



# Irish Forest School Association

**Minutes of AGM held on 28 May 2022, Tanagh, Co Monaghan (for Approval)**

**52 members attended**

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of 2021 AGM for approval – available online at <https://irishforestschoollassociation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IFSA-AGM-2021-Annual-Report.pdf>
3. Chairperson's report (Joan)
4. Financial report (Caroline)
5. Membership Report (Mirjam)
6. Social Media/communications Report (Kerry)
7. Insurance Campaign (Ciara)
8. Approval of IFSA Code of Conduct (Lucy) (attached)
9. Ratification of ACORN for 2022 - 2023 The following are seeking election:  
Joan Whelan , Caroline Carroll, Mirjam Bloem, Orla Gallagher, Ciara Hinksman, Lucy Bell, Lucy O Hagan, Kerry Walker
10. Member news
11. Close

Minutes were approved. Proposed by: Cliodhna Seconded by: Ciara

## **Chairperson's report**

Welcome to our 6<sup>th</sup> AGM. This report covers the period 1 May 2021 to 30 April 2022.

Following the AGM in August 2021, we have continued to meet online in September, Oct, Dec, Jan, Feb and Apr.

Special thanks to Shane who has been part of the IFSA ACORN for the past six years. Thank you, Shane, for your commitment to IFSA over the past four years. We wish you and your family well as you settle in the West of Ireland.

As always, I would like to thank all the members of the ACORN for all the effort they put in to make our meetings so energising and positive. We try to ensure that the spirit of FS is part of the way we do our business on your behalf and that is working very successfully. There is a huge voluntary commitment put in to make the organisation successful and, on your behalf, I want to thank each and every one of them for that commitment.

## EVENTS

In this past year, we again focussed on providing support for members as practice resumed and the pandemic began to ebb. Meeting online has been very effective and a way to reach more people. The Autumn Gathering is now established as a regional event. We want to remind you that this is a great chance to step up to the plate and showcase your practice in your region. Important way to build connections locally, accessing volunteers and supporting new trainees. In 2021 the Autumn Gathering (Back in the Woods) was hosted on 9<sup>th</sup> Oct

Thanks to:

South (Cork and Kerry) hosted by Tara de la Casas and Mirjam Bloem and Kerry Walker  
Mid West (Limerick) hosted by Joanne Davis  
West (Galway) hosted by Carol Barrett  
East (Wicklow) hosted by Marc Barker and Amber Godwin  
Midlands (Westmeath) hosted by Lucy Bell and Lucy O Hagan

Spring Webinar series. Over 60 registered for each one. Again, this is now a key event in our calendar as we emerge from the quiet winter months. Thanks to Ross in Dublin, Niamh and Arran in Cork and Lucy O Hagan in Westmeath. Unfortunately there were some difficulties technically and so the webinars are not fully online. As we had hoped.

QQI Level Six Training – with Brigid's Garden. IFSA completed a survey of FSLs in Ireland. This is a really exciting development and we are very grateful to Brigid's Garden and their commitment, both financial and philosophical to this project. Lucy B, Kerry, Carol B and Ciara, all members are involved in that project.

GOVERNANCE – as you we have started work on a quality framework. The first policy as part of this process is a code of Conduct for members, which we will vote on today. Thanks to Lucy Bell.

We made our annual Charities return

We sent a submission to the STEM Education review

Insurance Campaign - major piece of work this year – Ciara to report separately

General for members

We also kept in touch via email and tried to respond to your queries and suggestions as well as possible.

We continue to provide Garda vetting for FS trainees and leaders who have no access to training through other channels, through the Volunteer Centre Network. I want to highlight again the importance of full compliance with the law in terms of Garda vetting and child protection for us all.

We remain members of Leave No Trace.

Insurance remains an ongoing concern, not just for FS but for many businesses and voluntary settings.

