

Scouting Ireland  
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Our Ref : L16-2018

17<sup>th</sup> June 2018

## Re: Update to Members from the Board

Dear Scouts and Scouters,

As a board we committed to communicating better with you on the issues currently facing our organisation and on behalf of the board we are pleased to present this update to you.

### Safeguarding Update

The safety and protection of all scouts and scouters is of paramount importance to us. Ian Elliott has been working closely with the Board and the CEO to help us put in place the protections and protocols that will ensure our organisation is a safer place for our members and volunteers.

We have created a specific email address that can be used to convey concerns to the safeguarding team. ([safeguarding@scouts.ie](mailto:safeguarding@scouts.ie)). The issue of establishing appropriate accommodation for the team is being prioritized but is hampered by the continued withdrawal of statutory funding. This is also impacting on our recruitment of staff to strengthen our team. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to meeting the highest professional standards in our practice and the responses we make to the concerns referred to us.

### Lorna Lynch BL Investigation

The investigation by Lorna Lynch BL has commenced and the Board wants to ensure fair procedures are followed and that nothing undermines or pre-empts the process now underway. For this reason and to ensure due process to the members named in the terms of reference, we will not be making any detailed statements about it at this time. We are however determined to give Ms Lynch the time and space she needs to conduct her work thoroughly. We are committed to communicating with the individuals named in the report first, and with the wider scouting community after the Board has received Ms Lynch's report and considered its findings.

### Report by Ms Jillian Van Turnhout

Members will be aware that Minister for Children [Katherine Zappone](#) appointed former senator Jillian van Turnhout to assess the implementation of Scouting Ireland's governance reforms.

Reg. No. 397094  
Charity No. CHY3507

PATRON Michael D. Higgins PRESIDENT OF IRELAND



Member of World Organisation of the Scout Movement

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The terms of reference given to Ms van Turnhout by Minister Zappone were to provide her with a clear assessment of the adequacy of Scouting Ireland's governance arrangements and to advise the Minister on whether she can be assured about scouting Ireland governance and related matters.

Ms Van Turnhout received the full co-operation of the Board and the CEO to enable her to conduct a full assessment which we understand has now been completed. Ms Van Turnhout has submitted her report to Minister Zappone who will consider its findings and we are hoping to meet with officials of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the coming days.

We have no indication as to the findings of this independent assessment by Ms Van Turhout or when Minister Zappone might restore funding to our organisation. Members will be aware that we are rapidly reaching a crisis point and we need government funding restored immediately if we are to maintain our services.

### **Communication of Proposed Governance Structures**

The work on our proposed new Government structures was discussed in Dail Eireann this week when Deputy Sean Sherlock, TD told Minister Katherine Zappone of concerns raised with him by scouters who "feel they have not been communicated to in relation to governance change management procedures that are under way, particularly in relation to proposed new national structures."

Given the very extensive consultation programme with members over the last two years we are at a loss as to how any member could have this view and are disappointed if this is the case. We have:

- held 6 provincial consultation meetings attended by over 400 members in 2016
- held a briefing for members at our Scouters Conference in 2016 attended by over 150 people
- held a series of provincial consultation meetings attended by over 500 members in 2017
- held sessions at three County Commissioner Meetings and consulted with the Youth Fora, the National Youth Programme Committee and the National Adult Resources Committee
- held 3 provincial meetings this month, with a fourth scheduled for next week, in advance of the EGM on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June.

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The effectiveness of this consultation process can be seen in the fact that the membership felt they was no requirement for a governance presentation at the Scouters Conference held in January of this year and asked us not to include it in the Conference Schedule.

In addition we have produced and issued 13 bulletins focused specifically on governance to members. We have produced a frequently asked questions section on the governance section of our website ([www.scouts.ie](http://www.scouts.ie)) which is searchable and has answers to more than 150 questions. We encourage members to use this resource to familiarise themselves with the proposals before the EGM on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June next.

Regrettably, no matter how much consultation that takes place there will always be a small minority who will claim not to have been kept informed. Scouting Ireland, under the direction of the Board has been very committed to ensuring all members have had many opportunities over the past two years to engage on this very important matter for our organisation.

### **EGM 30<sup>th</sup> of June.**

Members are invited to attend the EGM on 30<sup>th</sup> June in the Helix, Dublin at which proposals for new governance structures will be discussed.

The new board structures have been four years in development and precede the current safeguarding issues affecting our organisation. Members should not confuse the two issues, nor should there be any complacency regarding the outcome of the EGM. It is very clear to the Board that the future of our organisation is dependent on us having the governance standards demanded of an organisation of our size and scale.

Members would have been asked to vote on the new board structures later this Autumn but the decision by Minister Zappone to withdraw funding and her repeated statements that she will not restore it until she has confidence in our governance structures has given added urgency to our deliberations.

The entire Board believes that the new board structures are right for Scouting Ireland and we are fully behind the proposals. As we continue to grow, they will ensure we are fit for purpose as a modern, national youth organisation.

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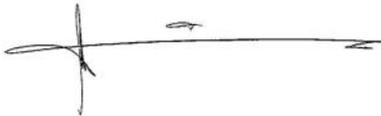
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We urge members to vote in favour of the new board structures at the EGM on 30<sup>th</sup> June next.

Yours in Scouting,

*Annette Byrne* 

**Annette Byrne  
Interim Chairperson**

**Charles Mc Guinness  
National Secretary**

*On behalf of the National Management Committee of Scouting Ireland and Board of Scouting Ireland Services CLG*

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