

Report in response to the anonymous correspondence in relation to Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin.

I wish to address the issues raised in the anonymous correspondence in the following manner:

Part 1. To reply to the matters raised and misconstrued in the anonymous correspondence.

Part 2. To contextualise the important role of the Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta development for the benefit of the School Pupils and the Community.

Part 1. Boatbuilding Project 2016/17

Student Teacher: Dónal Greene G0030688, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Letterfrack.

During this year we had the pleasure of facilitating the final year teaching practice of Dónal Greene a final year student in Design Technology Education (Honours) in GMIT Letterfrack. The duration of the teaching practice extended from the 8 of November until the 17 of February 2017.

As part of his teaching practice in conjunction with his College tutors it was agreed that he would undertake a boatbuilding project with a group of challenging TY students who were difficult to engage in some of the modules our school traditionally offer. The project involved elements of design and actual building of the final design.

Also linked to the project, Dónal undertook to use it as part of his final year research project and thesis. (Summary enclosed)

In relation to specific inference that school funds were used to purchase the material for the build, we wish to clarify the exact products and cost which was borne by An Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta which has enjoyed close links with the school over the years. Although we would have no issues with the purchase of materials for any school project, I as Principal requested the Cumann Bádóireachta to bear the cost of this material from a separate and independent fund to that of the school's accounts given the scale and cost involved. I wish to state that I am an active founding member of an Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta. We consider this an advantage to the school and indeed the local community in keeping with the values espoused by the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools of which we are a member. Copy of invoice enclosed along with evidence of payment. (Aguisín 2)

Although the students engaged positively and worked diligently with their student teacher the project was ambitious and they failed to complete the work within the time allocated. However it proved a valuable and enriching experience for the group of students involved and they gained valuable skills during their time involved with the project as well as fostering a sense of belonging to the TY programme as a result of participating in this once off opportunity.

As the teaching practice drew to a close several discussions took place between the Principal and the Teaching Practice student on the options to complete the project build. One of the options considered was the possibility of an Adult Education Programme to enable the completion of the project. We contacted the Further Education Department of the GRETB with a view to completing the work on the boat. The Further Education Department agreed to facilitate the project as a pilot BTEI once there was enough evidence and interest by adults in the programme. Several members of the local Scéim Fostaíochta Pobail expressed a keen interest in becoming involved during one evening a week for 3 hours. This provided both training and accreditation opportunities for the SFP participants to FETAC level 3 (Woodwork 3N058). Although it was late in the year to commence

evening classes, it was decided to commence some sessions with a view to complete the project fully in the winter of 2017/18. This remains the plan for completion and is well on the way of achieving this objective. In addition to the SFP participants, one of the students parents opted to take part in the evening classes also. The classes were brought to a natural close towards the end of April for the present Academic Year due to the unavailability of both the tutor and the participants.

The boat remains in the school in a basement storage area to free up the room for other use and is available for view at any time. Indeed GMT the student supervisor Mr. Enda Bryt along with others have revisited the project in it's present storage facility on the school premises to see the progress such was their keen interest in the concept. This independent verification can be corroborated by Mr. Enda Bryt if required.

Role of The School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme were not involved in this boat building project.

I wish to confirm that the annual cost of the insurance cost for Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta is borne by the School Completion Programme annually.

Part 2. Background and Development

Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta was established to cater for the provision of sail training in An Cheathrú Rua with aim of introducing youngsters into the sport in a more structured manner building on the strong maritime heritage and marine traditions of the catchment area of Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin in 2009. Traditional sailing was and is synonymous with this part of the western seaboard but there was a lack of structure to enable young sailors to get involved in the sport. With a view to addressing this deficit Cumann Bádóireachta was established following Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin participation in various sailing courses and events offered by independent providers. The purpose of the Cumann was two fold:

1. To provide sailing opportunities for the pupils of Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin and others.
2. To seek financial assistance to establish a functional sailing centre in the locality.

Various sources of funding were researched and applications were lodged leading to a significant breakthrough with a letter of sanction from the Leader Programme initiative for the purpose of training and purchase of equipment to the value of €37,170.

