

I would like to welcome you all here to our Annual General Meeting. Thank you for your commitment to continuing An Díseart as a place in the centre of the community for the development of spiritual, artistic and cultural activities and to continuing the research into Irish Spirituality and Theology.

Firstly, I would like to thank every single one of you for your help and support since I assumed the role of Acting Chairperson in March. I would also like to thank Fr. Jim Sheehy for the work tireless work he undertook as Chairperson from 2016 to early 2020. His contribution is lasting. I would like to mention in particular the work and the resources he provided for the restoration of the floors in the building and the stone walls in the garden also the donation of his books and construction of the library, with the help of the men's shed whose contribution who have been powerful and contuing in their support.

Many thanks goes to Pádraig Feirtéar, John Sheehy, Pádraig Ó Foghlú, for their advice as well as their individual contrbutions in minute taking, accounts and legal matters.

Thanks also to Tadhg Ó Dúshlaine for his work in developing An Díseart's co-operation with SHU on the ongoing research into Irish Theology and Spirituality, and the planned co-development of a library on the sources of Irish Spirituality, Isabel Bennett's input to this library is also extremely valuable.

The continued support of the Presentation Sisters and their representatives on the board, Sr. Marie Wall and Sr. Dorothy has been key in progressing developments at An Díseart and many thanks to Bríd Ní Mhoráin for her work on translation.

The work of Cairde an Díseart is central to the success of An Díseart and many thanks to all of the cairde who have given of their time to contribute to the work, and to Marian Uí Chofaigh for ably representing Cairde at board meetings and Maire Uí Shíthigh and Fr. Jim Sheehy for their role in liaising.

The essential work done on a daily basis to keep the charity operational, is provided by the foireann great credit is due to Theresa, Elaine, Tom, Joe, Páidí, Breda and Robert, who have shown great dedication since returning to work, and to their supervisors Séamus Ó Lúing and Joe Brick. The team in the garden have put in exceptional effort, in difficult circumstances, to bring the design of the garden to fruition. Tom Healy is retiring from before the end of the September. The garden is in the early stages of its development but its effect is already apparent, with our neighbours in Gairdín Mhuire expressing their delight at the developments.

For the first time, and as part of the developing memorandum of understanding between Ollscoil Chroí Ró Naofa and An Díseart, students were given an induction course by An Díseart. This was delivered by Isabel Bennett, Fr. Jim Sheehy and Joan Maguire.

The year took an unexpected turn after a busy start with a house full of visiting students and community activities. SHU had 191 students attending short courses early in the year. 63

semester students were a few weeks into their three month course when the call came to return to the USA. All students returned safely and completed their 14 day quarantine without any illness reported.

Apart from SHU students activities taking place included, Mass on Monday morning, Aerial Yoga, and Tai Chi classes, Irish classes and ciorcal comhrá, The Dingle New Music Choir and Orchestra and the Gospel choir were practising and studying music theory and Pat de Brún organized a once weekly evening of songs as Gaeilge. The Bereavement group held meetings and the parish retreat was held in An Díseart in March. The knitting group met weekly and the Art group met every Friday. Open art classes were organised by West Kerry Mental health group, Transition Chorca Dhuibhne launched their community forest project, and Maire Uí Shíthigh organized a lecture with Anastasia Crickley, which raised interesting questions about inclusion in community.

Domhnal Ó Bric has been appointed artist in-residence at An Díseart, it is planned that he will work on bringing his interpretations to the signage within the building and will exhibit his work as well as deliver a talk on his art practice. He is the first artist to be given an artists residency at An Díseart. It is hoped that other residencies will follow.

The work on the dry rot to the east of the front door was completed, as was the fire alarm system and essential work carried out on the electrical system. thanks to Gary Delaney and to Pat O Leary for their continued support. The Díseart safety statement was put in place and the statement was updated to include COVID-19 issues, also with the support of Theresa and Clíodhna Ní Bheagaíoch a COVID-19 policy is in place. The arrival of COVID-19 virus in Ireland and the ensuing lockdown brought all activities in the building to a sudden halt on March 12th, with work continuing in the garden for a longer period. Part of the team returned to work at the end of June with the work recommencing on the garden, but the building has remained closed to the public, due to safety concerns surrounding the virus. From mid- July everyone had returned to work

Going forward, we are facing a period of uncertainty and we have a responsibility to keep the scheme workers, students and the community safe in An Díseart during the present pandemic. This is not a time to pull back but a time to work in preparing the building for classes in the winter that will keep our mission active within the community, at a time when it is people need it. The safety requirements of operating in a pandemic will require detailed planning and co-operation from all who use the Díseart and an added cleaning schedule. SHU are examining the feasibility of bringing students for a semester starting in early 2021.

We can be confident that An Díseart gardens and building are viewed within the community and by the local festival committees as an important resource. The location of the Díseart in the centre of the town makes a visit here , a short step away from the hustle and bustle, a place apart, in keeping with its name and purpose.

As a registered charity, An Díseart, is regulated by the principles of good governance as laid out by the Charities Regulator and 2020 is the first year that we must comply with these regulations. This places added responsibilities on the board of directors. However, it also provides a structure that, if adhered to will ensure the safe running of the charity and the protection of the directors.

Our hope of employing an administrator will have to be reviewed, with the reduced income caused by the lack of visitors over the summer months. For volunteer-only charities, such as An Díseart (charities with no staff) the trustees are normally actively involved in both the governance and in the day-to-day management of the charity.

But we should not be deterred by this, because with continued commitment we can steer An Díseart forward. We can look forward in the coming year to working together to further the charitable aims of An Díseart. We each individually have skills in the areas, of academics, heritage, culture, writing, art and spirituality, and gardening.

The need for board members to continue their commitment by becoming active and taking up specific roles and responsibilities within governance and operational activity is pressing. Essential operational issues aside, we have to draw up a plan for the year that will continue and to develop the reach of An Díseart in the community, the main beneficiaries of the work of this charity.

If we succeed in this we can ensure that An Díseart continues to act as the centre for a lively community giving expression to and promoting Celtic Culture and Spirituality as an integral part of our local heritage. Thank you, with your continued commitment An Díseart will continue to grow.

Joan Maguire MSc FICS
Chairperson of the Board of Directors of An Díseart