an assembly question from Sinn Fein MLA Paul Butler.


A spokeswoman for the Ulster-Scots Agency said that to receive funding bands must show that:

- they have good administration and a plan to attract new members
- the project is "financially viable"
- the project has "an Ulster-Scots element".

A spokeswoman for the Big Lottery Fund said its scheme helped "organisations to run projects which will bring people together and increase community activity".

"We continue to proactively promote the programme through outreach and development work and continue to target all sections of the Northern Ireland community," she said.

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