



## Scouting Ireland – two Scout associations become one!

### The Results

- A new vision for Scouting in Ireland, which meets the needs of young people today.
- An understanding that Scouting needs to be strong in the local communities if it is to be strong nationally. All the actions undertaken in the association must support Scouting locally.
- A new Scout programme for young people in Ireland supported by new resources to support adults in Scouting.
- A detailed transition work plan to bring together the 2 established National Scout Organisations in Ireland, resulting in an updated, dynamic organisation with renewed energy and vigour.
- Young people are more involved in decision-making at all levels in Scouting in Ireland.
- A strategic plan for Scouting Ireland 2004-2007 has been adopted.
- More effective use of volunteers and professional staff.

### The Methods

The process started in 1998 when there was a decision by the national assemblies of the two associations to appoint a committee to undertake some preparatory work and explore the feasibility of merging to become one National Scout Organisation.

There were 5 representatives from each association who met under an independent chairperson. Equal representation was an important principle as one association was much larger than the other. The committee did not make a great deal of progress for a while, as there was no person from either association who would really champion the process. The chairperson changed due to work commitments and it was only after this change that there was real progress.



Scouts in both associations voted to merge - a single association was born

The first step in the process was for the two associations to work together on a vision for a new association in Ireland. This process was not a simple matter. Six areas were to be addressed, some of which had not been discussed previously – programme, adult resources, professional staff, finance and property issues, uniform and emblems and constitutions. Sub-Committees were formed to produce an initial document. These working groups had very detailed terms of reference and strict reporting deadlines which were adhered to. The Management group met every 4-6 weeks to make sure that the project was on track. Many young people were involved in the process, particularly in the topics that affected them – youth programme and awards and uniform and emblems.

An initial document was produced which was accepted by both associations but there was recognition that more work was required on the constitutional matters. Following additional work a second paper was produced and a series of consultation meetings were undertaken at local level. This consultation took place in each association, covering the whole of the island of Ireland. At this stage there were also discussions with other



Ireland: Scouting Ireland

# Strategic Priority 6

An Organization for the 21st Century – becoming flexible, lean, innovative and participatory



**STRATEGY**  
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interested parties (stakeholders) in Scouting – the Department of Education and the leaders of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Individuals and groups were also asked to comment on the proposals. Twenty-eight submissions were received from CSI and 15 from SAI and in total 128 items required further consideration.

The working groups were asked to consider the issues raised and the World Scout Bureau was asked to help with the constitutional matters.

The final recommendations were presented at separate National General Assembly meetings in May 2003, where the recommendations were accepted. Scouting Ireland – a single Scout association was formed, taking effect from 1 January 2004.

## The Reasons

Closer relationships had been developing at Group and Unit level between the two associations.

The need for better use of resources in both associations and in particular in areas relating to the government and the public.

The changing face of Irish society, in particular the results of the 'peace process' in Northern Ireland, which meant that the timing was right for open dialogue.

## Our Learning

A participatory process is essential. Scouting is fundamentally a local organisation and people at local level must be fully involved in decision-making, particularly in any process concerning major changes.

There is a need to progress systematically – any plans to make change in an association need a lot of thought and planning and need to be approached in a systematic way.

Effective communication is vital at all levels – to be successful it is important to get people on board. For this to happen they need to know what you are planning why the changes are

taking place and how they will be involved and how the changes will affect them.



Resources are proposed so that the needs of young people in Ireland are met

External factors will also influence the process – in this case it was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Ireland, which restricted travel at an important stage in the process: but there may be economic, political, or environmental factors which necessitate a change in plans. It is important to respond to these, reassess the situation and make plans to move forward.

Openness and honesty is required – there needs to be a commitment at national level to the outcomes. When two different organisations are working together, openness and honesty are vital. It is also important that unrealistic promises are not made to members of the association. This is where a clear communication plan is important.

Report on Results – to gain the support and trust of members at all levels it is vital to report on progress against the agreed plans and to explain the reasons for any variations.

## Our Future Plans

Much has been achieved since the project was started but there is still a lot of work to be undertaken. The details of the new youth programme have still to be worked out and this is being undertaken by a Programme Review Group using RAP.

An Interim Management Committee was established (10 people from each association), to manage the actual process of 2 into 1 and the first National Assembly took place in October 2004. This Assembly elected the first National Management Committee of Scouting Ireland who have been endorsed to oversee the strategic plan, which has a very clear focus, is supported by the local groups and involves young people at every level of the new association.



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