

AGM 2024

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to all of you, both those here in person and those tuning in online, of which we have quite a number. For the benefit of those online, if you have any questions or comments you can raise your hand and Barbara will let you in at the appropriate time.

My name is **Sean Treanor** from the *Department of Social Protection* and it my honour to present my report as Chairperson of the Committee of Management.

This is the first full year of the new team in the Society of Karen, Barbara, Linda and Frances. It has been a busy period but the team has now settled well into their roles and grown in confidence over the last year.

Our Development officer, Barbara Dillion, having served tirelessly over the last 8 years will however be returning to her Department – Environment, Climate & Communications at the end of this year. She will be a big loss to the team but she has served the Society well and deserves to move on to bigger and better things – thank you Barbara.

With regard to the Committee of Management, we would like to thank Angela McDonnell, Kieron Murphy, Kevin Farrell, Tony Kelly and John Molloy for their time served on the Committee and for their commitment and contribution to the management of the Society.

We are very pleased to have a number of new members who are now interested in joining the Committee of Management and will come to that in our election later in the agenda.

So, to the facts and figures for the year 2023.

GRANT AID 2023

Later on, our treasurer, John Meagher, will take you through the Accounts for 2023. So, I will only concentrate on some of the headline figures for 2023.

A total of **€715,535** (approx) was granted by way of grant or loan in **2023 in 794** cases.

The amount of assistance decreased by **24%** from 2022's total of **€935,929** (approx.), while the number of cases decreased by about **10%**.

Of the **€715,535** total, just under **€403,046** was by way of non-repayable grant down **30%** on 2022.

€312,489 was by means of interest-free loans, a decrease of **12%** over 2022.

Overall, there was a significant decrease in the figures from 2022. There was a significant drop in the number of applications overall but also a significant drop in the number of applications that were withdrawn or not pursued. The average amount per grant/loan also considerably decreased.

It is difficult to pinpoint the drop in applications between 2022 to 2023...

MEMBERSHIP 2023

New member figures have made a significant jump from Jan-Dec 23 (**an increase of +34%**). However, contributions have dropped by -4% with actual contributions **€539,213** for 2023. This is indicative of the loss of a significant number of members contributions through retirement (although the person continues to be a member with or without subscription as per the Society rules). Basically, more members retired from the Society and did not continue their contribution than the number that joined.

It is an ongoing issue that the NSSO no longer give retiring staff the option to select the deductions they wish to continue on their retirement forms. So, if a retired member wishes to remain on, they have to contact the Society and complete a mandate for the PMG. Although some members do make the efforts to do this, the majority do not go to these lengths to continue their subscriptions.

PROMOTION OF THE SOCIETY

Department Presentations

The Society continues to promote the work with a mix of longline and physical presentations, talks and information stands. Overall, this has seen a significant increase in attendance as had been the case with 'in-person' presentations which are professionally delivered by Barbara. We had a very successful attendance at a Customs 'open day' for new recruits in Dublin Port, in the Central Bank and also at several induction days with the Department of Transport where we held information stands for

the day. There were also numerous presentations held throughout the year with Revenue (various locations), the Department of Education, the OPW, the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission and at the PSCU AGM

Relaunch of New Benefits

The relaunch of our new benefits/incentives took place on 20th September and was well attended with nearly 70 people there.

Mr Niall Cody, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners and Trustee was guest speaker and was well received. Ms Roisin Lyons from Lyons Financial gave a brief overview of the new benefits available to members. Ms Angelina Kelly, fellow Committee member, bravely shared her own personal member story of having received assistance from the Society and the Revenue Choir gave a wonderful and appropriate performance to close off the event in style.

We got great feedback from the event and a flurry of new membership applications and queries afterwards.

Promotional Videos

We also finalised a number of new promotional videos and these were sent to all Departments to upload on their internal staff websites.

