John Holland - Scouting Ireland - November 14th, 2026

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Hi Folks and fellow Scout volunteers. I would like to follow on regarding some of the posts I have seen on social media. I am not a legal expert and I have no authority to speak on behalf of Scouting Ireland. The opinions here are my own, based on my own lived experience.

As an abuse survivor (my uncle, not in scouting), this is not an abstract issue for me. My experience informs how I understand the lasting harm abuse causes and the importance of acknowledgement and accountability. I do not and could never ever speak for every survivor. Every survivor's experience is different and deeply personal. I only speak for myself, with the perspective of exactly one abuse survivor. I speak here in the hope that my lived experience might provide a greater understanding for others who may only have information and experience through social and traditional media channels.

I also speak here as a scout volunteer, an ex-board member, and as someone who, after leaving the board for personal reasons, stayed on two subcommittees (Finance, Audit & Risk as well as Governance) to help the board and management team steer us through these difficult times. I speak as someone who, along with many others, has worked tirelessly to help steer us through these very difficult times in the hope of getting the best outcome for the youth entrusted to us.

I joined the board for one reason: my wife and our group leader believed my governance and business experience would be able to help make a difference. I really, really hope she was right!

What I hope more than anything is that the following will help bring more unity and help some understandably angry people focus their anger where it deserves to be, at the perpetrators and those who would throw Scouting Ireland and our wonderful volunteers (that includes the board…yes they are VOLUNTEERS too!) under the bus. Believe me, I am also very very angry and frustrated.

I am very proud to be part of an organisation, unlike other organisations, that voted to take responsibility for the Scouting Ireland membership's part in this tragedy. BRAVO to each and every member who voted and supports this position today. You realise that collectively people made bad decisions, could not believe what was happening, and maybe did nothing or looked the other way. But we are an amazing, ethical organisation that collectively was not afraid to stand up and be counted.

Things in life are rarely black and white or as black and white as we would want or as black and white as some would like to portray. So here I go….. let's get into it in a bit more detail on some of the statements and questions posted here.

1) Scouting will continue if Scouting Ireland goes into liquidation.

a. How many Group Leaders, Group Council members, County Commissioners & Provincial Commissioners will want to take the responsibility and risk for their groups without the support of Scouting Ireland or a similar umbrella organisation? Some will, but how many? Half?
b. So how many groups will close down if Scouting Ireland goes into liquidation?
c. How quickly could an alternative umbrella organisation to Scouting Ireland be spun up? Yes, a company already exists waiting in the wings. I know some of the amazing

people involved. Unfortunately, it may turn out to be needed, and if that happens I would support them wholeheartedly, but in reality:

How quickly could they have:

i. Insurances in place, DNO, Public Liability, employee liability?
ii. A relationship with the government, the Charities Regulator?
iii. A qualified safeguarding team?
iv. Membership of WOSM?
v. Funding & banking?
vi. A CFO, a CEO, and a board?
vii. A relationship with the property trust companies?
viii. Would only one organisation be set up or might two or more rival organisations set up?

d. How many groups would really survive while people try and set a new organisation up?
e. Bottom line: if the government allows Scouting Ireland to go into liquidation, the damage would be immense, and a large number of groups will shut down and may never be set up again. Circa 25% of groups shut down and did not reopen after Covid. Scouting Ireland liquidation would be much, much worse in my opinion and would decimate scouting and set it back at least 20 years.

2) Scouting Ireland wants to sell our dens to pay the HAC debt

a. They don't and they can't, they are not the beneficial owner.
b. The only dens they might be able to sell are dens that are not in use for many years that the trust company let them or unused property where they could prove they are the beneficial owner, and this is hard and lengthy.
c. c.However, if Scouting Ireland goes into liquidation… all bets are off. The liquidator and/or legal firms will likely look to go after what they can further down the line. If you are a scout group that had an abuser and you have assets, join the dots: Scouting Ireland surviving is actually in your best interest!

