

FOREWORD

We had an excellent meeting with Commissioners and Group Leaders in Tullamore on January 26th. The meeting was a valuable opportunity for us to provide an update from the board, respond to the questions submitted from members and to exchange views on how we can encourage more people to take up positions on our volunteer committees and how we can strengthen the board.

This document contains the answers to the questions which were submitted before the meeting. These have been grouped under the most appropriate headings and are set out in alphabetical order for ease of review.

The first question sought information on the reason for the delay in publishing the accounts which requires a more fulsome answer than a spreadsheet will allow. The Board of Scouting Ireland have a robust approach to bringing forward accounts which has served us very well to date and in fact from a financial point of view has done so as well this year. I want to share with you how we undertake this work as I think it will help your understanding of the process, will help explain the delay in this year's accounts and will demonstrate the diligence of the board in managing prudently the finances of our organisation.

From December every year the CFO together with the Audit & Risk Committee set out a number of milestones that must be reached so that the financial statements can be approved.

This includes:

- looking back and reviewing our operations and finances for the prior year and documenting this in the form of the Financial Statements.
- These financial statements are externally audited to confirm that they give a fair and true picture of our finances for the period being reported upon.
- Once approved by the board, they are lodged with the Charities Regulator and with the Companies Registration Office.
- The process includes planning for the future by preparing budgets and cash flow estimates for the next financial period,

In preparing the financial statements, the board is responsible for assessing our organisation's ability to continue as a going concern, in other words our ability to trade and to meet our debts. This whole process takes place across a series of board meetings throughout the spring of every year. When all this work is done, we report our financial statements in as open and transparent a manner as possible.

What happened this year?

Planning for the preparation of the financial statements for the year 2021 / 2022 began in December 2022 when the board actions required in the forthcoming meetings were laid out for the Board agenda.

The financial position of Scouting Ireland was then discussed at board meetings in January, February, March and April. The process started with the agreement of the principal budget assumptions followed by the operational budget. Presentations were provided to the board at the March 2023 board meeting by our legal advisors as to the quantum of the possible liabilities for historic abuse cases and the status & timings of legal proceedings against our organisation.

At the April 2023 board meeting the directors present discussed Going Concern. Directors are required to consider whether the organisation is a 'going concern', in other words that it will be able to meet its liabilities for a minimum period of 12 months after the signing of the financial statements.

When the board met in April one director chose not to attend. Please bear in mind that ahead of each board meeting directors get the agenda for the meeting and the board financial papers required to support

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discussion and decision making. The second of the two directors noted at the start of the meeting that he would not be supporting the going concern decision.

After the Board's discussion the Director voted to support the going concern decision which meant there was unanimous decision.

Shortly afterwards the auditors made the Chairperson aware that two directors disagreed with the going concern assessment and had made their point of disagreement known to the auditors. Without prior notice to the remainder of the board, the two directors had approached the auditors directly withdrawing their support for the going concern decision unanimously reached in April.

None of their points of concern had been raised in the context of the Boards consideration of the finances and the financial statements. The Company Secretary arranged a process to allow all directors address the points of concern and no meaningful evidence was brought forward to support or evidence the points raised with the auditors. The Chair of the board invited all board members to seek any further information they required from any or all the finance team, the Audit & Risk Subcommittee or from the external legal advisors and the auditor. No further information was requested by the two directors.

The board considered the matters raised by the two directors with the auditors. The remaining directors, having considered the material provided, confirmed their view at the August 2023 Board meeting that the company is a going concern. This was the unanimous decision of the board members present.

Given that some time had passed in the process the board felt it was prudent to review our Going Concern status for an extended period to the 31st of January 2025. Our finances are robust, and our financial statements include a provision for liabilities which relate to liabilities arising from historical abuse concerns in legacy organisations. The board remains satisfied that Scouting Ireland is a going concern for this extended period.

This whole process took up most of the summer and we lost our slot with the auditors for the completion of the audit. It was not possible to complete the agenda of an AGM without the availability of both the audited Financial Statements and the auditor. This required several deferrals of the planned AGM date.

This is the full explanation for why we were unable to publish the accounts and hold the AGM in a timely manner.

The audited financial statements of Scouting Ireland CLG for the year ended 31 August 2022 were approved by the board in December 2023 as soon as they were received. The financial statements show a healthy outcome for what was a challenging year as we returned to scouting following the pandemic. We reported a net income of circa €250,000 for the year ended 31 August 2022; this compares to a net expenditure of €465,000 for the year ended 31 August 2021.

