

The Board and I hope you are enjoying Scouting outdoors as we welcome the summer months. The main priority of everyone at Scouting Ireland is our youth members and their well-being. It is vital we all do everything we can to ensure Scouting is provided to our members. We recognise that Groups need to be supported by volunteers and staff so that we can all keep Scouting. Our Provincial Commissioners, County Commissioners and Group Leaders are a constant support to Groups and their work is even more crucial now. It is imperative that staff return to full-time hours so that full service is restored to Groups. In parallel, we have been working on addressing the outcomes and feedback from the AGM.

Over the last two years we have focused on safety at Scouting Ireland, and we have successfully addressed the concerns of parents, the Department, the Charities Regulator, and our insurance providers. I acknowledge that at times we have not brought all our membership along with us. In some cases, we have not communicated what we have done as well as we should have, in others we have not explained our constraints and reasoning so that everyone could understand our decisions. We have always made our decisions in good faith based on all information available to us. We will now spend time reflecting, listening, and working out what can be done to change the things we can and explain what we cannot.

We know that listening to membership is more important now than ever. We are proposing to improve two-way communication with members and provide opportunities for local volunteers to meet with board members. Dates of future Board meetings are provided below, and all correspondence received at least a week before each meeting (to [board@scouts.ie](mailto:board@scouts.ie)) will be discussed and responded to within a week of the meeting. We have agreed dates for the AGM, GL Conference and National Conference which are also listed below. We will attend all provincial conferences to better engage with membership and we will communicate through webinars and video conferences with commissioners and provincial teams.



Pat Kidney  
Chairperson, Scouting Ireland

### **Dates of Board Meetings**

- 13 June
- 3 July
- 15 Aug
- 11 Sep
- 10 Oct
- 13 Nov
- 12 Dec
- 15 Jan
- 13 Feb
- 12 Mar
- 10 Apr
- 14 May

## **Other Important Dates**

- GL Conference - either 25 or 26 Sep depending on venue availability
- Youth Assembly - 15 Jan 2022
- National Conference - 19 Feb 2022
- Youth Forum - 12 March 2022
- AGM - 21 May 2022

*\*Please note that open calls for project teams for the GL conference and the National Conference will be published in due course.*

## **Scouting during Covid-19**

Updates are emerging for both Northern Ireland and in the Republic and the SI roadmaps are being updated presently.

## **Turn the Lights on Campaign**

There has been positive feedback from Oireachtas members and local councillors in the ROI. All our local and national representatives are aware of the positive impact of Scouting and the numbers involved throughout the country as well as the financial challenges we have emerging from the pandemic. The campaign seeks additional financial support for both Groups and the national organisation to re-establish operations and further develop our contribution to society. We encourage Groups to continue to engage with local politicians and to demonstrate to them the value and impact of Scouting.

## **Financial Position**

The financial position of Scouting Ireland is reflected in our decision to introduce short working hours and our inability to replace retiring and leaving staff. The effect of budget cuts and reduced staff resources is that work other than Safeguarding is reduced to a three-day week. Some work and projects will be suspended altogether while others will progress more slowly than would normally be possible. We propose to return to full working hours and expand the staff team over time and the support of our volunteer teams and our Groups is appreciated. There continues to be open calls for project teams which we encourage our volunteers to consider, particularly in the context of our reduced financial and staff team capacity.

## **Census Returns**

Scouting Ireland requested that Groups completed a balancing statement by 30 June 2021. This year was an exceptionally challenging year and so we separated the collection of membership numbers from the collection of the membership fees. The purpose of the balancing statement is to verify the accuracy of the Census which was submitted earlier in the year. The balancing statement will facilitate the migration of data to OSM and minimise the

work involved at Group level. Groups and Group Leaders have been advised that records of members that have been removed/ inactive, will not transfer to the new system.

We have confirmed that the recording of new joiners registered since January (ie. people who were not registered in 2020) will not generate additional costs for groups in the 2021 registration. We encourage all Groups to engage with their PSO or with national office if they have not been able to register members or complete payments of fees for any reason this year. With regards to payments, we recognise that some Groups do not have the ability and/or resources to pay fees this year and it is our position that such Groups and their individual members continue to be part of Scouting Ireland. Key to this is active engagement with the relevant PSO and we ask all Groups in this position, if they have not done so, to discuss their circumstances with their PSO as soon as they can. Further information will be issued to Group Leaders shortly.

## **Sustainability**

The Sustainable Scouting from Home programme has seen over 2200 young people and 495 Scouters take part - that is on average around 6 hours of action equalling 16,170 hours of action for the SDGs. The team has further planned community actions. We will be looking to bring forward a policy to support to our strategy. The SDG's will be part of our programme for many years to come and will become embedded in our governance. As we adopt more and better sustainable practices, we will integrate sustainability information into our reporting.

## **Family Camping Available at National Scout Centres**

At our Board meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, we received a comprehensive briefing from the CEO and the safeguarding manager, including an explanation of the risk analysis. Following this briefing and follow up questions the board are satisfied that the approach to family camping is low risk. We are fully supportive of the National Scout Centre Family Camping Initiative which has returned for Summer 2021 in Larch Hill Scout Centre, Lough Dan Scout Centre, and several of the network Scouting Ireland campsites for a period of 10 weeks. This initiative runs from Monday 14 June 2021 until Sunday 22 August 2021. You can read the FAQs [here](#).

## **AGM 2021**

The 2021 AGM was held online and successfully delivered on all the regulatory requirements of our company AGM. 177 Groups registered up to five votes each this year. Up to 285 people voted on the motions. Given the disruption caused by the pandemic, every Group regardless of being active or not and regardless of whether they had paid or not paid membership for any reason were welcome to attend and engage fully. We appreciate the time taken by everyone in submitting and drafting motions, speaking on the day, and engaging with the whole process.

## **Director Positions for Election post-AGM and AGM 2022**

The Board of Directors has several vacant positions – two external directors and two casual vacancies. The recruitment for the external directors is underway and is being supported via Board Match. The casual vacancies will be recruited through an open call internally in the coming weeks. The casual vacancy appointment is for the period from selection until the next AGM. We ask that you consider applying if this is something you have the expertise and enthusiasm for. We have begun conducting our Directors' Skills Assessment to identify what specific areas we will need to focus on to ensure the board has all the skills and experience it needs both on the Board and on Sub-Committees.

## **Discipline**

The previous Board of Scouting Ireland fully accepted the recommendations made by Ian Elliott and had already begun the work of revisiting and revising policies to strengthen them and develop a proper code of discipline by the time the new board of 2018 was appointed. Scouting Ireland committed to this at the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs in May 2018. These commitments together with the National Council decision of the membership of Scouting Ireland in respect of governance changes enabled Government funding, and perhaps more importantly confidence of the Government and other stakeholders such as Tusla and the insurers to be restored. While all our policies, including disciplinary, are subject to regular review there is no question of this Board setting aside or terminating the disciplinary policy.. We have, however, reviewed this suite of policies and a final draft is being prepared for the next board meeting.