

In a now familiar pattern of taking actions to remove individuals who disagree with them, the Board of Directors have now called for our removal. They have not shared any reasoning other than that they are “acting in the best interests of Scouting Ireland”.

The Board have yet to share any explanation with the members to explain their actions and allow you to make your own decision as informed shareholders capable of making decisions when presented with the evidence. We believe this EGM is retaliatory because we reported them for what we perceived to be violations of Irish Law. It would appear that the threshold has been met for these regulators to get involved.

We have made a number of regulatory complaints and protected disclosures under legislation including the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. The content of these disclosures currently form the basis of multiple regulatory agency investigations and interventions, therefore they cannot be disclosed until after investigations are completed. However, the process that was followed as well as the timelines can be. This list is not exhaustive. There is another regulator who are still in the early stages of their investigation and cannot be referred to.

Data Protection

In January 2022, a GDPR complaint was made to the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, by Donnachadha, on behalf of members who applied to attend the (then proposed) Train the Trainer course. A senior member of SI, also a member of the V&GS working team, made an allegation of abuse of position to a director because a youth director identified themselves as a board member in their application to the course. The board refused to compel the senior officer to identify the source of the personal data theft of the list of applicants and their details or who it was disclosed to. The Data Protection Commissioner closed the case as it had been raised by an individual who was not one of the injured parties.

Department for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

In Feb 2022, a protected disclosure was made to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) by three directors after we had made all reasonable measures to deal with these issues internally. This was sent to the Office of the Protected Disclosure Commissioner (OPDC) who later sent it to the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA).

An addendum was made to the disclosure after it had left the DCEDIY.

Charities Regulatory Authority

The CRA met with the with the 3 of us and expressed the desire to support us but they noted they could not deal with anything that was not within the scope of the Charities Act 2009.

This excluded many issues that fell within any other relevant legislation. We were not precluded from making a Protected Disclosure with any other body or entity as per the Protected Disclosures Act 2023.

The Currency

We approached Mr Tom Lyons of the Currency who specialises in financial reporting and made a protected disclosure to him in relation to alleged irregularities witnessed at board. Mr. Lyon's wrote a short article containing some key information to highlight the irregularities. The article was limited in nature and did not mention the many other issues we were raising but instead focused on the obvious and unanswered financial issues in a responsible manner.

CRA Enforcement

In the following months, the CRA communicated several times with the company, giving directions on multiple occasions. Many of these directions were delayed in response, not complied with or partially fulfilled.

This led to the "unprecedented" issuance of an Enforcement Order under the Charities Act 2009 directing that the charity "provide the information specified ... no later than 4 p.m. on 29th September 2023... if the Charity fails to comply with this direction, the Authority may by notice in writing, inform the Charity that it is no longer deemed to be registered in the register."

The Order was complied with by way of a letter requesting a delay in response on the 29th September 2023 putting the charity's ability to continue trading (and groups to continue offering scouting) at risk. The CRA request was partially fulfilled one week later.

It was subsequently noted by the CRA in January 2024 that even after the enforcement order and "unprecedented" threat of deregistration, directions still had not been fully complied with, and that the company had submitted redacted evidence. The Charity Regulator expressed dissatisfaction for this level of redactions. The CRA also have expressed concerns at so much of a charity's financial resources being used for legal communications and activities when dealing with them.

Corporate Enforcement Authority

On the 15th June 2023, we made a protected disclosure to the Corporate Enforcement Authority (CEA). These events had crossed the threshold to what we believed would be covered under the remit of the Companies Act 2014.

On the 6th October 2023, the CEA accepted the Disclosure under the Protected Disclosures Act. As per our directorial obligations to report activities that may be deemed illegal, we continued to cooperate with the regulator.

On the 21st February 2024, Directors of Scouting Ireland clg were informed that an investigator had been appointed. The Corporate Enforcement Authority gave direction to inspect elements of Scouting Ireland in accordance with the Companies Act.

This is an ongoing matter and details of which cannot be discussed to avoid prejudicing any investigation or outcomes. The entrance of the CEA into Scouting Ireland should indicate the gravity of the situation facing our organisation.

Governmental Involvement

We also made disclosures to two TDs in Sinn Féin (as per the Act) with a view to communicate with the Northern Ireland First minister and the Cathaoirlach of the Committee on Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth, Kathleen Funchion. This led to disclosures to the Committee, who were unable to act in the area raised with them but have identified that it can be by other bodies. This has also led to the announcement of a Departmental investigation into the areas of Governance, Safeguarding & Culture to be held in the coming months.

The Board & The Irish Times

Unfortunately this confidential document was leaked to the Board of Directors of Scouting Ireland. Immediately upon receipt of the document, the Board communicated this document over email to the Department rendering it discoverable under Freedom of Information by the press.

As can be seen in the recent articles published in the Irish times, we have refused to give statements on the matter as this route has caused immense damage in the past. The same cannot be said for the rest of the Board who appear to have maintained their relationship with key members of the media.

In summary, this company has a number of problems, that we exhausted all available routes to deal with internally before we sought external help from regulators. As per our duties as Directors we have reported relevant wrongdoings to the appropriate regulators. Unfortunately we are now left in a situation where we have to resort to sharing this information in a public letter to defend ourselves. We ask that you vote NO on the 21st of April if, like us, you believe our organisation deserves better and should act in accordance with the principles we teach our youth members.

If you have any questions or concerns, as always we are happy to discuss them with you. To contact us please don't hesitate to reach out by email on ceist@proton.me