We continue to see upward pressure on costs, and we remain focused on carefully managing our resources and maintaining balanced budgets despite the considerable challenges of increasing insurance costs, providing for costs arising from historic abuse in CBSI and SAI, and the legacy impact of the pandemic on membership fees.

On behalf of my fellow board members, I assure you we have only one objective – to do what is best for our groups, our volunteers, and our employees.

Ned Brennan

Chair, Scouting Ireland CLG

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

What was the specific reason for the delay in the annual accounts being finalised?

This was answered in the foreword.

FEES & PAYMENTS

Since the introduction of the €20 increase in Scouting Ireland registration fees, can you give a break down as to how much is in the solidarity fund, how much on solicitors and to support counties?

The Board of Scouting Ireland, being cognisant of the increase in the number of historic abuse cases took a number of decisions in 2019 to ensure the Organisation's future financial stability. One of those decisions was to increase membership fees in 2020 from the previous fee of €45 to €65. There has been no increase in fees since 2020, despite Covid-19, increases in inflation and an increase in the number of historic cases. The amounts spent on legal fees and support costs are included in the financial statements annually.

Why has scouting Ireland refused to accept payments by cheques are they aware of problems involved in bank transfers (2 persons having to go to bank together which means taking time from work etc)?

Scouting Ireland accepts cheques for Census and bookings on our National Scout Centres. Transactions through the website such as training are made on a live system and require payment by debit or credit card. EFT payments can be made through online banking, or alternatively card payments through the website.

ARBITRATION

Where are we in relation to the compensation claims and the insurance company?

We are of the view we are insured. Allianz does not accept that we are insured. Under the terms of the policies, arbitration rather than recourse to the courts is compulsory to secure the value that we believe our insurance policies provide.

We commenced arbitration in 2022 and following the agreement to the appointment of a senior counsel by SI and Allianz we set out our points of claim. After clarifications, Allianz set out their 'points of defence'. After further clarification and following a hearing, we agreed the extent of discovery. Discovery is almost complete with large volumes of documents exchanged between the parties. – we are awaiting electronic documents from Marsh (our brokers). Our legal team is currently reviewing the documents received from Allianz. Once discovery is complete, both sides will seek to agree pathfinder cases which may then be considered by the arbitrator later this year. We expect that the arbitrator will complete his work in 2024.

AGM

Why is the Company AGM online and not face to face?

The AGM is held online for efficiency reasons and the view of the Board that it is difficult to get a quorum by having delegates to travel for the meeting. The solution may be to have the AGM as a small part of a wider event such as a national conference or gathering. The Board will consider options after the 2023 AGM.

Why are only 5 people being allowed to speak on motions?

This is for efficiency reasons.

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Can we get an approx. date for Company AGM 2024?

As we have not had a Company AGM yet can you clarify when Company AGM will be held for 2024.

The plan is to hold the AGM in September 2024. The date for the AGM will be confirmed at the first Board meeting after the AGM.

What is the plan to avoid any delays with future AGMs?

As was done this year, the Board has a work plan which covers the planned work and timetable for Board approvals from now until the AGM. All members of the Board and Scouting Ireland management are aware of the requirements and their timing. If all stakeholders engage with each other between Board meetings we should not have any delays. This assumes that there are no unplanned events such as the recent pandemic do not impact the timeframe.

THE BOARD

Why did the 2 external directors resign so quickly?

The Directors informed the board of their decision to step down and their resignations were accepted with regret. We are very pleased that Eoin O'Shea recently joined the board and brings a wealth of financial experience that will be of great benefit to us as we chart our future. We continue to recruit external directors to the board.

Can we get clarification as to exactly what is going on at Board meetings and position of some Directors?

The board operates in accordance with good governance principles and that is the basis on which decisions are taken by the board. The majority of the board work together in a spirit of collaboration. We have a sole focus – to ensure our organisation is strongly positioned to support our members while also doing what is right for survivors of abuse in CBSI and SAI.

Every person who takes a position on a board has a fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of all stakeholders. We are bitterly disappointed that our two newest directors nominated from the membership, joined the board with an apparent agenda to disrupt our work. It is the only conclusion we can draw from their actions, including, but not least, the leaking of confidential board information to external third parties. Efforts by the board to have constructive discussions with the directors and to address their concerns have been ignored. A board cannot operate without trust. Mr Reynolds and Mr Kinane have, by their actions, lost the confidence and trust of their fellow board members and have been suspended from the board.

What's the minimum number of Board members required to allow the Board operate fully and in compliance with Company law?

Under Charities legislation the minimum number of Board Members is 3.

How do we ensure we have competitive people on our board?

