Bantracht na Tuaithe – Irish Countrywomen's Association

Annual General Meeting, 26th May 2018

10.30am

Athlone Springs Hotel, Co Roscommon

MINUTES

Morning session

The Chairman Procedures Committee, Mairead O'Carroll, advised the meeting that, with the members An Cathoirleachpermission, the meeting would be recorded, to ensure that there was a complete and accurate record of the AGM. This was agreed and the system was switched on.

ITEM 1 OPENING

An Cathaoirleach, National President, Marie O'Toole, called the meeting to order at 10.30. The Prayer was said, and a verse of My Land sung.

ITEM 2 VOTE OF SYMPATHY

To Susan Potts, NAC Chairman, whose Mother's funeral was taking place today.
A minute's silence was observed for everyone bereaved since the 2017 AGM.

Apologies: Esther Cahill and Anna-Rose McCormack NEB Members; Monica Prendiville, Kerry Federation and former National President; Breda Hennessy, South Tipperary Federation; Ena Howell, Cork Federation.

ITEM 3 WELCOME DELEGATES - MONICA BEEGAN, ROSCOMMON FEDERATION PRESIDENT

Ms Beegan welcomed delegates and invited Councillor Orla Leyden, Mayor of Roscommon to welcome the AGM to Athlone. Councillor Leyden warmly welcomed the AGM and ICA members, in Irish and English. She had been delighted when Monica Beegan had asked her to welcome Ireland's largest women's association,and thanked the ICA for having its AGM in Co Roscommon. She referred to the influence of the Association in the development of policy locally, nationally and internationally.

Ms Leyden wished the new President of Roscommon ICA, Kitty Harrington, well for her tenure and congratulated Monica Beegan for her successful term and many achievements which she said ensured the continuation of the ICA for the next generation of women. She concluded quoting activist Gloria Steinem, reiterating the importance of friendship and support. "*If we're by ourselves we come to feel crazy and alone, we need to make alternate families of small groups of women who support each other, talk to each other regularly, can speak their truths and their experiences and find they are not alone in them, that other women have them too. It makes such a huge difference. Go raibh mile maith agaibh agus go neiri an t-ath libh don na blianta nios mo.*"

Ms Beegan thanked Ms Leyden and welcomed all to Co. Roscommon.

ITEM 4 ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS

An Cathaoirleach called on Mairead O'Carroll, chair of Procedures Committee, who advised that a quorum had been reached, with 171 voting delegates present. She thanked the Procedures Committee for their hard work over a difficult and demanding year, working together, to adhere to the Constitution and act in the best interest of the members. The ICA was the members' organisation who control what happens, adhere to the Constitution and do what is best for the ICA. She asked all speakers, to be respectful of each other and of ICA. She read out the Standing Orders.

Ratification of Tellers: Ms O'Carroll advised that Mary O'Gorman and Mary O'Reilly, past Procedures Committee Members, and Ann O'Connell and Bridgid Keane, current Committee members, were proposed.

On foot of queries received, Ms O'Carroll advised the meeting that there were no proxy votes, and that Guilds unable to be present could not ask another Guild to be the substitute.

The Standing Orders were put to the meeting and adopted by a card vote without opposition or abstention.

ITEM 5 MINUTES OF AGM 2017

Correction Received: Page 16 - Colette Spillane, Castlegregory Federation should read 'Catherine' Spillane. The 2017 Minutes were put to the meeting and adopted on a card vote without opposition or abstention.

Matters arising: There were no matters arising.

ITEM 6 INTRODUCTION TO INCOMING NEB

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ITEM 7 REPORT - ANNUAL ACCOUNTS: NAT. TREASURER – MARY MCNAMARA

Ms MacNamara welcomed everybody to the meeting including the National President, National Officers, former National Presidents and Mr John Reid, ICA solicitor. She reported:

Finance Committee Meetings: 7 meetings

Membership: 3 NEB members, Regional Presidents, joined bringing membership to 7.

Financial overview

Overall Income:	increased by €86,455
Overall Expenditure:	increased by €71,000
Overall Surplus:	€156,391.
An Grianán surplus:	€4973 (welcomed as the first surplus for many years.)

Grants:	Dept of Agriculture and Food - €9,000 towards costs at Ploughing Championship
	Solas - educational grant received towards An Grianán
Fund-raising:	Breast Cancer - c.€8,105 in account
	Pennies for Friendship – account €6774, transferred from time to time to ACWW
Membership Incentive fund:	Refunds - €5,325 in 2017 for net increased Guild membership
Budgets:	Adhered to through monthly management accounts
Sponsorship:	Retained - GemPack and Aldi supporting competitions. Member participation is important to retain sponsor interest
Property register:	In Central Office, must be kept up to date. All Guilds with property to complete the form circulated. It might be possible to improve insurance under a single policy.
Membership:	Decrease of 361. Total membership 8,814 in 2017.
	Largest Federations - Dublin, Cork, Wexford, Meath, Galway.
Central Office usage:	Office is being used for a lot of meetings

Ms MacNamara thanked the Manager at An Grianán and her team for their hard work, encouraging better use of the facility, particularly by members and Guilds who are enjoying day trips. She proposed the adoption of the Finance report, seconded by Monica Beegan, Roscommon Federation.

ITEM 8 MATTERS ARISING ON THE FINANCE REPORT (submitted in advance)

ACWW trip: funds shown incorrectly from Pennies for Friendship account but come out of the main ICA account. This will be amended.

Bank charges: Query, why on some accounts and not others? There are separate bank accounts [for Central Office, Pennies for Friendship (ACWW), 58 Maintenance; Counselling]. Charges are made to main account.

Matters arising from the floor:

An Grianán surplus – speaker not recorded**:** *Earlier indication was a surplus of €20,000 but report is €4,973.* Some costs had to be split between/ charged to An Grianán from Central Office, and had not been included originally. Corrected, this resulted in the lower surplus.

Audit representative – speaker not recorded: *Should the audit firm not have been present to report and if not, why not?* Ms MacNamara advised that this had happened in the past and would be looked into again, and perhaps should happen.

Membership fees - Mary Nugent, Swords Guild, Dublin Federation: *Should there be reference to a additional amounts (for Federation/Guild funds) over and above the national membership fee so there is no confusion when asked to pay a total amount?* Ms MacNamara said that this was a local issue and Central Office would not know what amounts might be added. She added that there had been a good few queries on the expenses – protected disclosure issue since the EGM and that a full breakdown would be sent out when the figure is right.

Mary Keelin, Prosperous Guild, Kildare Federation: *Query as to whether it was possible to adopt the accounts today, before the questions had been answered?*

Patricia Madden, Ballymun Guild, Dublin Federation: *Reiterated the same query.*

Ms MacNamara said that this was a good point and that this would have to be let go. She said that they were not being adopted and, in response to Ms Madden, that as this was the first time this has happened to her, she did not know. Ms Madden said she understood that part of the AGM would have to be adjourned to a later stage but that this was not within her area of legal expertise. She had seen that happen. It is a very important part of procedures to ratify the accounts.

The ICA Solicitor Mr Reid suggested that the question of whether to adopt the audited accounts for 2017 be deferred to later in the day, when people have more information in relation to expenses. A vote on that was put to the meeting and was in favour of deferral.

Catherine Spillane, Castlegregory Guild, Kerry Federation. *Query as to whether as Mr Reid was not a member of the ICA he should be making a proposal.*

Sheila Commerford, Gowran Guild, Kilkenny Federation: *Query as to whether the Solicitor was present at the request of the Board, as there is nothing in the Constitution, and she believed the Board did not request it so those questions have to be answered.*

Barbara Meer, Bunnyconlan Guild, Mayo Federation and NEB member: *Advised that she had not known in advance of the AGM that the Solicitor would be present.*

The meeting was advised by An Cathaoirleach that in view of leaks to the newspapers yesterday, she felt it very prudent for Mr Reid be present, adding that whoever gave that information to the Independent online was obviously trying to destroy this Association.

There was a short discussion about the importance of correct procedures; that they were being followed on something as important as the financial report; that proposals could only come from the members; that there were two issues raised – the presence of the Solicitor and the matter of the proposal.

The Chairman indicated that Mr Reid was 'advising', and it was taken as 'proposing'. Mr Reid apologised, he didn't want to cause discord, and had made a suggestion.

ITEM 9 ADOPTION OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS & APPOINTMENT OF ICA AUDITORS

Ms MacNamara withdrew the proposal to adopt the Financial Report/Accounts pending more information.

Appointment of Auditors

Ms MacNamara advised that the audit service would go to tender, if the AGM agreed, and referred to the possible separation of the accountancy and audit services as a matter of good practice in the charities sector. She put tendering for an accountant and an auditor separately and both proposals were adopted on a card vote.

Ms MacNamara said that it was her last report to an AGM as National Treasurer and thanked the members – go raibh maith agaibh go leir.

An Cathaoirleach advised members to submit any queries if they had not done so.

Margaret Shinny, Bunnyconlon Guild, Mayo Federation: *Query regarding the Solicitor's presence at the top table, which was somewhat intimidating, and expressing 100% confidence in the elected representatives running the Association. Seeking confirmation that the Board sanctioned his presence.*

Geraldine Holden, Tory Hill Guild, Kilkenny Federation: *Query seeking clarification - a proposer and a seconder is required for proposals. The previous decisions had not been put in that way.*

Another member [name not clear] offered to propose, and Ms Holden seconded both proposals previously voted on. [A further vote was not taken.]

[**NB** the appointment of Auditors for the 2018 Audit was not put to the meeting/voted on].

ITEM 10 REPORT OF NAT. EXECUTIVE BOARD: NAT SECRETARY - SHIRLEY POWER,

An Cathaoirleach called on the National Secretary to present the Annual Report of the National Executive Board which had been circulated to members.

Ms Power introduced the Report and thanked the staff at Central Office for their work in preparing the Annual Report. In addition to the information contained in the report, the following was added:

Meetings: 7 NEB and 3 NAC meetings had taken place ; no membership changes.

Annual Report format redesign: The Guilds and Membership section in the Report updated to give a better grasp of membership trends by county and by region. Timeline Dates for Irish Women section included to acknowledge the approach of the centenary year of women achieving the vote.

Sponsors: Members reminded of the importance of good membership engagement with sponsored competitions, to maintain sponsorship, and as the events bring members together nationally and on a social level in a more relaxing environment.

Member Benefits: From businesses that offer an exclusive discount to ICA members and are interested in a long-term relationship with ICA Members encouraged to send in suggestions.

ICA Website: Providing useful information for federations, guilds and members and members can sign up to the 'members area' - Central Office can assist.

ICA and Guild Facebook pages and ICA Twitter: Very popular, with more and more joining and Ms Power reminded members that, used correctly, a great way of keeping in touch.

Advocacy and campaigns: Ms Power referred to the detailed information in the Annual Report on the Pearl of Wisdom campaign; the Green Ribbon Campaign, and Temple Street Hospital and

Crumlin Hospital, benefitting from the calico dolls project. Ms Power noted the importance of the ICA advocacy work at national and local level which she applauded and encouraged.

Charities Regulatory Authority: Ms Power outlined the role of the national statutory regulatory agency for charitable organisations, and the obligations to report by charities such as the ICA. She advised that the ICA had not yet achieved compliance with the standards relating to policy and procedures, but she had confidence that this is attainable, and hoped that the next NEB would be able to adopt the Code.

Strategic Plan: A priority for the new NEB is to compile the strategic plan that is both workable and achievable,and provide a stronger and more transparent platform from which to work.

Despite current Association circumstance Ms Power commended the outgoing Board and NEC on the good work achieved, and asked the members not to judge based on the last few weeks and months because these people have done good work on the members' behalf throughout the last three years. She thanked management and staff in Central Office and An Grianán for their support to the NEB. She referred to the honour of representing the members as National Secretary, that she had been traumatised and deeply upset by what had happened in recent times, and sincerely hoped that the Associa tion, like the Phoenix from the Ashes, would rise again, move forward with strength to rebuild and go on to achieve great things.

She concluded her final presentation of an Annual Report on behalf of the NEB, with the saying: Ní neart go cur le chéile - there's no strength without unity, and formally presented the Annual Report 2018 on behalf of the Officers and fellow Board members, for adoption at the meeting here today. Go raibh maith agaibh.

ITEM 11 ADOPTION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT

An Cathaoirleach put the proposal, seconded by Margaret Stephens, Wicklow Federation and it was adopted by card vote without a declaration of the vote.

ITEM 12 REPORT OF THE NAC

The Chairman advised that the Report of the NAC by the Chair Susan Potts was not available, understandably due to her bereavement, as noted earlier.

ITEM 13 CENTRAL OFFICE REPORT – MS GRAINNE FERRIS, MANAGER

In addition to the Report contained in the Annual Report, Ms Ferris made the following points:

- a challenging first 10 months in post in a role largely related to governance and the strict requirements of charities.
- concerns/deficiencies/deficits had been identified, relayed to the Board, some rectified, some not, with many NEB members supportive, and a minority resistant.
- She said she had largely not been allowed to do a proper job in the last 4/5 months because of all the events ongoing that members were aware of.
- for a charity, governance issues are very strict, and ICA is not at the races yet and she would continue the work relentlessly
- an independent external auditor is crucial for compliance
- a potential new sponsor announcement was put on hold due to the negative publicity the previous day, in order not to compromise the sponsors.

Ms Ferris was thanked for her reports and work.

ITEM 14 AN GRIANÁN – REPORT - MS NIAMH DONEGAN, MANAGER

As Ms Donegan was unable to attend An Cathaoirleach read from her report, adding the following to the An Grianán Report contained in the Annual Report:

- various conferences and events have taken place successfully, and more secured for 2019 that will bring much needed business.
- note that An Grianán does not get any funds from the ICA membership fee although members sometimes think so - a few euro from the membership fee would make a huge difference as constant begging for money is not sustainable.
- new courses: Including felt, needlework, free motion quilting
- the tutors and the Handcraft Committee, Elsie, Margaret and Pat, were thanked for their continued dedication and support of An Grianán and the success of Handcraft Week, one of the most profitable at An Grianán.
- revenue being generated from leasing facilities is helping make An Grianán more open to non-members in the local community.
- in the absence of a contingency funds should a system such as heating fail there are no spare funds. The facility needs significant updating and costs for essential maintenance/repairs had been significant in 2017.

Members were advised of the lobby at An Grianán of Anita Lett, donated by Wexford Federation, and the Wexford Competitions Committee was thanked for their organisation of events and support at An Grianán.

ITEM 15 MOTIONS AND VOTING

An Cathaoirleach called on the Chairman of the Procedures Committee to introduce the amendment to the Constitution being put on behalf of the NEB.

Amendment proposed: "In order to comply with child protection laws and Garda Vetting requirements, the Board propose that the minimum age for membership be changed from 16 years to 18 years as per section 05 subsection (a) of the constitution."

The Clause would then read: "The membership of the Association is open to all women of 18 years of age and over organised in branches known as guilds."

An Cathaoirleach explained the background to the proposed amendment saying:

- The Garda Vetting Bureau has declined ICA's application to become a registered, relevant organisation for e-vetting.
- The Association has no other choice but to change the age of membership to 18 years guided by The National Vetting Bureau Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012, which came into effect in April 2016. The Act provides legislative basis for the mandatory vetting of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable persons or to provide certain services to children or vulnerable persons.
- In order for the ICA to avail of Garda vetting for its staff and volunteers, the organisation must firstly be registered with An Garda Siochana's National Vetting Bureau or NVB, and application was made in December 2017. Regrettably the NVB declined the ICA's application for the reasons outlined in their letter read to the meeting.
- Legal advice is that the ICA has two options – a separate policy, or establish a separate organisation The matter was opened to the floor.

Deirdre Connery, Wexford Federation President: Read a letter from Ciara Whelan, Bridgetown College Guild, Wexford Federation:

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Bridgetown College Guild members to express our concern about the possible change to the Constitution concerning the minimum age of members. We believe that any persons of the age of 16 and above should be allowed to participate in any guild throughout Ireland. On receiving the email from Shirley Power, National Secretary, we felt heartbroken as we were so proud of our achievements in being the youngest guild in the Westmeath Federation. We felt that we were creating history with women as young as 16 being members of the guild. When we set up the guild in 2015 we felt that we benefited greatly.

We feel that we have gathered many skills and qualities for example, we gained skills in communication as we hosted a convenor meeting in our school which was a very successful event. All the guilds from our area attended and we believe that they had a great night. We also improved our confidence in our organisation skills as we had to organise food, spot prizes, speakers and entertainment for over 50 members of local guilds. We felt great disappointment as a guild that we may have to stop our weekly meetings as an ICA group. This group has brought us great friends, joy and laughter, indeed the very fun and friendship promoted by the ICA as part of their ethos. As a guild we organised food appeals and used clothing appeals for the homeless, contributed to the Federation collection of toiletries for women's refuge, organised a series of hip hop classes with grant funding from Sport Act Wexford and organised a convenor meeting for our area. In short, we are a guild dedicated to the ideals of Anita Lett. We hope that you as a Board and you as members now today will reconsider your proposal to change the Constitution to exclude the young women of our guild. This proposal will also exclude the daughters and granddaughters of ICA members and any young woman who would like to join the ICA. Bridgetown College ICA Guild are of the opinion that younger guild members like ourselves are the future of ICA not just in our guild but throughout Ireland.

Yours sincerely, Ciara Whelan, President and signed by the members.

Ms Connery welcomed Mr Reid's advice and asked members to consider carefully their vote.

Mary Fitzgerald, Oylegate Guild, Wexford Federation, and the facilitator for the Bridgetown Guild: Fully in favour of Garda vetting as it is the law. Noted that the girls could not be present (doing the Leaving Certificate), explained the background to the Guild, the interest of the students, and the value of introducing girls to the ICA who might go on to start their own guild or join another guild in the future. She appealed to the members to oppose the motion and to find a way of Garda Vetting to bring the best of the ICA history since 1910 of involving girls and women of every age in the fun and friendship of ICA.

Nellie Dillon, Clane Guild, Kildare Federation. On a point of clarification was ICA intending to become a centre where you actually apply for the Garda vetting? This was confirmed.

There was a brief discussion on the matters at hand, what was proposed and the various issues arising: setting up a separate organisation; having a separate policy for 16 to 18 year olds; whether it would still require Garda vetting if people were under a certain age; the importance of not refusing membership to young people; the fact that teachers are Garda vetted in school does not deal with a situation where school based [16/17] year old members would wish to attend other guilds.

Kay Devine, Bunnyconlan Guild, Mayo Federation: Involved in Foróige, and queried whether it would be possible to have one/two Guild members Garda vetted to allow for younger members.

Mary MacNamara, National Treasurer: Offered Nursing Homes Ireland as an example of an organisation accepted on the Garda Vetting Bureau, and that ICA has to be able to be Garda vetted.

Dee Devereux, Regional President and NEB; Suggested that as a number of the ICA members involved in Wexford were Garda vetted professionally, and members going into schools are vetted. There must be a way to deal with this and welcome younger members who see all the fun and friendship and want a part of it.

Susan Reynolds, Louth Guild, Louth Federation: Proposed that a junior ICA be formed for the under 18s, as she had been privileged in the last two years of junior school to attend ICA on a weekly basis to do domestic sciences. She had come back from England because she believed in the ICA and how good it is.

Brenda Leary, Blackrock Guild, Louth Federation. Referred to the Lions Club and the junior section there – the Leo Club. She pointed out that Garda vetting in one setting cannot be applied in others, and that she herself was Garda vetted for a number of different things. She had a small business which included classes for children and had been Garda vetted by a third organisation.

Bridget Cahill, Ashford Guild President, Wicklow Federation. Outlined the decision of the Guild to support the proposed change because it would be too complex to have Garda vetting for everyone,

as this is a child protection issue. However, if there is a way of having Garda vetting through another organisation, this should be explored.

Mary D'Arcy, Ballyfad Guild, Wexford Federation: Raised the additional matter of vulnerable adults in Guilds, with every entitlement to be there. Raises the question of whether Garda vetting of the Association is required in relation to 16 upwards.

An Cathaoirleach pointed out the strong feeling in the room that the ICA should be Garda vetted. She proposed that the motion be put on hold until such time as a committee to investigate is set up to see what can be done. The proposal was seconded by Mary Fitzgerald, Wexford Federation, put to a vote and carried overwhelmingly, with one vote against and no abstentions.

ITEM 16 ADDRESS BY NATIONAL PRESIDENT, MARIE O'TOOLE

National Officers, Board, National Advisory Committee, former National Presidents, fellow members and Mr John Reid, ICA solicitor. The ICA that we all joined is one of fellowship and friendship, and we must strive to get back to keeping that ethos to the forefront of our Association. The Constitution is our bible, otherwise we would be just another ladies club.

It was a great honour for me to be elected as National President of this great organisation in 2015 and I have to say it has been a pleasure to meet most of you at your federation and guilds throughout my three-year term. As the former National Presidents will attest to, you come in to office and think you can change the world. This unfortunately doesn't happen. Luckily for most of you, you didn't have to contend with email which means that you are never free of the keyboard warriors.

Way back in 2008 at our AGM, the cases of misdiagnosis in the breast screening debacle had just come to the fore and I remember our National PRO, the great and late Breda O'Hanrahan being interviewed by RTE on this topic. We were subsequently advised by all concerned that this could never happen again.

Unfortunately, here we are ten years later, and we have yet another fiasco that is the cervical screening debacle. I'm sure all of you will applaud the courage of Vicky Phelan who highlighted the misdiagnosis issue and who had to go through the Courts to get justice, not only for herself but for all those unfortunate women who have been treated in such an appalling manner.

You would have to be made of stone not to be moved by Emma MhicMhathuna's interviews on radio and television. The bravery of that woman is beyond words. Here is a young mother with five children whom she will never see grow up. How many women died in the interim and were not even aware of the misdiagnosis problem. These were all women who looked after their health and went for regular screening and who put their trust in the system. Unfortunately, there are 200 more Vickys and Emmas who have yet to be made aware of their fate and survival rate.

We, as a women's organisation, the biggest in the country, should be doing more to ensure that this type of travesty should never happen again. We've had the Hep C, the breast cancer, and now the cervical screening debacles and I don't think we're free of the breast screening just yet, there was some information in the newspapers yesterday and nothing was right there too. It's time to call a stop now. The HSE seems to be totally dysfunctional and the arrogance of some of the representatives who appeared before the PAC was astounding.

In concluding, the National President introduced a petition seeking the dismantling of the HSE in light of the scandals and urged the members present to sign it, to do something to avoid similar situations. She said that as no-one seemed to be taking ownership and responsibility "it's up to us, Beantracht na Tuaithe, to play our part."

The morning session concluded, and members were asked to resume their seats for 2.15pm.

Afternoon Session

NOTE: *The recording and transcript of the afternoon session record noise, overtalking and argument/comments from the floor.*

ITEM 1 Welcome Back

The AGM resumed at 2.28pm. the National President in the Chair due to the absence of Ms Potts, Chairman, NAC, and delegates were called to order.

Emergency Motion: The Chairman - Procedures advised that an Emergency Motion under clause 53 had been received. "That Mr John Reid [ICA Solicitor] relocates to a room away from the AGM."

She said that some members had said that they had signed a petition which relates to the Emergency Motion, but thought it was the one about dismantling the HSE. She asked the meeting whether they wished the Motion to be put to a vote. Speakers made the following points:

Carmel Dawson, Ballyconnell Guild, Carlow Federation and former National President: the ICA appoints a solicitor at the AGM, for the purpose of advice. It is not the first time the solicitor had attended to advise and in light of recent events, asked that the meeting not exclude him.

Patricia Madden, Ballymun Guild, Dublin Federation: the Emergency Motion had been put forward correctly, she believed all who had signed the petition had known what they were signing. The meeting had to suspend Standing Orders to take the Emergency Motion. Recent events had not been correct. Having the solicitor present could give an impression that all was legal. Sometimes legal advisors were in another room.

Jackie Slattery, Clooney Quin Guild, Clare Federation: Remarked that if seeing a gentleman at the top table was upsetting members, perhaps he could sit down at the side.

The Chairman – Procedures Committee: announced suspension of Standing Orders and putting the motion to a vote. Following some confusion, the voting sequence was clarified, and suspension of Standing Orders was put and carried, the Emergency Motion was read out and formally put to the meeting, and speakers invited.

Linda Nolan Clogh Guild, Kilkenny Federation: The matter had come up twice in the morning and been dismissed out of hand. It was important members to have their say.

Catherine Spillane, Castlegregory Guild, Kerry Federation: Concerned about the legal issues, that the organisation must go by the Constitution and Standing Orders. The Solicitor had not been introduced to the meeting and on behalf of her Guild she opposed him being present.

An Cathaoirleach apologised for not introducing Mr Reid.

Patricia Madden, Ballymun Guild, Dublin Federation : (speaking on the Emergency Motion). She had been working to ensure that procedures were correct and the Constitution followed. She was a qualified barrister, knew both old and new Constitutions, had researched to take the ICA out of its current difficulty, and tried to ensure that everything was legal and correct, including meeting procedures. She had been jeered/sneered at. She said the ICA Solicitor should not be in the room

An Cathaoirleach reminded the meeting that speakers had 2 minutes.

Geraldine Holden Tory Hill Guild, Co. Kilkenny: abhorred the rowdiness at the meeting, asked had the board ratified Mr Reid's being in the room. If not, he should not be in the room. Some people feel very intimidated - suggested that he be at a table in the corner. MS Holden added that it not good enough that people were being booed and jeered, and the top table should stop this.

Mary Carey, Clifden Guild, Galway Federation. Referred to attending Guild, Federation and National AGM's, over 38 years; that she and the National President had been ill, and over the last five months she didn't know what had gone wrong with the Association. She had never in her life seen anything like it, in ICA or other organisations, and expressed her sympathy to Madam

President, Mr Reid, all the committee and Ms O'Carroll. Anything not decided with a yes or a no, half this hall/if not all, should walk out. It has nothing to do with the ICA, a strong organisation but if a few people can reduce it to this she said it was a sorry day.

June Lawless, Shankhill Guild, Dublin Federation, expressed shock at the behaviour at the meeting and asked that decorum and respect be restored.

The Emergency Motion was put, voted on, and called as lost.

An Cathaoirleach reminded everyone that the AGM is under the auspices of the Procedures Committee, and not the Board. There was some disputation about this and the Constitution.

Standing Orders resumed.

ITEM 2 Roll Call of Federations

Carlow; Cavan; Clare; Cork; Donegal; Dublin; Galway; Kerry; Kildare; Kilkenny; Leith; Leitrim; Limerick; Longford; Louth; Mayo; Meath; Monaghan; Offaly; Roscommon; Sligo; Tipperary North; Tipperary South; Waterford; West Meath; Wexford; Wicklow.

ITEM 3 Minutes of the EGM 14th April 2018, Gresham Hotel

An Cathaoirleach advised that the work involved in preparing the EGM minutes, dealing with amendments etc had resulted in late circulation and members were asked to submit any other amendments.

Sheila Comerford, Tory Hill Guild, Kilkenny Federation: Referred to an intervention at the EGM with the Chairman and the Solicitor on the day, putting a counter motion and being told to sit down. The opinion of other legal people consulted later was that a counter motion should have been taken. She had also asked where do missing votes go, and a further question about transparency, not in the minutes.

Brenda Leary, Blackrock Guild, Louth Federation: requested name correction. She had raised queries at the start of the EGM, and had four other queries: Why had the guilds not received the required 14 days written notice of the EGM? Why were membership cards not checked on entering the meeting? How were the voting delegates determined? Why were the three national officers standing at the back of the room? The correct minute of her comments at the EGM should be:

- that the inference that some Guilds were without ballot papers due to the National Officers having been sent them in error was unfounded
- as Shirley Power was acting as the line manager during the National President's absence, she was within her remit to enquire about how the distribution of ballot papers was progressing

Ms Leary said that she did not say that [the National Secretary] should not have had any involvement nor that she should not have been in Central Office, and she asked that be corrected and offered her note to the Chairman.

Carmel Dawson, Ballyconnell Guild, Carlow Federation sought a right of reply: She was the Independent Chairperson on 14th April, asked to do it as a past National President in office at the time of the 2009 constitution. She was not an election candidate, was just a member. She took Chairing the EGM seriously and was very happy to have the solicitor there. At the start she stated that the EGM should be respectful with everyone having a chance to speak, and to get answers to questions. She was independent and objective, known as firm and fair, strong on protocol and procedure. She categorically denied anyone coming to her saying they had a counter motion. She disallowed additional questions when serious allegations were made against the National President and stopped the meeting – she could not allow serious allegations to be levelled against anybody; she could not allow the speaker to slander herself, and she could not allow herself to be complicit with it. She stood over every word.

Breda Raggett, Seven Houses Guild, Kilkenny Federation and former National President: (asked to speak from the podium) A past National President and ICA member heart and soul for c. 45 years, she referred to a certain cohort who were shouting and making noises, and very quiet when their own person got up. This was not fair/intimidating. The meeting shouldn't be discussing minutes because the EGM was illegal. The NEB had no hand act or part in that meeting. She referred to the National President saying the [Constitution] is the bible/law maker in ICA, but calling a meeting that had to be called by the Management Board. Voting on the EGM minutes, and the resolution, were totally illegal because the NEB had nothing to do with it. At an EGM the National President chairs it, or if not, the Chairman of the NAC. An outside person was brought in to take the minutes, costing €1,000 that day, and a past President [as Chair] who had no authority from the board. At the EGM the National Officers asked where they were to sit and were told 'You can sit where you like but you've no room for you up here' but an EGM cannot happen without the honorary officers. The minutes refer to the Solicitor saying there was a motion voted on and the Chairman said she only looked for a show of cards. Ms Raggett asked that members stick to the laws of the organisation.

Chairman – Procedures said that the Procedures Committee answers to the Constitution which is owned by the members.

Sheila Comerford, Tory Hill Guild, Kilkenny Federation: Requested a right to reply. She was an honest person, and she reiterated what she had said earlier.

An Cathaoirleach explained that the chair of the NAC, as an election candidate, couldn't chair the EGM as it was about elections. [There was disagreement on this from the floor]. She referred to the Code of Conduct which candidates had signed. Requests from 53 guilds/6 federations for an EGM had been received. There was some disputation about the 53 letters of request for the EGM, their existence and whether they were in writing.

Helen Rutter, Annaduff Guild, Leitrim Federation: The letter indicated 53 guilds requesting the EGM, but further on it is letters from Federations requesting the meeting and listing the Guilds, which is not 53 guilds. This is a matter of procedure, stick to the Constitution or throw it out.

ITEM 4 Report on Review of Election Procedures

Chairman - Procedures Committee: Introducing the report, Ms O'Carroll referred to comments on the Constitution and shouting from the floor. In the Procedures Committee term of three years, the first two were fine, the last five months horrendous. She said that if people had observed the Constitution, we would not have had the problems.

Ms Madden sought to speak but was not permitted as the Chairman - Procedures had not completed her comments.

Sally Ward, Sligo Federation, and former National President: Intervened asking that everyone have manners when someone got up to speak, whether for or against them, to give the floor and listen.

Chairman - Procedures Committee: Continued, reporting that since the EGM the Procedures Committee had reviewed the ICA election procedures. A thorough assessment had identified uncertainties and insecurities as follows: adoption of procedures, the nomination process, implementing and overseeing the candidate code of conduct, campaigning arrangements, balloting and the count. She said, security of the ballot and that every Guild receives a ballot paper is central.

The recommendations will have the Procedures Committee taking charge of the entire process of preparing, printing the exact number, posting the ballot papers to Guilds and sending ballot papers out by registered post. The candidate Code of Conduct must be adopted, agreed by all candidates and have a robust way of dealing with any breach. The findings will go to the Incoming Procedures Committee. Perhaps to Guilds /Federations could contribute and members make a judgement.

In future, fair elections must be conducted with dignity and respect to all candidates and the process. The election process [2018] was agreed by the NEB, all candidates had signed up to the

Code of Conduct. It was very sad that the culture of honesty, integrity and accountability seemed to have left the ICA, and values of compassion, respect, team spirit can sometimes be very hard to find.

Geraldine Holden, Tory Hill Guild, Kilkenny Federation: Referred to her Guild colleague Ms Comerford as above reproach. She was among 10 who stood up and shouted out a counter motion at the EGM, no one was listening, they were completely ignored and Sheila at the behest of the 10 put it to the Chair and the Solicitor. She referred to an email to Guilds from the election candidate Ms Helly calling for an EGM. She believed it breached the Code of Conduct, and there was more than one person here wrong.

An Cathaoirleach referred to items in the Protected Disclosure introduced by the National Secretary at the EGM [see EGM minutes] – an employment matter and use of the NP Visa Card. She briefly outlined the employment matter, that she had apologised to the Board for what had occurred, but had not been happy how the matter was then dealt with.

On the National President's Visa Card, she said that she had never been asked to clarify anything and followed the advice on its use on taking office. The Card had been used for some office purchases when needed. When the Operations Manager queried this, she had agreed there should be a separate office Visa card, and agreed a new limit on the NP card. (€5,000). Following the EGM, Grant Thornton were engaged to check all Visa Statements, and the payment of the National President's honorarium (pa€16,500). Grant Thornton asked if there was a National Treasurer. This was confirmed and that the National Treasurer checked the accounts thoroughly, monthly. Asked by GT why the matter was raised after three years, the National President could not answer that question. She never claimed expenses, travel or otherwise, as she had free travel and the use of a car.

The National President referred to the office Visa Card being used for a meal for NEB members following the April NEB meeting. She could not attend but had agreed to a request by the National Secretary that two bottles of wine could be purchased. She assumed NEB members were paying any cost over the agreed ICA meal expenses. The bill came to her attention in mid-May. She was astonished that it was €776.31, the office Visa Card was used, and the bill included 4 bottles of very expensive wine, other alcohol, a 10% service charge and a €25 gratuity. She could not understand how the Card came to be used, or who had asked for it from the Office Manager who she was in no way blaming in the matter. She concluded, saying she was fed up at mud being thrown at her, and while she really didn't care about the Independent online article, it did hurt, mostly for the ICA.

An Cathaoirleach then moved to introduce the motion. Ms Madden and Ms Ferris sought to speak.

Ms Ferris: Referred to being shocked and horrified that the National President would implicate her in any wrongdoing. (*An Cathaoirleach and other voices pointed out that the National President had said 'in no way' was she being blamed*.) Ms Ferris continued that she was disclosing to the meeting that she made a Protected Disclosure to the NEB in December (*corrected to 'January' by An Cathaoirleach*), that none of the matters had been addressed and were very serious concerns in the organisation. She also referred to her involvement in the staff matter referred to, linking it to her experience of relentless resistance to her work from the start. She would not be seen to be unprofessional or have anything misconstrued when she had done everything in her power to sort out the mess that has been in Central Office.

ITEM 5 Motion

An Cathaoirleach then moved to the Motion.

Query [speaker unclear] does the National President receive €16,500 expenses every year. The National President confirmed this and that it had been the case for every National President. Querist followed up that the National President had said that she did not get expenses. It was clarified that the National President receives €16,500 per year, known as an honorarium, but not in excess of that. Querist confirmed satisfaction with the response.

On Grant Thornton the National President confirmed a full report on her expenses was being prepared and would come to members.

Ms Madden sought to speak again and there was some dispute about speaking rights.

Patricia Madden, Ballymun Guild, Dublin Federation: Query on whether the amendments submitted to the EGM minutes had been included in the minutes received, as she didn't appear to have such amended minutes. [*There is reference at this point to amended minutes having been checked. and this refers to the minutes as circulated*.] Ms Madden said that amendments had been sent in on Thursday, including one on the counter motion.

On the calling of the EGM, Ms Madden said nothing was given to show the 53 Guilds and that the meeting had been validly called. She had submitted a comment on the EGM and had received an email from the Operations Manager the previous day in which it was stated that Central Office staff had no involvement in the EGM, as Ms Ferris believed that the EGM was not called correctly.

An Cathaoirleach advised that if 53 guilds called for an EGM through their Federation Presidents and through their Secretaries, that had to be acceded to and she was having no more talk about it.

Chairman - Procedures (motion on the screen). Communications from Guilds about the elections, had been received, all using the same language. She said there was a motion, and an alternative, and it was up to the members to vote on what they wanted to happen.

The motion was proposed by Ms Dillon, Kildare Federation.

Nellie Dillon, Kildare Federation President: Ms Dillon proposing the motion, made a lengthy statement. She referred to the breaches in the constitution, with the extra votes. Her extreme concern prompted calling an Emergency Federation Committee meeting and a letter was sent and the matter pursued because of the seriousness of the issues. The letter went to all Kildare members. Some did not see it and were saying that they were victims, but she believed that it was the ICA members who were the victims.

She said she had received letters, including an anonymous letter, and she had heard from Federation Presidents who were feeling intimidated at what they saw as threats. She believed that someone was orchestrating this and the letter in the paper yesterday, describing them as cowards and bullies.

Ms Dillon said the whole election should be postponed until the ICA was in a nice quiet place and do it properly in a few months' time. She referred to the description by the NEB of the circulation of additional voting papers as an error, but pointed out that the Board decided that the other candidates were not to be told. She believed that it was done on purpose. She had never known of extra votes, yet it was being said that the practice happened. It didn't. She urged members to support the motion to defer the election for a minimum of six months, and for the National President to continue in a caretaker role.

Eva Coyle, Raphoe Guild, Donegal Federation, former National President: Formally seconding.

Mary MacNamara, (National Treasurer), Maynooth Guild, Kildare Federation. On Ms Dillon's statement she clarified some confusion about the meeting at which the Kildare letter had been prepared as being a Federation Committee and not a Federation meeting as she had understood.

Chairman - Procedures then took the meeting through the motion being put to the meeting and presented the full proposal:

"*As a consequence of the strong support for this course of action expressed at the EGM the board at the meeting on the 21st April determined that it is in the best interest of ICA that the following proposal be put to members at the AGM:*

1. *The 2018 election process for national and regional officers be abandoned.*
2. *The incoming ICA national executive board on assuming office at the conclusion of this AGM initiate new elections for the national officer positions and that of the four regional Presidents.*

3. *The process of election be completed speedily based on an agreed election schedule prepared by the incoming procedures committee with the aim of concluding the process within six months and no later than the 2019 AGM as would be required under clause 67 of the constitution.*
4. *The current National President remain in office pro temporary until the conclusion of the election process. The incoming NEB would have the power, should it be determined necessary, to fill the two national officer, secretary and treasurer vacancies pro temporary as set out in clause 67 of the constitution 2017. But again only for the period up to the conclusion of the election process.*

Should this proposal be rejected then the incoming procedures committee will oversee the issuing of a third set of ballot papers to be sent out by registered post for the guilds to ballot on the candidates list as validated in December, 2017 by the 2017/2018 procedures committee.

Should the members decide to propose a new election at the 2018 AGM, the incoming NEB will have the necessary power to carry out the function set out in clause 59 of the 2017 constitution and it would be made of the national president, 2015-18 remaining on in office pro temporary for the period of the new elections. The nine federation presidents as per the rotation schedule as members of the NEB. A further board member who would emerge through the election of the chair of the NEC by all 27 Federation Presidents. Co-option as the NEB may deem necessary. The new elections would add the remaining board members. In accordance with clause 67 the NEB would have the power to fill the national officer vacancies pro temporary from among its members or from the NAC membership. This places a time limit for co-options that is until the end of the election process.

The procedures committee elected at the 2018 AGM would set up the new election process or complete the old one in relation to the national president, secretary, treasurer and four regional presidents. They would prepare an election schedule to start the process of nominations and set out the rest of the timings. Or, they will oversee the sending out of new ballot papers to complete the old process if that is the will of the members at the AGM."

There was some disputation on the Constitutionality of the proposal.

Chairman – Procedures: pointed to the choice for the members, between a complete new election with new nomination papers or to run with current candidates and new (3rd set) voting papers

A request for clarification of when the 2019 AGM would be held was confirmed as May.

Ann Devitt Dualla/Cashel, ICA Guild, South Tipperary: Clarification as to why it is necessary to have a third election. The Chairman Procedures Committee outlined the reasons which concerned member unhappiness about what had happened with voting papers, and that this was necessary to keep everything transparent and above board.

An *Cathaoirleach* added that Guilds did not vote post the EGM because the vote was suspended and some Guilds had said they had not received voting papers.

Ms O'Carroll said that this time the Procedures Committee would oversee the process, unlike previously when advised their presence was not required, including overseeing the process of the destruction of ballot papers posted in and now not being counted, adding that candidates would be welcome to attend. She confirmed ballot papers would be sent by registered post.

May Campbell, Longford Town Guild, Longford Federation: As a member of 26 years she was embarrassed with the meeting and so sorry that members were behaving so erratically. She was glad the meeting had the good sense to vote to keep Mr Reid in the room, and that if a room full of men did this to a woman the ICA would be out roaring about gender equality. Had the constitution been adhered to in the first place we wouldn't be here. As a candidate she urged members to vote for this motion and a whole new set of candidates can be put forward.

Mary Fitzgerald, Oulart Guild, Wexford Federation. Asked if elections are deferred for 6 months will there be an opportunity for other candidates to step forward? This was confirmed by the Chairman Procedures Committee.

Catherine Spillane, Castlegregory Guild, Co. Kerry Federation: There has been no opportunity to hear an alternative, something had been proposed but nobody to speak against which she thought wrong. If the EGM was not constitutional, how could the meeting be voting on a motion that came from an illegal meeting?

Patricia Madden, Ballymun Guild, Dublin Federation: Referred to the legality of the EGM, which she had attended in good faith, that her view had been confirmed by the Operations Manager, and the motion then had not been constitutionally put. An Emergency Motion can only be put for something that could not have been anticipated at the time the agenda went out. She said there was no standing orders, no EGM legally put, no standing orders suspended by the meeting, the vote was unconstitutionally put, no person was allowed to speak to the vote, there were counter motions sought to be put and nobody was allowed. It was not a vote show your hands and then the advice from the ICA solicitor that it was a vote, it wasn't a vote. It had come here though you can only bring a motion properly 90 days earlier.

Chairman - Procedures attempted to have the speaker conclude and there was some disputation. The point was made that if the original errors with voting papers had not occurred, then there would have been no need for any of what followed.

Margaret Kenny, Bonniconlon Guild, Mayo Federation: Referring to her earlier comments, clarified that she was objecting the presence of the role of the Solicitor and had made no reference to the gender. Speaking to the motion, as a member for 10 years, she had believed that the meeting had not heard the full story. She had not been at the EGM. It was healthy to have debate and there was nothing wrong with people giving their honest opinion and speaking their mind, at the meeting and not in the papers. She urged that members reject the proposal and that whatever has been going on for the last five months come to an end and start afresh.

Chairman - Procedures advised that the Committee had identified how to have a speedy election process and that it would not drag on.

Deidre Hickey, Berrings Guild, Cork Federation. Ms Hickey confirmed she had received requests from 27 Guilds for an EGM and another 5 subsequently, and she could supply the 32 names if needed.

Carol Grogan, Drogheda Guild, Louth Federation. A letter with enquiries about the EGM included asking why did Marie stuff the envelopes. The answer received on May 22nd was that Head Office staff were extremely busy with the monthly mailing and were short staffed, which is different from the statement by the Operations Manager at the meeting.

Carmel Dawson, Ballyconnell Guild, Carlow Federation. In reply Ms Dawson said that she had never Chaired an illegal meeting in 53 years. The ICA Solicitor was present at the EGM and could have stopped the meeting if she was doing something illegal. She referred to Ms O'Toole, the first Dublin National President in the ICAs history, as having had the toughest time in her Presidency, coming out with flying colours because she had upheld the constitution. She asked how elections could take place with the atmosphere. She was supporting the motion to have a new, fresh elections as quickly as possible, overseen by the Procedures Committee. She concluded by pointing out that asking a member of staff to do something, is a direction.

Chairman – Procedures advised that the meeting seemed ready to vote, and summarized the sequence of decisions as:

> a whole new election is called and held within six months - a complete new election with new nomination papers, new candidates *or if not*
> the current candidates voted with a new set of voting papers going out.

There was a card vote on the motion, which was counted, rechecked, and declared as carried. [As the motion was carried, option b fell.]

Mairead O'Carroll, Chairman Procedures Committee: Thanked everyone for conducting the last and most important business of the day, and in her last session as Chair of Procedures thanked Committee members Ann O'Connell, Angela O'Byrne and Bridget Keane. Queried, she confirmed that in the new elections any [qualified] member could put themselves forward as a candidate

Mary McNamara, National Treasurer: Congratulated all present, and all who have taken Officer roles in a voluntary capacity, for three years of excellent work.

ITEM 6 Report from Competitions Committee (Wexford Federation)

Breda Banville reported on a busy and hard-working term in office for the Committee. She advised that another stamp on the Bauman Cup for Art was need, and that all ICA trophies should be assessed for repair, value and insurance. Members were reminded that the Patsy Lawler cup for set dancing and the Memorial Handcraft trophy must be returned to Central Office, and the Betty Manning and Eleanor Given cups will be needed in 2019.

Ms Banville noted a brilliant end to their work with the Gempack and Competitions weekends, thanking Niamh Donegan and her staff at An Grianán, for pulling out all the stops, and Anna and Colette in Central Office. She thanked her 'Conscious Cailíni' as the Committee call themselves - Dee, Breda, Alice and the four Mary's – who she described as the most loyal, dedicated and fun-loving Committee with whom it had been a privilege to work. She thanked the National President Marie O'Toole, a good friend, a support and worthy ambassador and figurehead for ICA, for her commitment, integrity and the ladylike way she represented and steered ICA through good and bad times, concluding that Anita Lett, ICA founder would be very proud of Marie, as are the members.

Presentations - Competition winners (**Table 1**). In conclusion Ms Banville marked the conclusion of the Committees three-year term and thanked the National President; the staff in Central Office, and Hilda Roche, Ashford Guild, Wicklow Federation. Presentations were made to the staff and Ms Roach, and the next committee wished luck and offered every help as others had given Wexford. *An Cathaoirleach* thanked the Committee for their wonderful work and introduced the Prize Draw.

ITEM 7 Raffle Results

Prizewinners were announced. The Draw will see vouchers for c. €350 for An Grianán going to Federations for distribution to Guilds.

ITEM 8 Vote of thanks and close of National AGM 2018

An Cathaoirleach called for the vote of thanks.

Rosemary Murphy, Cavan Federation: On behalf of all the members, Ms Murphy proposed a thanks to the ladies who had a very, very tough day and wished everybody the best of luck for the future.

An Cathaoirleach confirmed the incoming procedures committee [4 *nominees elected without a contest*] as: Carmel Dawson, Ann O'Connell; Angela O'Byrne; Mary O'Reilly. She thanked her fellow Officers; the Procedures Committee; Mr John Reid, Caroline McCamley in her absence; the Prize Draw Committee, Helen, Mary and Barbara, and Maura McManus who came up with the idea. She wished everyone a safe journey home and declared the AGM closed.

The meeting concluded at 5.20.

Table 1: ICA NATIONAL COMPETITIONS - 2018

Competition	Task	Results
Reporting	Report on a significant event in the area c.700 words.	1st Mary Plunkett, Ballingeary Guild, S. Tipperary Federation 2nd Jo Whitmore, Castlebridge Guild, Wexford Federation 3rd Sheila McCarron Murray, Ballinode Guild, Monaghan Federation
Photography Inter Federation Cup		**Overall winner** Susanna Braswell, Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Federation
Photography	Colour Fun in the Sun	1st Susanna Braswell, Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Federation 2nd Marion Cantwell, Tremorgan Guild, Waterford Federation 3rd Diana Dundon, Harris County Guild, Meath Federation
Photography	Black and White A Person at Work	1st Mary Finlay, Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Federation 2nd Betty Kelly, Brie Guild, Wexford Federation 3rd Susanna Braswell, Wicklow Town Guild, Wicklow Federation
Baumann Cup - Art	**A Beach Scene**	1st Kathleen Byrne. Garryhill Guild, Carlow Federation 2nd Ann Howell, Maudlin Guild, Wexford Federation 3rd. Carol Davis, Crosserlough Guild, Cavan Federation.
Inter Federation Cup for Crafts	A Red Work Embroidery Wall Hanging	1st Carole Davis, Crosserlough Rock Guild, Cavan Federation. 2nd Marjory Teary, Blackrock Guild, Dublin Federation. 3rd Olive Carr, Moss Guild, Donegal Federation
Murial Gahan Rosebowl	Tea Cosy	1st Mary White, Rathkeenan Guild, S Tipperary Federation 2nd Mary Scanlon, Derry Quay Guild, Kerry Federation 3rd May Cheevers, Longford Town Guild, Longford Federation
Contest Committee Award	Four Coasters	1st Ethel Patterson, Raphoe Guild, Donegal 2nd Mary Scanlon, Derry Quay Guild, Kerry Federation 3rd Kristina Riauke, Portlaoise Guild Laois Federation
Breda McDonald Trophy	Hobby	1st Krisitina Riauke, Portlaoise Guild, Laois Federation 2nd Yvonne Gill, Barna Guild, Galway Federation 3rd Anne Downey, Clareen Guild, Offaly Federation