

Kendo na hÉireann Annual General Meeting

6th July 2014

The Lough Community Centre, Cork

Participants

Kathryn Cassidy
Liam Liao
Riley Liao
Diarmuid Quirke
Dave McGlynn
Adrian Moloney
Mihailo Lalevic
Raul Fernandez
Lee Cahill
Martin Kiosew
Jason Clouston

There were a total of 11 people present but 18 were required in order to be quorate. It was agreed that we would proceed with the meeting and then send the motions for decision by an online vote to all members. If a quorum of members responds to the online vote and a majority agrees that this is an acceptable solution then we will proceed with it. If not then an EGM will need to be held.

Presentation and Adoption of Annual Report

Jason reported on the activities of the year and plan for the future. He said that the situation was improving even though the membership numbers are down again this year. The lack of a quorum at the AGM was also disappointing, but it is hard to ask for more commitment from people when kendo is a hobby to them, but ask that people try to get more involved when they can and volunteer to help out.

Going forward Jason hopes that we can become more independent as a federation. We hope to hold an internal grading to shodan this year (without inviting a sensei from abroad) and Jason expressed the hope that in future years we could even run the Nationals ourselves. At the moment people still like the security of having a sensei there, but in a few years we should be aiming to have enough referees and experience to run it independently. Jason stressed that we must make our own mistakes and learn from them rather than always relying on having someone from another European Federation there to help and advise us. We now have three Yondans and one Godan, as well as a lot of sandans and

nidans. The Federation is growing in terms of maturity, and we should be able to stand more on our own feet.

Jason stressed, however, the need to get more members. Our grades are increasing but our pool of members is diminishing. Kyu grades and beginners continue to come and go, and we need to work both on retention and on ideas for getting new members in. Jason pointed out that we could all help with this, for example if you want to put up some posters in your area just ask the Federation and we can pay for printing, etc.

The annual report and plan was unanimously accepted by those members who were present.

Presentation and Adoption of Financial Report

Martin presented the Financial Report (attached) and explained the main expenses.

Insurance was a little bit higher this year, Diarmuid volunteered to help us shop around for a better deal this year as he works in insurance. Kathryn agreed to send him the details of our current policy.

The Spring Seminar made small profit in 2013 and larger profit this year thanks to the sandan grading. The Nationals made a small loss, but we managed to reduce costs on accommodation and other areas.

Last year we spent a significant amount on the National Squad, but this year we didn't go to the European Kendo Championships so we haven't paid anything yet. We will probably put some money towards competition fees during the year.

IMAC fees are just slightly higher, while Garda vetting and Coaching Courses incurred some costs with more to come as we need to continue with the vetting and certification process.

The federation now has a number of Iaido practitioners and we hope to participate in the European Iaido Championships. We will make some small contribution towards the costs for the championship.

There were a number of once off fees this year

- New website
- Website Hosting
- Domain registration
- New Membership cards (to be issued soon)

Martin thinks that the temporary membership model is not working very well as we are not getting timely details from the clubs of new members, or following up on them after their 3-month period is up. An online system would simplify this. Kathryn will investigate whether we can use a plugin/module on the website to handle this, while Martin will look into using the DojoExpert software.

Diarmuid suggested collecting the information online, then sending out a copy to the member who must check it and correct any errors. They could sign and return it if a signature is required. This might be best practice as we could still have a paper copy. Jason suggests that we keep the current system but look at adding an online payment/registration system in addition to the existing paper forms.

Membership cards may also help to clarify the system with temporary memberships and these are being introduced this year.

DojoExpert software is being investigated to manage members rather than spreadsheets. This keeps everything in one place, memberships, email, finance, etc. We aim to introduce this for a trial this year. It has some features for integration with websites, so this might be a good option for automating things.

Overall the federation expects to make a loss of approximately 200 euro this year, which is quite a good position to be in. More of a problem is the membership numbers. We currently have 62 members (not including temporary), which means we are losing about 11 people each year. Membership fees are our main source of income so we do need to address the drop in numbers.

Martin thanked all members for paying their fees as that is how we can survive. We are also actively looking for sponsorship and this year did receive some money from the Japanese Embassy for the Nationals.

The financial report and plan was unanimously accepted by those members who were present.

Election/appointment of officers

The outgoing board thanked Patrick McGuire for his work and all of his contributions over the past years. Patrick is stepping down from the position of Vice-President this year and we wish him all the best.

President:

Jason Clouston was nominated by Martin Kiosew and seconded by Lee Cahill

Vice President:

Raul Fernandez was nominated by Kathryn Cassidy and seconded by Mihailo Lalevic

Treasurer:

Martin Kiosew was nominated by Kathryn Cassidy and seconded by Diarmuid Quirke

Secretary:

Kathryn Cassidy was nominated by Martin Kiosew and seconded by Adrian Moloney

All officers were unanimously elected.

The appointment of non-executive officers (anti-doping officer, child-protection officer and coaching officer) was deferred so that volunteers can be sought.

Motion: That members of dojos training in Northern Ireland should be able to participate in the Irish National Championships

This was proposed by Aaron Kelly and seconded by Kathryn Cassidy.

Kathryn outlined the current situation. Section 1.4 of the constitution of Kendo na hÉireann stipulates that the Geographical Area of Responsibility of the federation is the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland (Éire). While section 7.2 a and b stipulate that the competition is open to clubs and members of Kendo na h'Éireann.

While there was an overseas membership category in the past, it is not currently used, and if we reinstitute it to resolve this issue, then precautions would have to be taken to ensure that this membership category was restricted to those people who had some sort of connection to Irish Kendo. In the past we have had queries from members of the BKA living and training in Great Britain asking if they could participate in the nationals. We also had one American member who joined in order to participate. All agreed that this was not appropriate.

