



Federation for Ulster Local Studies Ltd
Companies No: NI27863RegCharityNo: XO1315/91

MINUTES OF FEDERATION FOR ULSTER LOCAL STUDIES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN THE HILL OF THE O'NEILL,

RANFURLY HOUSE VISITOR AND ARTS CENTRE, DUNGANNON

SATURDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2012

PRESENT:

Appendix 1

APOLOGIES:

Appendix 2

Chairman's Opening Remarks:

The chairman welcomed Mayor Phelim Gildernew to address the meeting. Mayor Gildernew said that Ranfurly House was an ideal setting for the Federation AGM in view of its history. He invited all present to view the new exhibition and make a plan to return again in the near future. The chairman then presented Mayor Gildernew with a copy of the latest edition of *Due North* which the Mayor was pleased to receive and would read with great interest. He wished the Federation well with the sales of *Due North*.

The minutes of the Federation AGM November 2011 were then agreed and proposed by Finny O'Sullivan, Lisburn Historical Society and seconded by Helen Meehan, Co Donegal Historical Society.

Secretary's report

The secretary's report was read by Bridgeen Rutherford of New Buildings and District Archaeological and Historical Society

When the Secretary's report was presented at the last AGM it was noted that in fact the Federation was without a secretary. This position had remained the case for some time but I am happy to report that a nomination has been received this year from New Buildings and District Archaeological and Historical Society for Bridgeen Rutherford. We wish her well in the role. To date, Liam Devlin has been acting as minute secretary and company secretary. Pat Devlin continued to carry the heavy administrative burden alongside his responsibilities as treasurer. Pat, however, indicated that this was only a temporary measure until a secretary could be found. Earlier on in the year Pat indicated his intention to stand down from both roles and resigned in April effectively leaving the Federation with neither a secretary nor a



treasurer. With Bridgeen's nomination from New Buildings as secretary this leaves the post of treasurer unfilled.

The Executive committee, on the basis of presentations given to previous Annual General Meetings, had continued to review the organisation's Strategic plan for the forthcoming years. This proved both time consuming and at times difficult. Consensus on the need for the plan and indeed the content of this was at times difficult to find and the problems of finding personnel to fill key roles within the executive have made the final document all but irrelevant. Nevertheless the Strategic plan has now been rewritten and a framework for the conduct of executive business has been devised. Difficulties will remain in implementing this so long as the Federation fails to elect the required officers to oversee its business.

FULS Membership

Membership of the Federation for 2010 -2011 stood at 97 representing an increase of one society from the previous year. To date 68 of these have renewed their membership for the current year. Whilst the delay in paying membership fees is not a new issue it remains a concern both for the organisation in as far as serial reminders have to be issued to late respondents and those societies that avail of the insurance scheme run the risk that they are not covered in spite of having paid premiums if they allow their membership to lapse.

As noted last year there are still a sizeable number of local groups who exist outside of the Federation who could benefit from affiliation and we must consider how best to bring these within the ambit of the organisation in the time ahead. Too many societies seem content to benefit from the Federation without playing a role within it. The lack of participation in Federation led events and the poor attendance at the Annual General Meeting continue to be causes for concern. The majority of Individual membership has remained loyal and this is an area that the organisation will consider best how to expand.

Executive Committee

The executive committee continued to meet during the year in Central Library, Belfast, the Armagh City Hotel and at the O Fiaich Library in Armagh. At times it has proved difficult to reach a quorum and in some cases meetings have been held with the minimum of attendees. It must be stressed that membership of the executive, although carrying the responsibility of company director, is voluntary and in some instances executive committee members have to balance participation with full time work. The committee has agreed to look again at how it operates and how it can do so more effectively and this will no doubt be given a high priority by the incoming chairman.

At last year's AGM Roddy Hegarty took over from Bridgeen Rutherford as Chairman



whilst Doreen McBride took up the post of Vice-Chairman, Pat Devlin was once again returned as treasurer and by default as secretary. The officers have been supported over the last year by John Hulme, Johnny Dooher, Neil McGleenon, Maurina Crozier, Finny O'Sullivan and George Beattie with Bridgeen remaining a member of the executive committee in an ex officio position as immediate past Chairman. These committee members have all contributed in various ways to the success of the Federation over the year and we should express our appreciation of their continued involvement and commitment.

As indicated earlier, I am saddened to report that Pat has resigned and Doreen has indicated that she also will also be standing aside. This has left a number of vacancies on the executive committee. However, I am pleased to report that a number of new executive committee members have been proposed and I hope that they will be able to contribute in their own way to building a stronger Federation in the year ahead.

Sub committees

Much of the key work of the Federation continues to be done at sub-committee level. Despite the difficulties that have beset the executive this year, a number of excellent initiatives have been carried forward. In the Education subcommittee, Roddy Hegarty handed the convenorship to Doreen McBride in the spring, allowing the project begun last year to be carried forward. Doreen will report on this later in the meeting but must be given credit for the work that she has undertaken with primary school children in Banbridge on the theme of the Great Famine. Contacts have also been maintained with St Mary's University College, with workshops being given to trainee teachers on using local studies in the classroom.

