

**Irish Forest School Association - Annual General Meeting 2019
25 May 2019, Fota Education Centre, Cork.**

Attendees: Approx. 58 Members including ACORN Committee

Committee: Joan Whelan, Caroline Carroll, Ciara Hinksman, Mirjam Bloem, Orla Gallagher, Shane Furlong, Gretta Murphy, Lucy Bell, Nichola Salmon

Agenda

1. Minutes of previous AGM
2. Chairperson's report
3. Financial Report
4. Social Media update
5. Membership update
6. Ratify Constitution of IFSA
7. Election of ACORN
8. Autumn Gathering date: 19th October 2019, Dublin (provisional)
9. Member announcements
10. Close of Meeting/announcement of results

Joan welcomed all to AGM and highlighted the importance of the AGM for all members.

1. Minutes of previous AGM

Minutes from previous AGM in 2018 were emailed to all members and are available on IFSA website. Minutes were proposed by Ciara Hinksman, Seconded by Nichola Salmon.

2. Chairperson's report (Joan Whelan)

IFSA is still in its 3-year startup phase, year three.

Following the 2018 AGM, Lucy Bell joined the ACORN. The ACORN has regular voluntary meetings, generally in Dublin or Kilkenny, approx. every 6-8 weeks.

Joan acknowledged and thanked ACORN for their commitment and mentioned the spirit of FS in IFSA business.

Sally O Donnell has recently departed the ACORN. Joan thanked Sally for her commitment, wisdom and contribution to IFSA, Forest School and outdoor learning in Ireland.

The output from the Conversation Café from 2018 Conference helped shape the Vision Day the ACORN held in Kilkenny in August 2018. Here IFSA's Mission Statement was created led by external facilitator Deirdre O Donoghue. Joan read the Mission Statement to the approval of the attendees.

The successful Autumn Gathering in Clondeboye Estate was highlighted and the strong connections established here with NIFSA.

Over the year, IFSA has seen an increased public awareness of FS.

A newsletter was emailed to members and contacts in December. Content is sought for further correspondence.

Joan flagged the Heritage in Schools intend to advertise a call for facilitators later in the year and will include second level schools in their remit. A good opportunity for members to bring FS to schools. Thanks to Gretta, IFSA placed a submission to the Heritage Council following publication of their draft plan.

Acknowledged insurance remains an outstanding issue for members. IFSA have made good contacts with O'Driscoll O'Neill company, inviting them to last two conferences.

IFSA is now a registered charity following extensive work during 2018 and 2019.

IFSA GDPR Policy was developed and published on the website.

IFSA Child Safeguarding Policy was developed and published on the website.

IFSA Conflict of Interest Policy was developed and issued to members of the ACORN.

IFSA was invited to be part of the Forest Stewardship Council, this is slow process but ongoing with Lucy Bell as our representative.

IFSA continue with CPD, quality training. Joan attended both FS training programmes – Hauthe with Down to Earth in Galway and Circle of Life Rediscovery with Earthforce Education in Wicklow. Thanks to both for allowing IFSA be present to meet new trainees.

An IFSA Training rate was established for this conference as a result.

A map of FS practitioners in Ireland is being developed, led by Orla Gallagher and is on the IFSA website. Forms are available or contact IFSA to put yourself on map.

In the coming year, the membership structure is to be progressed.

IFSA has joined Leave No Trace Ireland as members.

IFSA have a joint project with Kids Own Publishing. Members will be invited to participate.

3. Financial Report (Caroline Carroll)

- Annual financial reports are available on the IFSA website and some hard copies on the table present in the AGM room.
- The accounts have a balance of €5062.00 at the end of the financial year May 2019-April 2019. Conference expenses are to be deducted with an expected balance of €2500 remaining.
- This balance will be used to maintain the website during the year, work on membership improvements and grant applications.
- Caroline placed on record thanks to all members for their contribution to IFSA.
- Joan mentioned grant sources are limited, the organisation do not want to take opportunity from possible members grant success. IFSA rely primarily on membership fees.
- All workshop providers at 2019 Conference are voluntary including keynote speaker Sara Knight.