Also, it might be unfair to require members of NI dojos to join both Kendo na hÉireann and the BKA.

If we simply include blanket permission for all kendoka training in Northern Ireland, however, we would have potential problems in verifying their membership of the BKA, and their real credentials as members living and training in Northern Ireland. While we know the Belfast club, there could be an issue with future clubs in Northern Ireland with whom we might not have any relations. We would have to be very careful of the wording of any such provision to ensure it was not open to abuse and did not give blanket permission to any BKA member to participate in the Irish Nationals.

Jason proposed that rather than change the constitution we could simply organize a separate All-Ireland competition that would be jointly run by Kendo na hÉireann and the Northern Ireland club(s). This would bring the added benefit of an extra competition for all kendoka in Ireland, as well as giving the Belfast club the chance to get the experience of running a competition (with our support). Hosting could rotate between all the clubs and any profits made would go to the hosting club.

Kathryn suggested that we might alternatively add a provision to the constitution to allow the board, at their discretion, to invite participants from particular dojos training in Northern Ireland. This would not give any blanket permission to BKA members, and would ensure that we could verify the status of any kendoka or dojo that claimed to be training in Northern Ireland before inviting them to join.

Concerns were raised that we were discussing this without a representative of the Belfast dojo present, which was not really appropriate as we were attempting to make decisions that affected them.

Because of the difficulty in coming to an agreement with only 11 participants, without Aaron being present and with no chance for the Belfast dojo to have their say, it was agreed to table this motion for discussion at a later date when we can include the Belfast dojo.

Motion: That an IMAC representative should be able, in certain circumstances, to sit on the board of KnhÉ as non-executive officer

Proposed by Kathryn Cassidy and seconded by Martin Kiosew.

This came about because of an amendment passed at the last Irish Martial Arts Commission AGM to give authority to IMAC to arrange with their members for a neutral IMAC representative to sit on their board. This would only occur in the situation where that member is having governance problems that might lead to them failing to meet the requirements of IMAC membership. The IMAC representative would not get a vote on the board, and would be there in an advisory capacity only.

IMAC have given their members until the end of the year to make any changes required to their constitutions to permit this. If we do not agree to this our membership of IMAC may be in jeopardy. If we do make this constitutional change, we would still have the ability to refuse or to ignore any advice the IMAC representative may give. In this case, once again, our IMAC membership could be jeopardized.

Adrian suggested that it would be better not to amend the constitution where possible. He pointed to the situation where we might, in the future, withdraw from IMAC membership. In such a case we would have to amend the constitution again in order to remove this provision. He also voiced concerns over the idea of giving an external body any position within our constitution.

Kathryn pointed out that we already have provision for the position of the European Kendo Federation and International Kendo Federation within our constitution, as these are the official governing bodies for Kendo. IMAC holds a similar status as the official governing body for Martial Arts within Ireland.

Jason pointed out that this does not constitute any kind of threat and we would just be allowing them to observe and advise. There is no obligation on us to take their advice and the only repercussion would be that we could lose our IMAC membership.

The following proposed constitutional amendment was voted on:

2.5 At the request of IMAC an IMAC representative may sit on the board for a specified period of time. The IMAC representative will not have a vote.

This was passed unanimously by those in attendance at the meeting.

Motion: That KnhÉ will establish a constitutional review committee to review the constitution with a view to produce an updated version for consideration at next year's AGM.

Proposed by Kathryn Cassidy and seconded by Martin Kiosew.

It was pointed out that there are a number of typos and ambiguous points in the constitution.

Diarmuid and Adrian volunteered to work on the constitution to fix typos and identify areas that might benefit from further changes. This will be reviewed during the year and a modified version prepared for next year's AGM. It was noted that there is no need to vote on this now, as any proposed changes would be brought to next years AGM and voted on then.

If other members are interested in joining in this work they are encouraged to volunteer. In particular those with any relevant experience in drafting such documents, or legal knowledge. The number of volunteers will be limited to a small number however, to be determined by the board.

AOB

Membership

Adrian wonders if there is anything we can do collectively, all the clubs or as a federation, to try to promote kendo nationally. A long conversation was held on the topic the main points are summarized below:

- Ireland has a small population so we may always struggle to get large numbers
- We should look at expanding into other cities and new dojos
- We can do more as a federation both in actively promoting and in advising and helping clubs to do the same

- We need more volunteers in order to do this well, all are encouraged to participate in demos, make posters, suggest other promotional activities.
- Retention is just as important as attracting new members
- Kendo tends to have a relatively high drop-out rate (worldwide)
- The Dublin club did some research on where new members are coming from and found that posters, demos and leaflets had limited impact
- Clubs should share experiences such as the above so that other clubs might benefit
- Social media and the internet are under-utilised, we need volunteers to this too (e.g. hashtag #irlkendo)
- Other martial arts (e.g. Shotokan) have increased numbers, we can look at their example
- The problem might not simply be lack of effort/investment but it could be a branding issue, that we are not targeting or attracting the right people
- We should not underestimate the value of samurai movies and similar popular media in attracting new members, we should make the connection for them between Samurai and kendo
- Liam and Riley Liao volunteered to help with branding and promotional strategy
- We need to consistently put our message across, cannot just do it once as people must be reminded so that it is prominent in their minds

Nationals

Diarmuid pointed out that the Nationals went very well this year at least partly due to the fact that the board members didn't compete. He asked if this is the plan in future years. There was some concern that high grades might lose out on the chance to participate if they need to help out, but Jason pointed out that this can also give lower grades more of a chance and more enthusiasm to participate.