

**FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES  
SECRETARY'S REPORT - AGM 2018**

**Introduction**

This is the first time that the Secretary's Report to the Annual General Meeting has been issued to members with the other papers prior to the meeting.

In its review of corporate governance, the Executive Committee determined that the text of the Secretary's Report must be agreed by it before being delivered at the AGM. In addition, instead of being read out at the AGM, the report will be sent to the membership with the rest of the AGM papers so that societies may be better briefed on issues that might arise.

This process will ensure that the reports have the approval of the Executive and will reduce the time taken up at the AGM.

**Governance**

The attendance record of the members of the Executive Committee in between the 2017 AGM and 8 October 2018 is recorded in the following table.

<b>Committee member</b>	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Actual</b>
James Armour	7	4
Bridie Bradley	11	10
John Bradley	11	6
Florence Chambers	11	8
Patrick Devlin	11	11
John Dooher	11	11
Patrick Greer	5	4
John Hulme	11	11
Patrick McGuigan	8	4
Josephine Herbison	11	10
Dr Janice Holmes	9	6
Elizabeth Hoy	11	8
Aine Ni Duibhne	11	9
Bridgeen Rutherford	1	0

At its first meeting on 27 November 2017 the new Executive Committee, in reviewing the events at the AGM, decided that the primary need was to restore normality as quickly as possible and act so as to ensure that what had happened at the AGM would not be repeated. As one of the seven Executive Committee members specified in the Article of Association was the immediate past Chairman, the number of Committee members elected at the AGM exceeded those allowed by the Articles. This was resolved by one member of the Committee resigning, and then being co-opted.

The Committee then focused on three major issues that needed to be resolved as quickly as possible so as to enable the Federation to fulfil its mission

- a new and more effective sub-committee structure and working rules to allow for a more focused approach to planning and implementing Committee initiatives and involving more committee members – the aim was to have every member directly involved in committee work.

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- a comprehensive review of corporate governance, including the Executive Committee's acceptance and practice of collective responsibility.
- a full review of the Articles of Association

One result of this programme of work was an acceptance that the Committee's capacity to plan and implement a programme of events, such as seminars and workshops, would be limited in the current year.

A new, more inclusive, sub-committee structure was introduced, with clear rules and structures. The Committees; a Management Committee, Publications Committee and Programme Committee, several times before the end of the period to consider a range of issues identified by the Executive Committee and advise the Committee on options for action. The Committees considered a wide range of issues, only some of which had been progressed by the end of the financial year. The most important of these, on which work continued included –

- organising an early Summer Seminar,
- reviewing the Articles of Association,
- corporate governance issues,
- the future production of Due North,
- reviewing scope for an investment policy,
- improving communications with members and the wider community,
- the use of newsletters and social media,
- the modernisation of the website

The review of good governance took account of the guidance issued by Companies House and the Charities Commission in relation to charity trustee rights and responsibilities. The claims made at last year's AGM that the Charity Commission had expressed concern at the management of the Federation were proved to have been inaccurate and advice was sought from NICVA, of which the Federation had become a member in March 2018, on the way forward. This work resulted in the adoption of a Trustee Code of Conduct Declaration that was signed by all Executive Committee members. Other work included the adoption of a Financial Code of Practice, and procedures governing the nomination for and election of the Officers and Executive Committee.

In January 2018, Bridgeen Rutherford resigned as Secretary and was succeeded by Pat Devlin. Patrick Greer resigned as Vice-Chairman in April and Josie Herbison was appointed in his place. James Armour, Maghera Historical Society, who had been nominated for the Executive Committee at the 2017 AGM but had lost out when the President rejected the nomination process, was co-opted. Dr Janice Holmes, who had been co-opted at the November 2007 meeting, is moving with her family to another European country and as a consequence resigned in August. Patrick McGuigan had informed the committee in July that he was withdrawing from the executive and this was accepted with regret. The Committee thanked all those who resigned for their work for the Federation and wished them well for the future.

### **Hidden Gems and Forgotten People**

Two Exhibitions for the HG&FP project were held, in Letterkenny Library from 16 to 30 October 2017 and Enniskillen Library from 19 February to 3 March 2018. Full illustrated reports of both Exhibition launches are available on the website.

