



THE DUBLIN NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

Honorary Secretary's Report 2020-21

This report covers the 6-month period since the last AGM, which was held on 28th November 2020. Unfortunately, during this period, the Field Club has not been able to provide its normal programme of field outings and workshops. This was due to the restrictions on both travel and group meetings, imposed nationwide by the Government in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to provide a service that would be of interest for its members, the Field Club introduced a series of monthly online presentations. These commenced in January 2021 with a Presidential address that discussed mosquitos and malaria along with ticks and Lyme disease. Other topics covered by the presentations included: the flora and vegetation of North Bull Island; peatland structure and plants; the CHERISH Project – which assesses the impacts of climate change on our coastal heritage; and the background to compiling the recently published book on “*Ireland's Rivers*”

The Club has continued, over the past six months, to have a very active WhatsApp Group, which operates as a platform for information exchange and learning. Several themes emerged over the period, including ‘trees in winter’ and ‘small white-flowering species in spring’. Now that the summer months are drawing nearer, we can perhaps look forward to other themes dealing with bees, butterflies or ladybirds.

Since the last AGM the DNFC Board has met on 4 occasions, with all of the meetings being held by teleconference using Zoom. Two active Club members, Melinda Lyons and Ursula King, were co-opted onto the Board in January 2021. Alexis Fitzgerald stepped down from the Board on 29th March 2021 and I would like to thank him for his contribution over the past six years. I would also like to thank David Nash, who is retiring from the Board at this AGM, for all of his help and guidance during his most recent stint on the Board over the last nine years.

The principal activities of the Board have included the finalisation of a COVID-19 Protocol and a Safety Code, both of which will have to be taken into account by Members when we recommence our normal field activities. As the Field Club is registered as a charity, it must comply with a new Governance Code introduced by the Charities Regulator. This has meant a short-term increase in the workload of the Board, including the development of a Code of Conduct for Board members, trustees and officers of the Club; and a new Constitution that will update and replace the existing Memorandum and Articles of Association. I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Club member Jim Fitzharris to this new governing document, and to thank Jim for his help and support in drawing it up. This new Constitution will

be circulated to all Club Members and brought to a general meeting for approval by the Members once it has been endorsed by the Charities Regulator.

No meetings of the Federation of Irish Field Clubs Executive Committee were held during the period since the last AGM. A proposed FIFC outing to West Cork, initially scheduled to be held in June 2021, has been postponed owing to the uncertainty over travel restrictions in both jurisdictions and on the number of people permitted to meet up together in the Republic of Ireland.

During the period since the last AGM the Board approved the application of 2 new members to join the Club, along with 1 former member who wished to re-join; and at the end of calendar year 2020 we had a total of 150 members.

I would like to thank all of the presenters who have helped to make our series of online seminars a success; and my colleagues on the Board for all of their efforts to ensure that we will comply with the new Charities Governance Code. I would also like to thank all those members who actively contribute to the WhatsApp Group, who willingly share their knowledge and who have helped to keep the educational traditions of the Field Club alive during an extended period of social distancing and isolation.

Charles Shier

Hon. Secretary