

## **Draft Minutes of the AGM of The Irish Forest School Pedagogy Association CLG (for approval at AGM 2025)**

**Held Sun 8th June 2025, Common Knowledge, Co Clare, 11.15-12.30.**

**51 members attended**

### **AGENDA**

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of 2024 AGM for approval -see <https://irishforestschoollassociation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Final-Minutes-of-AGM-Approval-at-AGM-2025.pdf>
3. Chairperson's report
4. Financial report and approval of accounts/ accountants
5. Membership Report
6. Social Media/communications Report
7. Regional report
8. Ratification of Directors for 2025 - 2026
9. AOB
10. Close

### **Minutes**

The chairperson, Joan welcomed everyone to the meeting, the 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM of the The Irish Forest School Pedagogy Association CLG.

The minutes of the 2024 AGM were presented. They were proposed by LMCM and seconded by SS for approval. Approved unanimously.

Joan delivered the chairperson's report for the period 1 May 2024 to 30 April 2025.

Following the AGM in June 2024, the Board met regularly online and in person online over the course of the year. We continued what has now become a tradition of starting the year with an in-person Day at Lucy's home and land in Co Kildare and again the sun shined on our endeavours. We set out our priorities and shared out the roles for the year ahead. Our approval from the Charities Regulator for the appropriate charitable status, came through on Friday, 31st May (RCN 20206667) so it should be recorded as a milestone for us of the past year. This way of organising both protects us as Directors of the company and as trustees of the charity and opens up avenues in terms of potential both public and private funding going forward.

Joan thanked her fellow directors/ ACORNs for the huge voluntary effort they put into all IFSA activities on behalf of all our members. She reiterated how the board try to ensure that the values of Forest School are imbued in how we conduct the business of IFSA on your behalf. Joan thanked our new directors/ ACORNs Sonia, Leona, Cathy and LK who joined us this time last year and complemented them on their contribution to the work of the association.

### **EVENTS**

Events are core to our mission to promote FS across the island of Ireland. There were as follows:

## **Annual Gathering**

The IFSA Annual Gathering 2024, our 6<sup>th</sup> on the theme of Restoration - reflecting on how we can restore our woodlands and green spaces took place in Slieve Aughty Centre, Kylebrack, Loughrea, Co. Galway. 67 participants attended over the weekend of 7-9<sup>th</sup> June. Our keynote speaker was Catherine Cleary, founder of Pocket Forests Workshops and walks took place as follows:

- 1: Willow Bird Feeder with Kate and Alan Burrows of Westcountry Willows
- 2: Foraging with Olwyn Williams
- 3: Bushcraft - 1 match fire making challenge! with Dylan Van Leeuwen
- 4: Permaculture with Esther Zyderlaan
5. A walk and permaculture talk through the Slieve Aughty orchard and organic garden.

## **Autumn Regional Gatherings**

This was followed by our regional events in Autumn 2024. 119 people booked onto 9 subsidised Regional Gatherings. We say a big mile buiochas to the regional co- coordinators who led on these gatherings. 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. The model we have developed is that IFSA manage bookings and offers financial support. In 2024, each event can access up to €250 from IFSA towards expenses (ie venue/ provisions/ workshop leader/ equipment), paid upon receipt of an invoice. Details of the 2024 gatherings:

Clare, Limerick & Tipperary Region

Sat 16 Nov 2024 11:00 - 15:00

The Old Creamery, Clooneyogan South. Lahinch, Clare, V95 A4CC

We will gather to prepare a seasonal meal together over the fire with wild tea.

We will guide you to make flower/leaf printed beeswax sandwich wraps.

Please bring a song that you may like to share, a bowl, cutlery and your won cup. And dress for the weather! Co-ordinators: Lisa and Jasmine

Midlands Region

Sat 16 Nov 2024 11:00 - 14:00

Baile na Rínca 10 mins west of Oldcastle, Co.

Meath, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/FdzqZfqQpnzQ2B827>

We will wander while “tracking” the story on the landscape which is created by the more than human world. Following our wanderings you may connect with nature and with yourself in a sit spot. We will share lunch in community fireside (soup provided), with an invite to share reflections, connections, story, song. Please bring; a camp chair, snacks to share, own cup and bowl cutlery. We will be walking through a field and woodland over mucky/wet terrain – so bring suitable footwear. Carpool - The location won't take 15 cars – may take 10. Can park at Oldcastle or Castlepollard and share lifts from there as an option.

Co-ordinators: Cathy & Gráinne

Dublin Region

Sun 10 Nov 2024 10:00 - 13:00

Gormanstown College Demense, North Dublin

We will gather under the trees with a song workshop by Roisin, and then Ross will lead a workshop on firecraft and outdoor cooking.