On foot of this funding the Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta sought the support of The Board of Management of Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin in relation to the matching funding required to avail of the grant aid. The Board of Management sanctioned the matching funding required on the 3 February 2010 to the value of €12,390. They imposed various conditions to the funding. I enclose copy of section (ix) of the minutes of that meeting and MFG Leader programme letter of sanction (REPORT Aguisín 1 & Aguisín 1b)

Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin further assisted the promotion of sailing for the benefit of it's students by hiring of storage and compound at Sruthán during the years 2011, 2012 & 2013. This was discontinued and thereafter a storage container was bought for the purpose of storage on the pier. The funding for this was from Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin's account number 2 and not from Department of Education sanctioned grants. The 20ft container remains the property of the school. Permission was sought from the locally based Galway County Council area engineer to locate the container on the pier. The decision to purchase the container rather than continuing renting was a

cost saving exercise although the permanent structure was more desirable due to its secure nature and toilet facilities (Aguisín Cíos v Container). The issue of a suitable shorebase remains a priority for Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta.

The Cumann Bádóireacht have been fortunate to have garnered the support and financial assistance of other organisations along the way including the support of the wider community as follows:

- Údarás na Gaeltacha
- Galway Sports Partnership
- The School Completion Programme
- Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta
- Irish Sailing Association
- Galway County Council – Provision of enhanced slipway Céibh an tSrutháin

The Cumann Bádóireachta agus Seoltóireachta achieved the significant milestone of becoming an Irish Sailing Association recognised centre in May 2015 which has been retained annually (REPORT Aguisín ISA Centre Recognition). This enables the Cumann to organise and accredit courses under the Small Boat Sailing Scheme.

In April of this year the Cumann Bádóireachta in partnership with Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin was in a position to host the Connacht Schools Team Racing event at late notice at the request of the ISA Regional Development Officer. The event proved to be a great success. Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin were runners up to Athlone Community College in the final event of the day (Aguisín 3 & 4).

Courses are held annually and Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin students are the exclusive participants. In its short history the Cumann has managed to get eight students to Instructor level with one student gaining his Senior Instructor qualification.

In conclusion I wish to state,

1. Country of origin of the wood for the boat?
Answer: Finland
2. Cost of the wood for the boat build and who funded its purchase?
Answer: Cumann Bádóireachta (see invoice and bank statement enclosed)
3. Role of School Completion Co-ordinator in any possible funding of the boat?
Answer: The SCP Co-ordinator had no role in the funding of the project.
4. Role of the SCP Co-ordinator in funding the annual insurance costs of the private sailing club run by Mr. Seán Mac Donncha, Principal.
Answer: The School Completion Programme covers the annual insurance costs of An Cumann Bádóireachta & Seoltóireachta (Community based initiative not a private sailing club).
5. Role of the Local Fás/Solas employees in the building of the boat on school premises and whether the required vetting was carried out on these employees before working on the school premises?

Answer: Vetting is not required since these participants were not involved in relevant work or activities in relation to children or vulnerable adults as per CL 31/16.

6. What funding was used in the employment of the person who mostly engaged in the boat build?

Answer: The student teacher was not remunerated for his work.

7. Location of the boat at present and who removed the boat from the school premises before the arrival of the Department Inspectorate?

Answer: The boat is still on the school premises in basement storage area. The work had ceased for the current academic year and the space was required for other use.

8. Who funds the storage of the boats in the private sailing club that Mr. Seán Mac Donncha, Principal runs and as to whether the School Completion Programme or other school funding may be used for the storage of these privately owned boats by Mr. Seán Mac Donncha?

Answer: The boats remain on Sruthán Pier throughout the season. During the winter some of the boats are stored in a basement area of the school.

The School Completion Programme does not fund the storage of the boats.

There is no cost involved in the storage of the boats currently.

I wish to emphatically refute the false, misleading and malicious allegations contained in the anonymous letter. Cumann Bádóireachta is not a private operation for the benefit of Seán Mac Donncha. It is rather a progressive and worthwhile organisation addressing the needs and deficits of the community with significant potential to develop further in the years ahead.

An Cumann Bádóireachta is currently an ISA recognised sailing centre. The current committee is as follows:

Principal: Seán Mac Donncha (The ISA use the term Principal regarding accredited training centres)

Children's Officer: Diane Uí Chonghaile

Designated liaison Person: Seán Mac Donncha

Designated Person (Garda Vetting): Nóirín Uí Dhonncha

Junior Organiser: Micheál Ó Conghaile

Committee members: P.J. Ó Conghaile, Siobhán Uí Loideáin, Cian de Buitléar

Current listed instructors:

Ciarán Murphy, Graeme Grant, Noelle Doran, Brian Ward, Seán Mac Donncha, Shane Mc Elligott, Seán Ó Murchú, Micheál Ó Conghaile, Breandán Mac Donncha, Síle Ní Chonghaile, Fiachra Ó Sé, Brian Mac Donncha.

Seán Mac Donncha (Príomhoide)

Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin

An Cheathrú Rua

Co. na Gaillimhe