The Governance & Compliance subcommittee of the board has discussed the need to address the immediate succession of retiring board members. An external review of the composition of the board is also being undertaken which will inform the skillsets required to meet the needs of the organisation. Future aspirations for the board, that would attract skilled members include:

- a) That we achieve diversity on the board including gender balance.
- b) That we will introduce a greater proportion of external board members
- c) That we would accept nominees for external directors from other stakeholders (parents, other youth organizations, government?)

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- d) That we will have an Academy or apprenticeship/ gateway approach to accepting new directors as members nominees. This would require a nominating committee interview, a period of membership of one or more board subcommittee or Taskforce to establish competency before ballot. We immediately need the support of groups, and our group leaders, to bring about this change and to bring forward new board members.

What is the plan to fill the empty board spaces?

A number of directors are due to resign from the board in 2024, are the current members of the board working on a succession plan in place to fill these roles and what is being done about this?

As above. This is being considered by the Governance and Compliance subcommittee.

Suggestions were also sought from the commissioners meeting on the 27th of January. These are being collated for consideration by the board.

How do we avoid not having a choice of candidates for the board at AGMs?

We would like to see more people putting themselves forward for election. That is the only way members will have a choice in their candidates. It is a responsibility to join any board and it does require a time commitment. It is also important that our board has as broad a range of skillsets as possible - for example, finance, legal, communications, HR, and so on. Anyone wishing to know more can speak to the Company Secretary – email cosec@scouts.ie.

ASSOCIATION & NMC

What is the precise role of the Association at present?

In October 2018, the membership of the Association voted overwhelmingly in favour of transitioning to a company-only model for the management and operation of scouting activities in Ireland.

It was planned to swiftly close down the association transferring all of its functions, assets and liabilities to the company. However, unforeseen legal and insurance requirements have necessitated the continued existence of the Association for some time into the future.

Currently the Association's sole purpose is to provide support for ongoing litigation and insurance arbitration with Allianz. We now need to undertake an administrative task to transform the Association into a smaller unincorporated body. We need a new constitution for the Association which limits its role to these essential housekeeping matters related to legal, financial and insurance issues. We need a simple organisation which with a small management committee which is indemnified by Scouting Ireland CLG. In due course, the association will be wound down.

We have a draft of the new constitution and are working with our legal advisors as to how it will be adopted now that the NMC has resigned.

Can the board provide an update on the current position re NMC please?

There is currently no NMC.

Does the Board intend to have elections to fill vacancies on NMC. What criteria will be used to fill vacancies if Board intend to have an NMC. How many members do they intend to have on the NMC?

The board does not intend to fill the vacancies in the NMC until a new constitution is adopted.

Can you clarify the position now as we have no members on NMC. What will this do to insurance, Foundation Companies and redress situation?

We are receiving legal advice, but our current view is that having no members on the NMC does not affect the legacy issues.

REPUTATION

How do we re energise our organisation after years of crises and leverage the power of our volunteers?

Scouting is recovering with little help from its Covid low point what is the plan for moving forward?

What positive actions can we take with the Board to assist Scouting Ireland to keep moving forward?

How is the board going to navigate the current scandals and poor name?

What is scouting Ireland doing to restore the good name of scouting? So many adults don't want to allow their kids or themselves be involved in our association because of our reputation.

It is true that our reputation has been damaged in the past number of years. However, the way the membership responded to the survivors of sexual abuse in CBSI and SAI has served to limit this damage. We did not shy away from the wrongdoing in these organisations and are doing all that we can to act responsibly towards the survivors of historic sexual abuse while also supporting our current and future members. We recruited nearly 1,400 adults last year and our membership should grow by 6 - 8 % this reflects the response at national level and the strong reputation of our groups within their communities and the undiminished trust parents have in our group leaders. The best way we can restore our good name is to continue to serve our young people, helping them to benefit from the scout method. Many local newspapers are positively disposed to our local groups and publish articles to promote the good work they are doing. Our communications team will continue to seek out opportunities to promote Scouting Ireland with all our stakeholders both on our own social media channels and in the wider print and broadcast media. We had very good input from commissioners and our group leaders at our meeting on 27th January and we will be considering how best to implement these suggestions and to leverage the goodwill within wider society towards scouting in Ireland. Scouting has been very resilient in how we have managed very difficult situations over the past 5 years, including the pandemic. Having navigated through turbulent times, we must focus on the future and continue to grow our organisation.

MEDIA

Why is the board reactive to news instead of proactive to members?