Co-ordinators: Ross & Roisín

Cavan & Northern Ireland Region

Sat 9 Nov 2024 11:00 - 15:00

Cootehill, Cavan, H16CD98

Workshop with tracker and Play Therapist Cathy Daly. Gather around the campfire for chats and food. Please bring your own food and dress for the weather

Co-ordinator: Marian

Donegal/Sligo/Leitrim Region

Sat 2 Nov 2024 12:00 - 15:00

Sligo Woodland School, Sligo LETS Organic Garden, Cleaveragh Drive, Sligo, F91 X314

Celebration of the seasons

Opening & welcome circle, reflection on practices and skill sharing; a year in nature observational mandala and celtic calendar; storytelling, songs, ecology & art. Closing reflection circle. Please bring some food/dish to share around the fire.

Co-ordinators: Trisha

Wicklow & Kildare Region

Sat 19 Oct 2024 11:00 - 15:00

Glendarragh Cottage, Kilpedder, Wicklow

Sensuous somatic foraging and medicine making with Sophie Rieu. Time for chats and food and reflection too. Please bring food to share, small jars with lids if possible, stories, songs or ideas. Parking is limited so car pooling from Newtownmountkennedy preferable.

Co-ordinators: Jenny & Liz

Cork & Kerry Region

Sat 19 Oct 2024 10:00 - 15:00

Coille Mara, Killarney road, Sneem, Co. Kerry

Samhain gathering - needle felting and candle dipping crafts as well as songs, games, a pot luck lunch and lots of time for chats. Please bring; Plate/bowl, cup, cutlery, a dish to share for lunch, song, game or other skill to share. Please be aware that being punctual is important as we have an approx. 10 minute walk from the meeting point to the FS site. If it happens that someone is late, they will need to be collected by a member of the group, which obviously isn't a huge issue but nicer if everyone can relax into the space uninterrupted.

Co-ordinators: Mara & Yvonne

Galway & Mayo Region

Sat 19 Oct 2024 10:00 - 13:00

Kilcolgan ET, Kilcornan Woods, Clarinbridge, H91Y7HR

Exploring the Gifts of Samhain

We will take the opportunity to connect and reconnect to weave and wonder at the splendour of nature in autumn whilst growing our sense of community.

Activities: Making paint and nature paint brushes, decorate a FS community banner with our chant, communal sit spot, sound mapping, food and chat. Please bring plate, bowl, spoon, seat/camping chair if needed. Food will be vegetarian. Meet in the yard of Kilcolgan Educate

Together to depart at 9.45am, to be on site for 10. We will walk to our Forest school location from here. Please park at the swimming pool (car park is on the left as you drive up the main avenue from Clarinbridge) or at the playground car park. Access to toilets at the school.  
Co-ordinators; Joanne & Niabh

Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford & Waterford Region

Sun 6 Oct 2024 10:00 - 15:00

Shankill Castle, Carlow, R95N7F3

Willow workshop Heike Kahle, from Baurnafea Studio, will run a workshop on using willow. We will create something small along with time for skill sharing. We will cook lunch on the fire. Please bring some small contribution to a shared lunch.

Co-ordinators: Eithne & Sarah

### **Spring webinar series**

The 5th spring webinar series was also well attended and led by three powerful presentations. 78 people booked on to the Spring Webinars. Sessions are free for IFSA members or €15 for others. Price includes all 3 sessions.

Monday 24th February 2025

Forest School and the early years. Trisha will discuss her experience of working with the Early Years and share lots of projects, activities and ideas on what we can do with that age range in our wonderful outdoor spaces. She will also share how forest school practice offers a unique and creative solution to the educational environment and beyond. The holding of space for individual engagement through nature-based learning in a non-invasive, empowering and self-directed way. You can see more about what she does here: [Sligo Woodland School](#)

Monday 10th March 2025

Forest School and teenagers Barry's workshop will focus on outdoor developmental work with teenagers and will touch on the many programmes he delivers with this cohort through Venture Out. Check out the amazing work that Barry offers here: [Venture Out](#)

Monday 25th March

Supporting Neurodivergent learners in Forest School Diarmuid Heffernan and Gala Tomasso of [Cre-Aut](#) will be joined by Pouki of Pouki WildClan. This webinar will explore how to support neurodivergent learners in Forest School. Pouki will share her unique perspective on neurodiversity, blending personal insights with professional expertise to inspire understanding and celebrate the strengths of diverse minds.

Diarmaid and Gala will share their experiences using creative practices to support connection and belonging with neurodivergent learners. We are looking forward to connecting virtually with you soon.

### **Governance**

We've completed the process of the winding up the Irish Forest School Association Charity as agreed last year.

### **General**

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.

Going forward: A priority for the new ACORN is accessing funding to support the development of IFSA across Ireland. We've some exciting developments on that score which the new acorn will pursue.