The Events/Programmes sub committee was headed by Bridgeen Rutherford. The events this year were joint ventures with the FLHS and John Hulme will further report on these which include a successful and thoroughly enjoyable trip to York and memorable Titanica visit.

The Publications and promotion committee has been led by Johnny Dooher. Roddy Hegarty handed over the editor's role on Due North to Johnny and the latest issue of this will be available from today. Once again it proved a struggle to get the range of articles that the Federation membership should be able to generate and the review/report section in particular should be used more effectively by member societies to publicise and promote their work. We remain in need of reader views on how far Due North meets the needs of the local studies audience throughout Ulster and would welcome your comments and suggestions. A new sub-committee under the guidance of John Hulme was put in place early in the year to build upon the work being carried out jointly with the southern federation. More time was devoted this year to the promotion of the Hidden Gems and Forgotten People project, one of the ongoing successes of the Federation and is of relevance to every society, Saturday



1 December will see a seminar in Inniskeen, Co Monaghan and the launch of the promotional leaflets in a joint venture with the Federation of Local History Societies in the rest of Ireland. I would encourage your support for this initiative.

Armagh Leuven Links

Liam will again give more detail on this initiative, which was announced at last year's AGM. It has proved a great success with exchange visits being organised between members of the Federation and volunteers from the Leuven City Archives in Belgium.

Future plans can also be announced this year with the good news that the Federation has been awarded a grant towards the delivery of a new project 'People and Places' which aims to involve five of the Federation's member societies in a year-long scheme to promote and develop local studies in their own area.

Conclusions

Looking back at 2012 it would be very tempting to become despondent and pessimistic about the Federation. There is little doubt that the organisation needs a shot in the arm. We need new people, if only to replace those that we have lost over the last twelve months. We constantly strive for new fresh ideas and this will only be delivered in the longer term if we all as members play some part. The attitude that the Federation will survive come what may has to be set aside. This type of complacency led us to the point of extinction only five or six years ago and will do so again if we allow it to.

New voices need to be raised and listened to. Innovative ways need to be put forward to reengage those who have become disengaged. Those outside of the Federation need to be reminded of who we are and why we exist. This applies to not only bodies within the heritage sector, but institutions such as museums, and archives. The relationship built with our southern counterparts has to be maintained. The Federation is not some nebulous body that simply provides access to the necessary low cost insurance. Members - it is your voice, your collective strength and it is your federation!

The secretary's report was Proposed by Jennifer Cunningham, Coleraine Historical Society and seconded by John Hulme, Carrickfergus Historical Society.

The chairman commented on Pat Devlin's immense contribution to the Federation and acknowledgement was given by the attendees.



Treasurer's Report:

Roisin Dooher, Independent Examiner, who had signed off the Federation accounts, attended to present the financial report. She thanked the Federation for the invitation to the AGM. Roisin thanked Pat Devlin and commented that his accounting system was a bookkeepers dream.

80% of the EU funding totalling £11,000 has been received for the ALL project. Insurance costs remain same, bank charges remain static. She commented that the Federation had a strong balance sheet but the surplus was not gaining any interest currently. She said that the Federation would be able to fund some expenditure in the incoming year.

Roisin took questions from the floor following which Roddy thanked her for attending and presenting the report.

Treasurer's report was proposed by Trevor Adams, Coleraine Historical Society and seconded by Doreen McBride, Banbridge Historical Society.

Chairman's Report

Roddy Hegarty presented the Chairman's report. He welcomed all present and thanked them for attending this morning. He went on to say that 2012 had been a challenging year for the Federation and perhaps it was easier to difficulties than opportunities. The Federation has been in existence for 37 years and with commitment would continue to thrive as long as people were willing to participate. This year there has again been a loss of nominations for vice-chair or treasurer. Roddy urged members to become engaged, interact and support the Federation to move forward. They can promote best practice and write articles for Due North.

Roddy spoke of the difficulties encountered with PRONI since their move from Balmoral Avenue to the Titanic Quarter. There was no Saturday opening in the new premises and discussions had taken place with the facilities management in relation to considering Saturday morning opening to make PRONI ere user-friendly. The User-Forum is due to be resurrected and hopefully some progress could develop from this.

Roddy welcomed Larry Breen and JJ Woods from the Federation of Local History Societies, to the meeting. He said that a very firm relationship FULS has been built with our Southern counterparts. We have the cross-border nature of research, sharing of ideas, practice and experience in common.



In conclusion, Roddy asked that next year members should encourage one more person to attend at the AGM and participate in Federation business. Members should ensure that their secretary reads communication at their meeting/lectures. These measures would help promote activities and encourage members to participate in events. The Federation Executive would guarantee to provide the opportunity for everyone to provide new studies in 2013.