The Board tries where possible to advise the members of news items as they occur. Often, we are not aware that an article will be printed until it appears in the media. Sometimes we are asked for a response, at other times the article will appear without the journalist contacting us. We do not see these articles before they are published. Sometimes even when we have given a response no article will appear. On each occasion, we must wait and see what the journalist actually writes before we can give a full and accurate briefing to the members. That is why it might appear to the membership that we are being reactive when we actually inform you as quickly as we can once the article is published.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

With reference to the target of an additional 15,000 Scouts over 3 years, how is the 1st year going? Did we reach the 5,000 target?

On the figures to date for Census 2024 Our membership should grow by 6 - 8% this year. This growth is contingent on Scouting Ireland receiving extra funding from the Department over the next three years to recruit staff to support Scout Groups recruit Adults to help them

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Grow and develop. This was part of a budget submission to the Department. Only when we get this extra funding will this happen.

Is there a strategic plan on enrolling these additional 15,000 Scouts? Can this plan be shared with the PCs? Or the Scouting Community in general?

Is there a "Plan B" if the target of 5,000 extra Scouts per year over 3 years is not achieved?

Will we wait until the 3rd year has passed? Or are there definitive intermediate goals that need to be achieved with these numbers along the roadmap?

The plan is for sustainable growth. We have done this before. In 2009 we had less than 34,000 members and we increased the membership by 20% in 3 years. Since then, our growth has been 4-5% per annum.

What are the current membership numbers per section and scouters?

Last year our membership was just above 35,000. We do not have the breakdown per age range today but will be happy to provide this at census completion at the end of February.

NATIONAL SCOUT CENTRES

What is happening regards the volunteer staff on the campsites? Specifically talks with the previous Meitheal staff about some returning to work?

The Volunteer teams in the campsites are working on this.

Can you confirm\clarify if there have been several gardai incidents in larch hill since the hostel has been used for refugees? I think us using it for refugees is great but hiding incidents is wrong if they have happened.

There is no question of us hiding incidents. The hostel is leased to the government who have an appointed operator to care for the refugees. Unless there is a direct impact for Scouting Ireland as we will not necessarily be aware of events within the hostel. Information on any such incidents would be the remit of the Department.

What's the position with income from Castle Saunderson not appearing within the most recent set of accounts?

The income from our National Scout Centres is included in the financial statements of a related entity, Scouting Ireland Campsites and Facilities CLG.

What is the situation with our national hostels/campsites. When will we have full use and which are leased to government?

As a board we had to carefully consider the humanitarian response required of us when the Government was faced with a critical shortage of accommodation and needed to provide refuge and sanctuary to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. We believe our response in assisting the government was the correct one and in keeping with our scout law and code. The income from the use of the National Scout centres has also enabled us to avoid passing on increased costs by increasing our membership fees. As the refugee crisis continues, we will have to further consider whether to renew the government leases on the scout centres at Larch Hill and Killaloe. The timetable ahead of us will require the board to make further tough decisions before the summer.

GOVERNANCE/CRA

With all the red tape (social media, GDPR, Trustees, insurance, financial, safeguarding), a lot of this is necessary in today's society, but this is causing so many hurdles and barriers for us adults. What is SI doing to support the ordinary scouter who just wants to scout. So many adults are leaving because of this?

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The Board and Departments are keen to support members on the issues raised in the attached question. Every voluntary organisation is faced with these issues, and it is important that we meet our governance obligations. Over the coming months the relevant Departments will deliver webinars or online training for these topics.

Charities: what are the consequences for groups who do not register by the designated date to begin registration?

This matter is under consideration by the Board and members will be updated in due course.

Charities: campsites, some are not owned by groups and are owned or ran by counties or collaborative groups, is there a plan for the campsites to register as charities?

This matter is under consideration by the Board and members will be updated in due course.

When all the groups are registered with the CRA where will the Counties stand? Will they have to register with the CRA?

Scout Counties and Provinces are part of Scouting Ireland and as such will be dealt with under Scouting Ireland's registration with the CRA.

INSURANCES

When will groups have to pay trustee insurance? Trustee/directors insurance is not an adequate amount for the entire organisation, can SI increase the amount with the insurer or provide groups with an option to purchase an additional policy to cover their group?

The Board of Scouting Ireland considered this point at the last insurance renewal date, and having taken expert advice for the Organisation's brokers, a decision was made by to proceed with increasing the insurance limit under the D&O insurance policy, by way of an excess layer of cover. This brings the total cover from €1 million to €3 million for the policy period. This policy, and the increased limit that was put in place, also exists to cover the trustees of the individual scout groups at no cost to the Group.

Can groups take out their own trustee insurance with the current provider?

Groups can choose to purchase an additional policy. However, these are extremely expensive and typically cost in excess of €1,000 per Group. Details of our Insurer can be provided by National Office upon request.