4. Communications, Social Media update (Orla Gallagher)

Social media is used to increase reach and awareness of IFSA and FS in Ireland.

Social media following, reach and engagement has grown in past year:

- 2000 followers on Facebook
- 500 on Instagram
- 200 on Twitter

IFSA Facebook group for members only. All are encouraged to join, participate and share content.

A call was made for members to send IFSA/Orla content to further increase awareness.

A new mass-mailing tool is being sourced which is Irish-based. It will be used to send quarterly newsletters. Again, a call for content was issued to members.

5. Membership update (Mirjam Bloem)

Approx. 150 members including new trainees.

Booking system improvements were made over the year for the annual conference.

6. Ratify Constitution of IFSA (Joan Whelan)

IFSA's charitable status required established of a Constitution.

This is available on the website and is of a standard format.

The Constitution must be ratified at the AGM and subsequent changes may only be ratified at the AGM.

Constitution was proposed by Gretta Murphy, Seconded by Kerry Walker

7. Election of ACORN

There are four Officer positions on the IFSA ACORN committee and six Ordinary places.

An email to all members was issued in advance of the AGM seeking expressions of interest/nominations.

The four Officer positions were uncontested and are as follows:

- Chairperson: Joan Whelan
- Treasurer: Caroline Carroll
- Membership: Mirjam Bloem
- Social media/communications: Orla Gallagher

Each of the above were proposed by Gretta Murphy, Seconded by Barbara Sullivan.

There are seven nominees for the six ordinary places on the ACORN as follows:

- Marc Barker
- Lucy Bell
- Marian Dempsey
- Shane Furlong
- Ciara Hinksman
- Gretta Murphy
- Nichola Salmon

Each nominee was afforded a couple of minutes to introduce themselves and their interest in the position.

Marian Dempsey was absent from the meeting. Joan introduced Marian to the meeting.

All present are members of IFSA and so entitled to vote (including nominees). Ballot papers were provided to all present and members were asked to place six X's beside the names of those voted for.

Three ACORN members and one independent member, not involved in election, collated votes. These were Caroline Carroll, Mirjam Bloem, Orla Gallagher and Tara de la Casas.

The following six members were deemed elected to the 2019 ACORN:

- Marc Barker
- Lucy Bell
- Shane Furlong
- Ciara Hinksman
- Gretta Murphy
- Nichola Salmon

The unsuccessful nominee, Marian Dempsey, will become a reserve member as needed by IFSA over the year.

8. Autumn Gathering date (Joan Whelan)

The provisional date for the one-day Autumn Gathering is 19th October 2019 with Dublin as the planned location. More details to follow later.

9. Member announcements (opened to floor)

- Arran Towers – suggested idea of mentor/peer supervision of FS practice
- Kerry Walker – IFSA West Skillshare to be organised, maybe June
- Roisin – Summer retreat for Primary teachers, 19 August, Elderrooms
- Request for IFSA guidelines for schools for inspectorate. Joan said to contact her for information. Suggestion to put school curriculum links on website.
- Grainne – Teacher organic garden course in July
- Ciara Hinksman – Jon Cree 3-day Challenging Behaviour CPD, end November. Also Marina Robb course on mental health and wellbeing with nature pedagogy.
- Shane Furlong & Marc Barker – Wild Coastal Immersion Weekend, Badger's Hill, Wexford in August. See wildnature.ie.
- Niamh – Pippa Bondy 4 day residential in October.
- Marc Barker – Fundraiser, 3day camps call for volunteers. Story immersion camp.
- Joan Whelan – PhD research will need survey of members to review FS practice in Ireland. Would appreciate member participation.
- ? – Childcare module of FS with Lucy Bell & Ciara Hinksman. FETAC Level 6, Pre-School course with Intro to FS.
- Lucy Bell – Primary teacher training week with Lucy & Ciara on FS, Castletown House, Kildare in July.
- Johanna Browne – Expressed thanks to ACORN and Conference organisers.
- Ciara Hinksman presented plate to Joan Whelan expressing thanks for commitment to IFSA.

10. Close of Meeting/announcement of results

As above.

Minutes taken by Nichola Salmon