Election of Officers and the Executive Committee

Office Bearers elected were:

- Chairman Roddy Hegarty, North Belfast Historical Society
- Vice-chair Liam Devlin, Trinity College Dublin NI Association
- Secretary Bridgeen Rutherford, New Buildings & District
Archaeological & Historical Society
- Treasurer No nomination received

Executive Committee elected were:

- Dr Murna Crozier, Loughbrickland Historical Society
- Alexander Cupples, Loughbrickland Historical Society
- John Dooher, Strabane Historical Society
- Matthew Dring, Lisburn Historical Society
- Aine Ni Dhuibhne, Donegal Historical Society
- John Hulme, Carrickfergus Historical Society

Reports from sub-committees

Education:

Doreen McBride reported on the work that she had been doing with Edenderry Primary School. This was with the P7 class and the project was on the Great Famine. Doreen thanked Roddy, Murna and Jason Diamond from Banbridge Council for their support and help with getting the project completed. The children were encouraged to do their own research and discuss with their parents. They visited the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum where they were able to handle the artefacts and dress up in period costume.

Larry Breen, FLHS advised that they had been having similar discussions about this type of project and would encourage their member societies to explore further.



Armagh-Leuven Links (ALL)

Liam Devlin reported on the success of the ALL project. He pointed out that there was an article in the recent copy of Due North devoted to the project. Funding for the project was received from the European Commission's Senior Volunteer Programme. Four members from the Federation Society and five from the Leuven Archives had exchanged three week visits to Belgium and Ireland respectively, meeting with local people, organisations, visiting historic sites and examining and participating in volunteering activities.

The website will be updated for a further period. Photographs, reflections and presentations were all available to view on the website.

Joint North-South Committee

John Hulme gave a report on the work done by the North-South committee. John said that it was a privilege to work with so many enthusiastic and friendly people. The joint trips this year consisted of a very memorable trip to York and a thoroughly enjoyable visit to the Titanic Centre in July. The joint Federations had presented Hidden Gems, Forgotten People at the History Ireland Conference in Carlow.

Larry Breen thanked the chairman for the invitation to attend the AGM today. He said that the link with FULS means a lot to FLHS members. A lot of friendships have been made and the outings provide a platform for this to continue.

Larry said that there was a report on the trip to York on the website. The trip for 2013 would be to Bath. There would also be a trip to Islandbridge Memorial Garden, Dublin in June. Invitations would be sent shortly for the Bath trip in the first instance.

People and Places Project

Johnny Doher announced the launch of a new project called People and Places. Funding of £10,000 had been awarded from the Heritage Lottery Fund. 5/6 maximum groups would be involved in the project. The project is due to start immediately and finish in September 2013. Up to £1000 would be available to individual societies to help with publications, exhibitions and displays. He advised that this is an excellent opportunity for local groups to work together to produce useful material in their local area, widen their skill base and produce material that would serve as exemplars for other groups and encourage Societies to participate in similar projects.

Johnny advised that he was agreeable to meet with any interested Societies and give further information and guidance on the project. He would also be available to support them through the project.



Society updates:

Jennifer Cunningham from Coleraine Historical Society told the members of her experience as Editor of Coleraine's Journal, The Bann Disk which was now in its 18th edition. They have an abundance of articles submitted for the review for publication from both the Coleraine area and further afield. They hold their meetings in various venues and engage with local schools at P4 and P5 level.

Finny O'Sullivan. Lisburn Historical Society told the members that Lisburn were planning to restore three memorials in the Cathedral churchyard. The project would cost approximately £60,000 and funding needed to be sought.

Pat Devlin, Ulster History Circle explained the criteria for the selection of individuals to be commemorated and the funding sources that could be sought to support this. He outlined some of the plaques already in place and shared a few that the Ulster History Circle were currently involved in planning.

The Chairman, Roddy Hegarty, thanked everyone for attending. He encouraged everyone to join with Peter Lant, who would give a tour of the new facility, the exhibition and the new park which is currently under construction. He advised that next year's AGM would be held in Belfast.



APPENDIX 1

Attendees:

Roddy Hegarty	Chair FULS
Bridgeen Rutherford	N & DAHS
John Doohar	Strabane HS
John Hulme	Carrickfergus & D HS
Liam Devlin	TCD NI Assoc.
R Wylie	Cookstown Hist Group
Una Teague	“ “
Ruth McKenzie	“ “
George Glen	Carrickfergus & D HS
Bridie Bradley	West Belfast HS
Graham Mawhinney	Ballinascreen HS
Mona O’Kane	Cookstown Wildlife Trust
Katie Orme	Antrim & D HS
Jane Edwards	“ “
Jennifer Cunningham	Coleraine HS
Trevor Adams	“ “
Mathew Dring	Lisburn HS
Finny O’Sullivan	“ “
Evelyn Cardwell	Indiv.Mem
Helen Meehan	Co Donegal HS
Áine Ní Dhiubhe	“ “
Felix Hagen	Donaghmore HS
Patrick Devlin	Ulster Hist Circle



Federation *for* Ulster Local Studies Ltd
Companies No: NI27863RegCharityNo: XO1315/91

APPENDIX 2

Apologies:

Doreen Corcoran Carrickfergus & District HS

Pearl Hutchinson

Jane Wright Donaghadee HS



Federation *for* Ulster Local Studies Ltd
Companies No: NI27863RegCharityNo: XO1315/91