Thank you all for your continued support. As you know, I take my leave of the ACORN at this meeting. I am deeply grateful to Forest School for the richness it has offered to my life both personally and as a teacher and how it has enhanced my understanding of the land and of community and education. It has been such an honour to be part of the development from the beginning of this now established and powerful organisation, and I look forward to seeing the Forest School community continue to thrive from a different vantage point as it were. Thank you all.

Joan Whelan

Proposed O G

Seconded M D

Approved unanimously

### **Financial report**

The treasurer presented the Annual Accounts (see separate pdf)

Proposed O G

Seconded M D

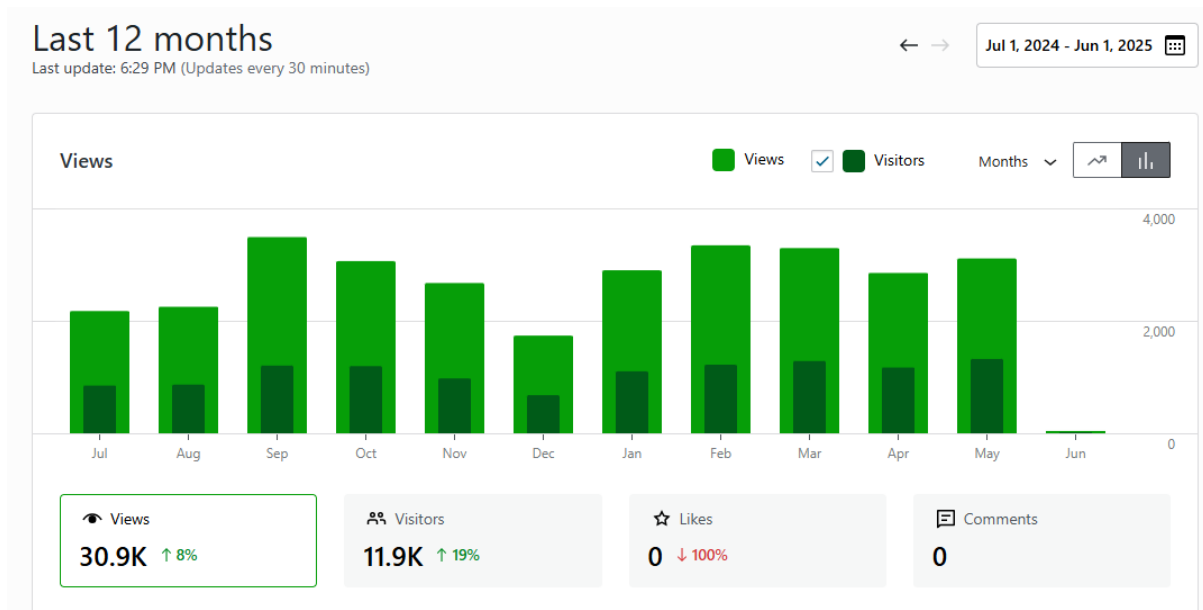
Approved unanimously

The meeting approved Michael Lonergan of Liston, Lonergan, Meade as out accountants for the coming year. It is the intention of the Directors to seek funding to support the development of the association going forward.

### **Membership Report**

We currently have over 200 members. Membership fee will be retained at €35 for the coming year. Trainee members are offered one year free membership. Member benefits include access to the members area and discounts of IFSA events.

### **Social Media/communications Report**



## Regional report

Numbers in the groups show steady growth and all groups are active, some more than others.

IFSA 1 - 12

IFSA 2 - 18

IFSA 3 - 12

IFSA 4 - 36

IFSA 5 - 36

IFSA 6 - 14

IFSA 7 - 19

IFSA 8 - 25

IFSA 9 - 29

IFSA10- 26

No problems to report. Mostly the groups act as a forum for networking, sharing information about events, locally and nationally and a discussion forum for queries. The groups also function to support FSLs seeking volunteer or paid qualified staff to help out at regular sessions and camps; to share advice about sourcing services ie tree surgery/ first aid courses and training as well as issues related to their practice and pedagogy in FS.

## Ratification of Directors for 2025 – 2026

The directors elected for 2025'26 are as follows:

Miriam Hurley Chairperson

Proposed: JD

Seconded:LMcM

Approved unanimously

Lucy Bell Secretary

Proposed:KW

Seconded:OG

Approved unanimously

Orla Gallagher  
Sonia McGuirk  
Ellie McEwan  
Kerry Walker  
Jenny Dungan  
LK Howells  
Leona Cronin  
Cathy Daly

Proposed: LK  
Seconded:RD  
Approved unanimously

#### **AOB**

OG proposed Joan Whelan, who has resigned from the Board as an honorary member of IFSA. This was seconded by LK. Orla offered a fulsome vote of thanks to Joan for her service to IFSA since its founding and her honorary membership was approved unanimously by the meeting. A presentation and a short ceremony to honour her service then took place.

**The meeting closed at 12.30pm.**