An additional Exhibition will be held in Carrickfergus Library from 10 November to 8 December. Two further venues, in Counties Cavan and Monaghan, which were in the original programme, were postponed until a later date.

### **Other Activities**

During the year-

Three newsletters were issued, with news of planned events and enhanced services;

- The Speaker's Register has had an extensive overhaul, thanks to John Hulme, who spent weeks

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and weeks following up existing speakers and identifying new ones; the revised Register at the end of the period had over 150 speakers covering some 560 topics – a herculean effort indeed;

- a new edition of *Due North*, with a new design was launched in at the AGM on 11 November 2017;
- the Federation's Exhibition and Programme, supported by Libraries NI, to publicise and promote the joint FULS/FLHS joint *Hidden Gems and Forgotten People* project and website continued throughout the period. In the financial year exhibitions were held in Omagh Library (8<sup>th</sup> – 26 June 2017); Letterkenny Library (31<sup>st</sup> Oct – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017) and finally in Enniskillen (19 February – 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018). A further Exhibition is planned for Carrickfergus Museum from 10 November to 8 December 2018.
- The Early Summer Seminar was held in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey on Saturday 9 June 2018 with useful advice and guidance from James Lavery of the Heritage Lottery Fund, on the funding available from the Fund. Trevor Gordon spoke on the many roles of the Northern Ireland's Publications Resource including being a repository and publishing adviser. The main focus of the Seminar was the Suffragist movement in Britain and Ireland in the early 20th century. Josie Herbison and Pat McGuigan, speaking in tandem, took us through the development of the movement from its earliest beginnings in the early nineteenth century up to the present day and Carol Walker, from the Somme Centre concentrated on the impact of WWI on voting rights and social change in Ulster. A lively Q&A section elaborated on some of the themes. The day was rounded off with a discussion, led by Johnny Dooher, on the options for further seminars on the theme of the Centenary of Anniversaries and ideas from member societies are always welcome.
- the Federation's website continued to provide additional information about members' programmes and events of general interest and its news section carried 15 updates of information since the last AGM.

### **Working with others**

The Executive Committee continued to develop working relationships with other groups-

1. Federation of Local History Societies in co-operating in joint events and programmes. Activities include: joint membership trips in Ireland, joint seminars and workshops covering the whole of the island of Ireland; joint projects e.g. a joint website on *Hidden Gems and Forgotten People*. In the current year, these included -
  - i. Continuing work on the joint *Hidden Gems and Forgotten People* project.
  - ii. A meeting of the Joint Federation/FLHS committee was convened in Belfast on 26 February 2018, with the chairman and one executive committee member from the FLHS attending. The main focus of discussion was on restoring the good working relationship between the Federations after the disputed events of the previous year. Good progress was seemingly made but unfortunately difficulties remain. The Executive Committee remains confident that these can be resolved and will continue to strive for success.
2. Libraries NI, in planning, mounting and delivering the *Hidden Gems and Forgotten People* project.

### **Society Matters**

*Lecale & Downe Historical Society*

Congratulations to the Lecale & Downe Historical Society which celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding at an event on 24 September. The Executive Committee was pleased to receive an invitation

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to the celebrations and presented the Society with the gift of an inscribed gavel to mark their appreciation and best wishes for the next 70 years. It is possible that there are other societies out there who are approaching important anniversaries and the Executive Committee would like to provide whatever assistance they can in these landmark events for local studies.

*Maghera Historical Society Townlands project*

One recent project was the launch, on 30 June, of a Townlands Project by the Maghera Historical Society. The project aims to build up a detailed picture and history of the townlands in the area. The project will engage with local people to record field names, stories, memories, traditions, customs and folklore, and the results will be published. The Federation can advise and facilitate any societies who may wish to carry out townland studies and the Maghera Society, as they gain experience with their project should be able to help also.

*Maghera Agricultural Show*

The Federation provided a stand at the show, offering copies of Federation literature for sale. The Show was well attended and although few publications were sold, it did provide an opportunity for the Federation to publicise its presence and its services. Thanks to Liz Hoy for running the stand.