

**Scouting Ireland
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L11-2018

10th June 2018

RE: Statement to Members

Dear Scouts and Scouters,

The Board of Scouting Ireland condemns in the strongest possible terms the campaign within our organisation which seeks to undermine the very important work currently being undertaken to strengthen safeguarding within our organisation.

The Board totally rejects the false and misleading representations of the work being undertaken by Ian Elliott, one of the foremost experts in safeguarding in Ireland whose reputation is beyond reproach. Mr Elliott's work has been exemplary and his Reports fully accepted by the Board. We are fortunate to have a person of Mr Elliott's experience and standing working with us to ensure that Scouting Ireland becomes an organisation where best practice safeguarding procedures are embedded into our organisation. The Board is at a loss to understand why any member would seek to undermine this work.

We are also aware of attempts to undermine the investigation being undertaken by Lorna Lynch, BL. Ms Lynch was engaged by the Board to investigate very serious matters in relation to safeguarding in our organisation and the Board has full confidence in Ms Lynch and the investigation underway.

Accountability must come from the top and, as he stated at the time, it is for this reason that Christy McCann stepped aside while the current investigation is ongoing. This was the responsible course of action to take and Mr McCann was supported by the Board. It is wrong and irresponsible to suggest that any individual in Scouting Ireland has 'been shafted'. Indeed the whole purpose of the investigation is to ensure that this does not happen.

The investigation by Lorna Lynch is taking longer than anticipated but this is not unusual in an enquiry of this nature. The Board is giving Ms Lynch the time she needs to conduct a thorough investigation and also to ensure that all individuals named in the terms of reference are accorded due process. This is in the best interests of the individuals involved and in the best interests of Scouting Ireland. We are committed to communicating with the individuals named in the report first, and with the wider

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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scouting community, once Ms Lynch has concluded her investigation and her findings considered by the Board.

The work of Ian Elliott and the investigation by Lorna Lynch is fully endorsed by the Board who are determined to ensure that Scouting Ireland is an organisation where adult volunteers and members can be assured of a safe environment. The Board has overseen this work at every step and is fully satisfied with the progress being made. We fully support and have confidence in John Lawlor, CEO of Scouting Ireland who has been leading this work on behalf of the Board. In so doing, he has displayed considerable courage in challenging practices that do not meet the required standards of a leading organisation like Scouting Ireland. The unprovoked attacks on John Lawlor are abhorrent to the Board and all right thinking members of Scouting Ireland. John has always acted with integrity and in the best interests of Scouting Ireland, putting the interests and welfare of the young people in our organisation to the fore. As CEO John Lawlor has overseen extraordinary growth in our organisation and the winning of the World Scout Moot for Ireland.

We are extremely concerned that some members believe it is possible to postpone the vote on new governance structures at our EGM on the 30th of June next until the current investigation is complete.

This displays a worrying lack of understanding of the very precarious financial position of our organisation and of the work over the past four years on our governance project which has been led by volunteers.

The new board structures have been developed to reflect the operations of Scouting Ireland and to ensure we meet the expected governance standards demanded of an organisation of our size and scale. They are critical to restoring confidence in Scouting Ireland and to providing the necessary assurance to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs that our governance structures are fit for purpose. The new board structures are key to restoring funding to the organisation and the current Board is fully behind the proposals.

If government funding is not restored in the coming weeks we will be forced to close our Scouting Ireland offices and will be unable to provide the services essential to the operations of scout groups across Ireland.

The new governance structures which will be voted on at the EGM on the 30th of June next are the result of four years of long and hard work, undertaken by a committed

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team of volunteers and our professional staff, and have been produced with the assistance independent experts in this area.

We recommend that members familiarise themselves with the proposals by attending any of the provincial meetings being held and attend the EGM on the 30th of June. A vote in favour of the new structures will help ensure the long term survival of our organisation.

Finally, the Board apologises unreservedly to members who feel we have not been proactive enough in updating you on progress in respect of the process underway. We commit to doing a better job of communicating with members in the future. Likewise, we ask and expect that all our members will act responsibly, in accordance with the Scout Law and Promise and allow the current work to be completed so that we can move forward in confidence and united in our common purpose of serving young people throughout our communities in a safe and protective environment.

Yours in Scouting,

**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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