

**THE
ORAL HISTORY NETWORK OF IRELAND
HANDBOOK
2019/2020**

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I. About the Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI)

On 23 April 2010 the University of Limerick held an oral history symposium titled 'Private Stories, Public Histories' at which an initial call was made for participants who might be interested in setting up an oral history society in Ireland.

In June 2010, a further meeting brought together representatives of local history groups, independent scholars, and professional academics in order to discuss a tentative organisational structure for the group. A steering committee was formed then whose aim was to design and to develop a website and to organise an inaugural conference, which was held in Kilkenny Castle in September 2011. The conference, entitled 'Word of Mouth: Oral History Practice and Preservation in Ireland', also marked the official launch of the Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI).

The founding members of OHNI agreed that the network would act as a link between individuals, local history groups, and academics who are involved in the collection and in the use of oral history and heritage, in order to raise an awareness of the importance of Oral History. An 'all-island' approach was also determined as essential and connections were subsequently established with a number of Oral History groups in Northern Ireland. Among the founding members of the Oral history Network of Ireland (OHNI) were representatives from the following organisations:

The Centre for Contemporary Irish History at Trinity College, Dublin
The Cork Folklore Project
Cuímhneamh an Chláir, the Clare Oral History and Folklore Group
The GAA Oral History Project
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
The Peace Process: Layers of Meaning Project
University College Cork
The University of Limerick

The Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) Limited is a company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 23 March 2011. The company has charitable status and is registered under charity number CHY 19806. The purpose of the Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) is to discharge both the financial and other business interests of the Network, in consultation with the Steering Group.

II. Steering Group Composition

The Steering Group is responsible for the strategic planning and day-to-day management of OHNI. It determines the mission and purpose of OHNI in accordance with its standing orders, its memorandum, and its articles of association. The Steering Group may raise funds, may organise events and may make policy decisions in relationship to OHNI according to a majority vote. Membership of the Steering Group is drawn from the OHNI general membership.

2019/20 Steering Group Members:

Aleja Allen	Dianne Kirby
Fidelma Ashe	Sam Manning (Chairperson)
Arlene Crampsie (Vice-Chairperson)	Ida Milne
Maura Cronin (Secretary)	Michael Mulvey
Regina Fitzpatrick	Matthew O'Brien (Treasurer)
Sara Goek	Adrian Roche
Penny Johnston	

Steering Group Meeting Dates 2019/20:

Friday 20th September, UCD, Dublin 3pm
Saturday 23rd November, QUB, Belfast, 2pm
Friday 17th January (TBC)
Saturday 18th April (TBC)
Friday 18th September (TBC)

III. OHNI Standing Orders

- i. The name of the organisation is The Oral History Network of Ireland, also known as OHNI. The purpose of OHNI is to establish a formal oral history community for the support and promotion of oral history and heritage in Ireland from all aspects, and to hold, if possible, an annual conference.
- ii. OHNI is a not for profit organisation.
- iii. The objectives of OHNI are:
 - a. To create a formal network of oral historians, independent and group collectors of both oral and personal testimony, and those persons interested in oral history throughout the island of Ireland and beyond.
 - b. To provide a forum through which OHNI members and non-members may meet, share resources and information, and advance the position of oral history throughout the island of Ireland and beyond.
 - c. To promote the value, relevance, and the inter-disciplinarity of oral history and to raise its profile throughout the island of Ireland.
 - d. To organise conferences and other events where possible in which Oral History practitioners may have the opportunity to present and to discuss their own work and to learn from the work of others.
 - e. To develop a website as a resource for OHNI members and non-members who are interested in the collection, storage, preservation, and the dissemination of oral history and heritage.
 - f. To advocate for the interests of oral history and heritage in the relevant legislative developments where it is deemed necessary.
- iv. Membership, which is subject to stipulated annual fees, is open to all individuals over the age of eighteen and those groups who are interested in furthering the aims of OHNI. OHNI reserves the right, where appropriate, to decline or not to renew the membership of individuals and/or groups.

- v. Each member and/or group shall pay an annual subscription to OHNI as determined by the Steering Group. Membership is conditional upon payment.
- vi. Members of OHNI are entitled to attend and to participate in OHNI conferences, open events (meetings/seminars/workshops) that are arranged by OHNI, and in OHNI's Annual General Meeting (AGM), subject to fees where applicable. Members may bring motions, which must be duly seconded by those members in good standing with OHNI and are at the discretion of the Steering Group before the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Members may nominate other members in order to fill vacancies on the Steering Group, which must also duly be seconded by members in good standing with OHNI. When present, members may vote on the motions that are put to the general membership. Motions and/or nominations must be presented to the OHNI Secretary in writing via post or email at least 10 days in advance of the AGM.
- vii. Notice of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be circulated to the membership at least 21 days in advance of the scheduled meeting.
- viii. Ten (10) members shall constitute a quorum at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson or other recognised officer will Chair the meeting. The Chairperson shall cast a vote only in the event of a tie.
- ix. The Chairperson and Secretary / Treasurer shall submit their reports to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- x. The Steering Group is elected from and by the ordinary membership of OHNI. The Steering Group shall require a minimum of twelve (12) members and a maximum of nineteen (19) members. Vacancies on the Steering Group are filled by an election held at OHNI's Annual General Meeting (AGM). The term of membership of the Steering Group is three (3) years, after which members may be re-elected for up to two (2) consecutive terms.