3) Why are Scouting Ireland dragging survivors through the courts? Why can't they just set up a redress scheme like in the US?

a. They are not dragging survivors through the courts. Only one case has gone to court. Horrible, but necessary as it was, under legal advice, one of the abuse cases was picked as a test case to get an estimate of what settlements might cost. Without a test case that has gone through the legal system, there can be no estimate grounded in evidence, which would make insurance arbitration or any financial solutions impossible, as Scouting Ireland could not know how much to provision for from a financial perspective without this.
b. Circa 16 cases have already been settled out of court with full apologies as and when the court cases come up. The survivors were not dragged through a protracted court case; they and their legal team met with the SI legal team and an apology and settlement were agreed outside of court. This is the most prudent and practical way of dealing with these cases.
c. Horrific as it is, there are some in society who will chase ambulances and make fraudulent claims. The US scouts set up a a redress scheme fund, and there was a feeding frenzy, and they ended up going into liquidation. There is a reasonable

middle ground in making sure, within reason, that there is an actual case to hear and, when the case comes up to agree a settlement based on the facts/evidence available.

4) Why hasn't the insurance covered everything?

a. Insurance companies are a business; if they can find any contractual reason not to pay out, they will.
b. Sometimes we as humans just can't believe that our best friend X could possibly do anything like that! Well let me tell you they can. They are often the kindest, most fun, most genial beguiling people in the world. My uncle was everyone's favourite in our family, until one day he absolutely was not. Some abuse victims like me are lucky; those responsible for them make absolutely sure that the vulnerable child knows it is absolutely and unequivocally not their fault. Some are not believed or worse in my view, the adults around them won't make the difficult call because that abuser is more important to them for some reason. Pretty much every insurance policy has a clause where you must inform them as soon as the organisation becomes aware that something has happened. This was not always done unfortunately, for a variety of reasons.
c. Arbitration (negotiating what will and will not be covered by a policy) took too long and was too expensive. Unfortunately, for too long the insurance company had no incentive to agree a figure quickly, and Scouting Ireland did not have any strong levers to force them to. Thankfully this closed last year, and finally the organisation could move on and focus on the actual funding gap, until arbitration closed and the test case mentioned above was run, no one knew with any degree of accuracy.

5.) Why didn't the board do this or that – fill in your own personal peev!

a. The board are a bunch of humans with plenty of human imperfections
b. They are VOLUNTEERS just like you, but fair play they agreed to take on more and try to help the organisation move forward.
c. It's very easy to have expertise in hindsight
d. Sometimes people join a board for the wrong reasons (ego) as opposed to being humble and working with fellow board members to reach consensus. They need to be right and important, in the media all the time, and be "vindicated" when they are wrong, as opposed to quietly getting on with what needs to be done.
e. Thankfully, there is now more information for members on what work on the board actually is and what the board does, it's responsibilities and the skills and attitude needed, as well a competency matrix for the board in order to try and get the best expertise onto the board.

I hope the above helps, I am really angry and frustrated by the situation we find ourselves in. Focussing my anger at other scouters, board members, the CEO instead of on the perpetrators and those who have the power to save Scouting Ireland would only make things worse. More than ever we need to work together and support the board and our CEO. I believe that is really is the route to the best outcome for Scouting in Ireland.

For me, the key message should be:

1) Scouting Ireland volunteers contribute more than **1,857,200** hours worth of youth work a year. That equates to circa **€59 million** worth of youth work, excluding wider

societal benefits per annum! And this is growing year one year. 12 new groups launched last year.

2) Between **900,000** and **1.2 Million adults** in Ireland have had either direct or household exposure to scouting in Ireland and circa **650,000** have been scouts or scout leaders themselves.
3) Unlike other organisations, Scouting Ireland members voted to take responsibility for the organisation's part in this tragedy.
4) The organisation is not asking for a handout; we are asking for a loan. The Government could give us a loan for €8m at no expense to the taxpayer. It is a rounding error on the education budget and a small fraction of the value the organisation delivers. Scouting Ireland can afford to pay it back with interest. We just need a hand to get over the next couple of years where there are larger numbers of cases to settle.

The whole thing is complex and emotive. If any her would like to chat about any of the above, feel free to DM me. I'm sure there will be a lot more communication about the plan to close the gap in the coming weeks. We may even have to organise ourselves and get out on the streets if the government doesn't listen to Sean and our Board.

Yours in Scouting,

John Holland