Is there a marine insurance for groups with lillyflots?

Scouting Ireland has a Marine Hull policy which is regularly updated for changes and/or additions. Further information is available from Margaret Moore Lewy at mmoorelewy@scouts.ie.

SCOUTING IRELAND TRUSTS

Scout dens vested in SI, what is the process to take back the deeds and hold locally?

This is a matter for the property companies themselves. There are three separate property companies, each of which are also separate charities with their own Boards and Trustees. These companies are the Scout Foundation, the Scout Association of Ireland Trust Corporation CLG and Scouting Trust Property CLG.

Can the board members of the Scouting Ireland trusts (in the Republic) be confirmed?

The members of the Board of each company are common and according to the company's registration office the members are:

- Michael Devins
- Niall Walsh

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- Mark O'Callaghan
- John Reid
- William James

BEAVERS AND CUBS

What is happening with beavers' chief scout award?

This process has been agreed by the CSA Support Team and the Programme Department. Beavers and Cubs are not required to register for the awards. Their leaders are aware of the requirements and youth members can start the work when they're ready. The record books are being phased out and youth members can record their activities in their own way. On completing the required activities, the leader completes an online form (Microsoft Forms) and clicks on the payment link where they can pay through PayZone. The cost is reduced to €5. Certs and badges will be posted to group leaders at the end of the month of completion. Step by step information was given in the Newsletter (E16-2024) emailed to members on the 8th February 2024.

Is it acceptable to wait over 6 months to receive beaver CSA AWARDS then to discover two not issued & no badges or not in envelope and no reply to email asking this question?

We are sorry that you have had this experience and that you were not responded to. The CSA Team and the Programme Department have been working on this very frustrating issue and are very close to a much simpler solution. Details of this will be shared with the membership in the coming month.

Why is there no national event for beavers?

There is a broad plan to have a National Beaver Scout event. The current intention is that the event would take place in a number of locations on the same day. This deals with previously expressed concerns about the logistics of bringing lots of children to one location. Groups would have the option of staying relatively local or travelling to another area. We will share more information with you when we finalise our plans.

Why has the Scout Shop changed the colour of the Cub Scout uniform. Who sanctioned this?

Will the Scout Shop stock all programme award badges for Cub Scouts?

The colour of the cub scout uniform is navy. We have not changed the colour. What we do see is variation in the shade of navy at times. This is because with the smaller numbers we struggle to secure a supply of dye batches in a consistent manner.

EVENTS

Cruinniu: there was no feedback captured from attendees after the 2023 event, why was this valuable opportunity lost especially as Cruinniu is to be repeated in 2024?

We did receive feedback from Cruinníú and this feedback will be used in planning Cruinníú for 2024. There will be regular bulletins for Cruinníú 2024 in the coming weeks and months.

Is there an Irish jamboree planned?

The Programme Department are keen to support this, and the Board have agreed that a jamboree should be held in 2025/2026. The Programme Department is anxious to recruit a Camp Chief and the post will be advertised.

Has the phoenix team lead been filled and is their details on phoenix 2024?

Shane Cusack and Michaela Fitzgerald are our team leads for Phoenix 2024.

When are we going to have National Meetings as agreed at EGM of National Council 2018. That is Company AGM and National Conference.

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The AGM is held every year and the National Conference is held during Cruinniú.

TRAINING

How can Scouting Ireland improve the quality of real scout training? Leaders are going through the full wood badge and still have no clue how to scout.

The new Training Team Lead and his team are working to ensure that all training is fit for purpose. There will be regular briefings from the different Training Team Leads to the membership in the coming months.

STRUCTURAL REVIEW GROUP

No progress has been made with this group other than one meeting, what is the plan going forward for this group as one director who was involved has now stepped down from the role?

The work of the Structural Review Group is very important to us as we plan for the future.

Ned Brennan will step down as Chair of the Board at the AGM on the 17th of February. We are very pleased that he has agreed to take on the role of chairperson and lead this group's work.

Will SI ever return to the Group is main focus of Irish Scouting not the few?

The Group has always been and will continue to be the main focus of this Board of Directors.

NATIONAL OFFICE

Can we get who is who and doing what in National Office that is names and position they fill in Departments?

The staff diagram is shown at the end of this document. It outlines who's who in National Office, the Department they work in and their e-mail address.

Who are the volunteers in each department? When are their terms up? is there any scope to return these to electable roles in the future?

There is significant change happening across a number of Departments and a full listing will be provided in the coming months.

When will the database be replaced?

We are working with our supplier to roll out the database in Quarter 2 this year.