We respond as well as we can to queries from both members and non-members

Our map of FS practitioners is on the website. And I would encourage any of you who are practicing and who are not yet on the map to complete the forms -we will send the link again following this meeting

We agreed our next tasks going forward are to:

Internal: Funding stream/ website revamp

Governance: Quality Framework – continued policy development

External Lobbying stakeholders: who makes decisions that affect us (e.g. Coillte, Heritage Council, DCYA, DES)

Supporting members:

Regional groups Use of regional meetings to provide discussion/network/sharing forums for member practitioners,

Thank you all for your continued support.

Joan Whelan

Proposed by Ruairi /Seconded by Eithne

## **IFSA Financial Annual Report**

Reporting period: 1 May 2021 – 30 April 2022

Balance Forward - 1st May 2021	€6,333.63
Income for the period 1st May 2021 – 30th April 2022	€2,235

Expense for the period 1st May 2021 – 30th April 2022	€1,613.53
Closing Balance as of 30th April 2022	€7,019.69

Income: May 2021 – April 2022

Membership Fees	€1,485
Autumn Gathering	€510
Spring Webinars	€240

Total €2,235

Expense: May 2021 – April 2022

IT	€403.90
Garda Vetting	€20.00
Bank Charges	€33.50
Insurance	€385.00
Autumn Gathering	€548.15
Spring Webinar's	€150
IFSA Supplies	€72.98
Total	€1,613.53

Proposed: Orla    Seconded: Cliodhna

**Membership**

Maintaining our current membership and growing the membership of the Irish Forest School Association is core to our aims. In doing so we can offer you benefits such as:

- Supporting the growth and development of the Forest School movement in Ireland
- Discounts in attending our annual conference
- Discounts in attending our Autumn Gathering CPD
- Access to Garda Vetting\*
- Discounts with affiliate organisations e.g., training/professional development workshops with Earth Force Education.

We are currently working hard on resources for members, and hope to be able to offer further benefits to members as our growth facilitates.

To this end, we have seen a good growth in members this past year, with over 200 members on our current mailing list. We notice an increase each time there is training in Ireland. 16 members have joined since the Spring webinars. Our events this year online also drew in new members. Membership will remain at €35 and current membership is extended to April 2023.

**Social Media**

Our profile continues to grow apace. We have over 4,000 facebook followers and over 1500 on Instagram. Next step is to develop our twitter feed.

### **Insurance**

We are aware of grave difficulties for members in accessing insurance. We have joined the Irish Alliance for Insurance Reform. We have had a successful and high-profile campaign, including a slot on RTE prime news programmes. to highlight the issues and completed a survey of members to inform our stance and approach.

### **Governance**

Following a discussion, members approved a Code of conduct for members. This will act as a starting point for developing a grievance procedure. Members were encouraged to adopt and draw from IFSA policies for their own practice as appropriate.

Proposed: Kerry Seconded: Grainne

### **Election of ACORN.**

The following were elected to the ACORN for 2022-2023:

Joan Whelan, Caroline Carroll, Mirjam Bloem, Orla Gallagher, Ciara Hinksman, Lucy Bell, Lucy O Hagan, Kerry Walker

Proposed: Caitriona Seconded: Marian

Claire Samways, Proposed: Jenny Seconded: Carol

Caitriona Ni Cheallaigh Proposed: Ciara; Seconded: Marian

Eithne Fitzgerald. Proposed: Lucy Seconded: Ruairi

It was agreed roles would be set out following the first meeting of the ACORN.

### **Member news and AOB:**

Jenny and Yuki mentioned a blog on the DSPNS website

Kerry sent out a request for whoever might have the Creative Journal created following the Autumn Gathering in DCU.

Amber mentioned the possibilities for FS in the new short courses being developed for the Junior Certificate.

Sinead Walsh extended a welcome to anyone getting started to visit her at Rain or Shine Forest School in Kilkenny, as did Hightime Forest School

The possibility to convert the OCN level 3 training as FSL to the proposed new Irish QQI level 6 was raised.

The possibility of a second level grouping of members was raised

There was a discussion on possible member categories. And the use of the IFSA logo.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm.