

## **Minutes**

### **Meeting of Toscaireacht at Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square, Dublin 2**

**2pm – 4pm 9 March 2020**

#### **Present**

Anne Haverty, Deirdre Kinahan, Enda Wyley, Geraldine O'Reilly, Gerard Smyth, Grainne Mulvey, Mary O'Donnell, Theo Dorgan

#### **Apologies**

Michael Holohan, Eamon Colman

#### **In attendance**

Karen Hennessy (Aosdána Registrar)

#### **Welcome**

Registrar welcomed the new Toscaireacht.

#### **Appointment of Chair**

Theo Dorgan proposed Anne Haverty continue as Chair. Geraldine O'Reilly seconded. Anne Haverty proceeded to Chair the meeting.

#### **Minutes and Matters arising**

Anne Haverty proposed the minutes and Theo Dorgan seconded. No matters arising.

A point of information was made as to the function of the Toscaireacht. The Toscaireacht is the Steering Group of Aosdána and is not an Executive Committee. As such all decisions must be ratified by the membership at the General Assembly.

A discussion ensued on the handbook of Aosdána. The handbook requires revision. The detail on the foundation of Aosdána is currently being worked on through the Aosdána/Arts Council working group and will feed into the new handbook. The Registrar will forward a copy of the current handbook on file to each member of the Toscaireacht as a point of information. Theo Dorgan and Michael Holohan are reviewing new documents in the National Archives from the Department of An Taoiseach. Anne Haverty offered assistance with this.

In tandem to revising the handbook it was discussed that a log is needed of the rules and regulations of Aosdána. These have had alterations over the years via Standing Orders at various General Assembly. The Registrar is to compile all this detail into a Rule Book. Gerard Smyth and Enda Wyley volunteered to help with the editing of this.

A question was asked regarding the process undertaken by the Toscaireacht after a Standing Order is passed at the General Assembly. It was outlined that it is up to the Toscaireacht to act on the Standing Order and to see it is carried out in so far as is possible.

Grainne Mulvey asked about a Standing Order at the 2019 General Assembly:

*“In view of the rising cost of living, coupled with the increasing costs of producing work and the fact that the value of the Cnuas has been frozen for several years, we move that the threshold for eligibility be raised and the basis of assessment be changed to nett rather than gross income”.*

It was outlined that at the General Assembly the focus of discussion had been on unfreezing the Cnuas and that the proposal to assess income for Cnuas purposes according to nett income rather than gross income was deemed unworkable.

Theo Dorgan stated that in order to avail of the Cnuas one had to dedicate to working full-time on one's art making.

Anne Haverty outlined that work had been carried out in relation to the Cnuas and a letter had been sent to the new Arts Council Chair, Kevin Rafter. A meeting had also taken place between the Chair of the Toscaireacht and the Chair of the Arts Council and that this continues to be part of the discussion at the Aosdána/Arts Council working group meetings.

### **General Assembly 2020**

The Toscaireacht will issue a letter of invitation to Kevin Rafter, Chair of Arts Council to address the General Assembly. The Chair will write the letter. This opening address could be for 10 minutes. Professor Sarah Prescott, Principal and Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities will also speak on behalf of UCD at the opening of the Assembly. It was decided that a letter of invitation should also go to the new Director of the Arts Council, Maureen Kennelly. The Agenda could include a morning coffee break after the opening address to enable the Chair and new Director to mingle and meet members.

The Registrar gave an overview of meeting held in UCD on 27 February and the warm reception from UCD. Geraldine O'Reilly explained why it is not possible to have work from the Arts Council collection on display. This is due to logistical reasons and time constraints. Work by Aosdána members already exists in O'Reilly Hall which is a good compromise. There is also the potential to have work by Aosdána members who were alumni of UCD on display in one half of the hall, as the hall will be divided into two halves. Emer Beesley, Marketing & Communications Manager UCD, will also send on an overview of the UCD sculptural trail and this may include work by Aosdána members.

It was felt that this occasion would provide an appropriate opportunity to honour Saoi Anthony Cronin, an alumnus of UCD, considering his role as a prime mover in the foundation of Aosdana. It was decided that Anne Haverty would select poems and read a number of Anthony's poems after lunch, introduced by Theo Dorgan.

After this reading Theo Dorgan would introduce the contribution from the School of English, Drama and Film and the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore, coordinated by John Brannigan

The contribution by School of English, Drama and Film and the School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore coordinated by John Brannigan was discussed. It was decided that the best time for this was just after lunch and before the newly elected members were announced. It should be for no longer than 40 minutes. Due to the necessity for time for Standing Orders it was thought that the best way to involve UCD creative fellows would be to invite them to attend the public afternoon session. The

Assembly is the only gathering of Aosdána members each year and as such it was thought the day should culminate in a social gathering in the University Club rather than an event. If there is a public event taking place on campus with UCD Arts Council Writer in Residence Colette Bryce members can be informed of this and attend if they wish.

Registrar to follow up with UCD in relation to the Agenda.

### **Discipline Ballot**

The Registrar read out the results of the discipline ballot which had taken place that morning. The outcome is 16 out of 22 nominees will go forward for election at the General Assembly. There are also 8 nominees from 2019 that will carry forward giving a total of 24 nominees for the General Assembly in 2020. It was noted that the letter, drafted in consultation with the Toscaireacht, and issued by the Registrar with the discipline ballot vote papers, had had a positive outcome with ballot returns up 20% on 2019.

Clarification was given that there is no limit to the number of times a person can be put forward for nomination. The criteria for nominating an artist was discussed and it was stated that the statement as per the call for nominations as follows *“made an outstanding contribution to the creative arts in Ireland”* refers to the artistic contribution of the artist and not services. It was outlined that the Aosdána/Arts Council working group is working on a document to clarify to members and a wider public the artistic attainment of an artist for Aosdána and that this would help members particularly new members when nominating.

### **Aosdána/Arts Council Working Group**

Anne Haverty stated that she would continue on the Aosdána/Arts Council Working Group. Theo Dorgan stated he wished to put himself forward for the working group. Mary O'Donnell also put herself forward. The date of the meeting of the working group did not suit Mary O'Donnell and as a result Deirdre Kinahan put herself forward for this meeting. It was discussed that this third member could rotate. The Registrar will put forward the names of the working group and check on rotating the third member or if continuity requires it to be the same person.

### **Culture Night Proposal**

Peter Sheridan's letter to the Toscaireacht in relation to Culture Night was discussed. It was outlined that as Aosdána is an affiliation rather than an organisation it is difficult to have an *'Aosdána Event'* as part of Culture Night and that it would more appropriate if it was billed as *'Members of Aosdána for Culture Night'*. It was agreed that this was the best way forward and this was to be outlined to Peter. Deirdre Kinahan expressed her willingness to be involved with this.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set as 11am – 1pm on 6 May 2020.

### **Follow on**

- Registrar to circulate current handbook to all Toscaireacht members.
- Registrar to compile an overview of all rules and regulations of Aosdána into a Rule Book and work out a timeframe for doing so.

- Chair to write letter of invitation to Arts Council Chair Kevin Rafter to address the General Assembly 2020.
- Chair to write letter of invitation to Arts Council Director Maureen Kennelly to attend the General Assembly.
- Registrar to continue to liaise with UCD in relation to the Agenda for the General Assembly.
- Registrar will put forward the names of the working group and check on rotating the third member or if continuity requires it to be the same person.
- Deirdre Kinahan to respond to Peter Sheridan's letter.