- xi. The Steering Group will have four (4) Standing Committees: Finance; Policy; Events; Membership and Communications. Convenors of these committees may invite ordinary members of OHNI to join these committees in order to fulfil their purposes for a limited period of time and with the approval of two (2) members of the Steering Group. Ordinary members of these committees will not be entitled to vote at Steering Group meetings. It is the responsibility of the respective committee convenors to report formally at each meeting of the Steering Group and to bring recommendations to the Steering Group meetings for the requisite approval.
- xii. Convenors of the standing committees are elected by the Steering Group. Only members of the Steering Group are eligible to be nominated as convenors. Vacancies are filled by an election held at a Steering Group meeting. Where there is only one vacancy, a private ballot will take place in the event of multiple nominations. The term of each office is three (3) years after which members may be re-elected for up to two (2) consecutive terms.
- xiii. Members of the Steering Group may convene ad hoc committees with the approval of the Steering Group. Ad hoc committees are subject to the same terms and conditions as Standing Committees.
- xiv. Members of the Steering Group will demonstrate agreement by a show of hands. All decisions with financial or legal implications must be made in consultation with the Finance Committee.
- xv. The Steering Group will meet at least four (4) times a year. The Steering Group may co-opt members on a temporary basis in order to fill vacant places and/or offices in ONHI until such time as an election may be held at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- xvi. Membership of the Steering Group requires attendance at a minimum of two (2) meetings each year. Members who do not attend the necessary number of meetings will be asked to re-consider their commitment to the Steering Group. Members who do not attend a minimum of two (2) meetings each

year in two (2) consecutive years will be asked to stand down from the Steering Group. Video conferencing (e.g. Via Skype) is acceptable where the appropriate facilities are available and where the member's participation is for the full duration of the meeting.

- xvii. The quorum for Steering Group meetings will be fifty per cent (50%) plus one of the Steering Group. In the absence of the Chairperson, another recognised officer will take the Chair.
- xviii. Officers are elected by the Steering Group. Only members of the Steering Group are eligible to be nominated as officers. Vacancies are filled by an election held at a Steering Group meeting. In the event of multiple nominations to fill one vacancy, a private ballot will be held. The term of each office is three years after which members may be re-elected for up to two (2) consecutive terms.
- xix. Members of the Steering Group will commit to acting in the best interests of OHNI, upholding the principles of respect, honesty, and fairness in the implementation of OHNI business and will also adhere to the following:
 - a. Roberts Rules of Order shall govern the parliamentary proceedings of OHNI, except as otherwise provided for in the Standing Orders, Memorandum, and Articles of Association of the Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI).
 - b. In the conduct of its business OHNI shall have due regard to diversity and equality.
 - c. Steering Group members will observe the requirements of non-disclosure of privileged and/or confidential information to any third party.
 - d. OHNI will not be used for any commercial and/or professional purposes and will not engage in any commercial or professional activities without the prior agreement of the Steering Group.
 - e. Members of the Steering Group shall only speak on behalf of OHNI when authorised to do so by the Chairperson and two (2) other Directors of OHNI.

- f. Members of the Steering Group will disclose any interests where there may be a conflict or potential conflict between the best interests of OHNI and the best interest of the Steering Group member.

- xx. The Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer of OHNI will be common to both the Steering Group and the Board. Vacancies are filled by an election held at the AGM. Where there is only one vacancy, a private ballot will take place in the event of multiple nominations. The term of each office is three (3) years after which members may be re-elected for up to two (2) consecutive terms.

- xxi. The minutes, correspondence, and other records of OHNI and its committees shall be preserved by the officers and convenors of committees and shall be promptly turned over by those responsible to the Secretary when their terms of action expire.

- xxii. Proposals for amendments to the Standing Orders may be made by a majority at any meeting of the Steering Group. They must be submitted to the Secretary at least six (6) weeks before the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and must be circulated by the Secretary to all members via e-mail at least twenty-one (21) days before the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In order to take effect, the proposals must be approved by a two thirds (2/3) majority of those eligible to vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The voting will be conducted by show of hands.

IV. OHNI Legal Structure and Board Composition

The Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) was set up as a limited company by guarantee on 23 March 2011. OHNI was granted Charitable Status on 5 January 2012. It has seven (7) Directors and is governed by a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. The main object for which the Company has been established is:

‘To advance the education and to benefit the community through establishing an organised network for the community of oral historians and practitioners and to direct projects for the support and promotion of the discipline of oral history in Ireland’.

The basis for this structure was derived as the best possible option for a charitable organisation, bearing in mind the Charities Act 2009. All monies and assets of any kind are held in trust by the Company (Oral History Network of Ireland Ltd.) for OHNI. It is envisaged that the accounts will be made public to the members by publishing an online version as part of the OHNI website. Fiduciary responsibility for OHNI lies entirely with the Board of Directors.

A Company Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Directors is held annually in order to sign the annually audited accounts, which are currently produced by D.F. Dillion & Co. The appointment of annual officers of the Company will be held at this meeting. Any further changes to the Company’s Memorandum may be considered at this meeting.

The input of the OHNI membership is separate to the legal status of the company.

Directors of OHNI are nominated by the members of the Steering Group. Members of the Steering Group may also nominate as Directors, any former Steering Group members and/or persons who are not members of OHNI in order to avail of particular expertise. Nominations are received by and are voted upon by the existing Directors at the Company Annual General Meeting (AGM). A secret ballot will take place in the event of multiple nominations to fill one vacancy. Nominations to fill vacancies on the Board must be presented to the Company Secretary at least ten (10) days before the company Annual General Meeting (AGM). Notification of the Company Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be circulated to the Steering Group and the Board at least twenty-one (21) days in advance of the meeting. Steering Group members must form the majority of the Board at all times.

The term of office for Directors is three (3) years.

The current Directors are:

Mr. Peter Carson

Dr. Arlene Crampsie (Vice-Chairperson)

Dr. Maura Cronin (Secretary)

Mr. Matthew O'Brien (Treasurer)

Mr. Adrian Roche

Ms. Regina Fitzpatrick

Dr. Sam Manning (Chairperson)