Ezine

The Society's newsletter has also been reintroduced in an online format and has now issued twice since last year. We hope to do that on a bi-annual basis via email to our members and via our website going forward.

Promotional Offers/Member Rewards

We have also been researching a number of offerings to reward members and hope to launch these later in 2024.

WORK PRACTICES

Online

Close to 90% of the Society's work is now done online including payments, membership and grant applications and meetings. We still of course offer paper application forms and payments by cheque and we are only too happy to continue to provide this service. While we do most of the caseworking over the phone and by email, we also still visit people when it is appropriate to do so.

We also now hold Cases Committee meetings on a fortnightly basis in a combined in person/online format. This is to create a more expedient process with a reduced wait time for case decisions, although we still deal with urgent/emergency cases via email when necessary. So far it has worked for our Cases Committee members, although their commitment and dedication can not be underestimated and which are hugely appreciate of.

IT

We have also updated our IT systems with the kind assistance of the Revenue IT Division. Our operations are now run via wireless systems and our phones have now moved to a online facility. On the outside there are no changes to our phone numbers but it now makes it more possible for staff to take phone calls anywhere and has created greater flexibility and autonomy from an IT perspective.

MANY THANKS TO ...

There are many people who help to make the work of the Society run smoothly...

1. Cases Committee

The Cases Committee give so much commitment and dedication to help us process our applications and keep the work on track and we owe a massive debt of gratitude to them. We had a few changes to the Committee in 2023 as we said farewell to Frances McGahon who gave many, many years of her time to the Cases Committee and for which we are very grateful for. We also had a new addition to the Committee and would like to thank Eileen Horgan for joining the team. Eileen joins Joe Keane, David Cleary and the longstanding John Meagher who continued through 2023 with their ongoing commitment and dedication to helping our members. Everyone on the Cases Committee give their assistance with such empathy, experience and understanding and, I know that all the staff in HQ are extremely appreciative of their contribution.

2. Trustee and Supervisory Committee

The Supervisory Committee also perform an importance function in the running of the Society, and we are very grateful to Michael Stapleton, Declan O'Brien, and our Trustee, John McKeon who make up the Supervisory Committee.

I also wish to acknowledge our other Trustee, Mr Niall Cody, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, who along with John McKeon have given their full support to the Society and are always available whenever we need assistance.

I am also very pleased to announce the appointment of our new Trustee Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General of the Department of Rural & Community Development. Mary is now officially appointed as the 3rd Trustee of the Society and we are more than happy to have her on board and value the experience and expertise she brings.

3. Committee of Management

I also wish to thank my colleagues on the full Committee of Management.

We are delighted to have some members put their names forward for the Committee this year and I would encourage more working staff to join the Committee in order to represent your colleagues on the ground. It is not a huge commitment timewise but may prove valuable to making your colleagues aware that there is financial help and advice available to them within the civil service.

4. Employee Assistance Service

As ever, we value our relationship with the Employee Assistance Service and in doing so, ensure that the confidential ethos of both the EAS and the Society are honoured. The Employee Assistance officers continually look out for our members and also promote the Society on our behalf at every opportunity. And we are very glad to have representation from the EAS on the Committee of Management. So thank you Susan Clarke and all at the EAS.

5. Credit Unions

I would like to thank Susan Lynch in CANA Credit Union and Paul Ryan in the PSCU for their ongoing support and to their respective staff who work with us for the common good of easing financial concerns for our members.

6. Lyons Financial Services

I would like to thank Roisin and her colleagues in Lyons Financial who have worked closely with the Society over the last year to create the member Benefits most appropriate for PSFS members but have also provided support and advice to the Society staff on an ongoing basis of which we are very grateful.

HQ Staff

And many thanks are due of course to our staff in HQ, Karen, Barbara, Linda and Frances for handling the day-to-day calls on the Society and looking after our members in their times of need.

Go raibh mile maith agat

Sean Treanor

Chairperson

Public Service Friendly Society