**THE NUTRITION SOCIETY**

**Irish Section**

**Section Honorary Officers**

**CHAIRPERSON INTERIM SECRETARIES TREASURER**

**Prof Alison Gallagher Dr Aileen McGloin & Dr Trish Heavey Dr Kirsty Pourshahidi**

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**Irish Section Annual Section Meeting 2024**

**Conference Room, Assembly Buildings, Belfast**

**Wednesday 3rd July 2024**

**(47 in attendance)**

1. Professor Alison Gallagher noted that the minutes from the 2023 Nutrition Society Irish Section ASM had been circulated in advance of the meeting. No changes were made, and the minutes were approved by Professor Alison Gallagher and seconded by Professor Mary Ward.

Professor Gallagher spoke about the very sad passing of Professor Mike Gibney and acknowledged his huge contribution to the Nutrition Society and in particular the Irish section. There will be future discussions on how best to remember and honour Mike’s legacy.

2. Matters Arising: Actions from minutes: acted upon or part of current agenda as ongoing action.

3. Officer’s Reports:

Treasurer’s Report:

Dr Kirsty Pourshahidi noted that the accounts showed a healthy balance. Dr Pourshahidi also thanked all local organising teams who successfully secured sponsorship for recent meetings including €15,300 for the Athlone meeting and €2500 for the postgraduate conference meeting also in Athlone. Professor Mary Ward also commended the local organisers on this achievement.

Summary

Status of bank accounts

Sterling Account

Balance at 28 June 2024 £ 947.01

Euro Account

Balance at 28 June 2024 € 11,710.86

Awards and Bursaries

Safefood Nutrition Exchange programme bursaries

Dr Pourshahidi highlighted that in 2023, the continued support from safefood facilitated the Irish Section with the flexibility to award 9 bursaries allowing attendance at a variety of events, including training courses and conference or webinar attendance. This included the usual Nutrition Exchange Programme bursaries, as well as specific funding allocated for ECO/UKCO meetings which were held on the island of Ireland. All applicants have submitted evidence of attendance, receipts, end of visit reports, and have been reimbursed for costs incurred. Funding for the current year is still available (application via main society website). Dr Pourshahidi thanked safefood for their continued support and flexibility in awarding this funding to our members.

ENLP

The IS have awarded 5 ENLP bursaries each to the value of £1000 for participation in ENLP 2024. Awards were gratefully accepted by participants. End of visit reports and proof of attendance are due by early July.

Irish Section Travel bursaries

In 2023, 20 students were supported in their attendance at various conferences (10 of which were supported directly from sponsorship secured for the meeting in TUS in June). For 2024, two different levels of funding were made available depending on location of the event (in or outside UK/Ireland). Bursaries are reviewed on a rolling basis (quarterly) throughout the year while funds are still available.

Other

Dr Pourshahidi reminded members that funding is available from the Irish Section for Ambassador Activities to promote membership and wider Society activities. International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS) dues for 2023 have been paid; those for the current year have not yet been requested. All bank statements, receipts, invoices, other paperwork and accounts for year end 2023 have been sent to the Nutrition Society for audit and analysis.

Dr Pourshahidi thanked Dr Caomhan Logue (c.logue@ulster.ac.uk), who will take over as Treasurer for the Irish Section.

Member Secretary Report:

Dr Marianne Walsh reported that the Irish Section of the Nutrition Society has a total of 429 members, an increase of 30% since the previous annual section meeting last June. This relates mainly to an increase in student members, specifically those availing of the free university group membership scheme. The new scheme, established since the last meeting, is a 3-year pilot, offering free membership to all undergraduate students on a nutritional related BSc degree in the UK or Ireland. Nominated academic staff members sign up on behalf of the students by completing an application form on the Nutrition Society’s website. Student and graduate members currently account for approximately 66% of IS membership. Membership in other categories has remained relatively constant.

Summary figures\*:

Irish Section Total: 429 members (up 100 since 1st June 2023)

North: 92 members

South: 337 members

Of which:

Irish Section Students & Graduates: 232 (up 42)

North: 48

South: 236

\*Data accessed 17th June 2024.

Communications

The Members Connect platform continues to be used to share events and opportunities that are relevant to Irish Section members. This platform has a separate database to the main membership and the address field is not mandatory. Therefore, the exact proportion cannot be reported accurately. However, the most recent report shows that the total number of all members engaged with the platform is 728 (total members of NS is 2355). It has been observed that the majority of typical notifications that had previously been managed by the IS membership have been taken over by NutriPD. There were some comments from floor regarding the challenges with communicating with members of the Irish section. Dr Eileen Gibney noted that this was an ongoing issue with the Society, and they were looking at ways to improve this.

Ambassadors & Membership working group

Atlantic Technical University has hosted two student events (Galway on 13th October 2023 and Sligo on 15th April 2024) where membership benefits were promoted as part of a recruitment drive for new student members to join the Nutrition Society.

Secretary’s Report:

Dr Trish Heavey and Dr Aileen McGloin expressed congratulations to two of our committee members Dr Emma Feeney and Maria Wesolowska on the happy arrival of twins and a baby boy.

Dr Aileen McGloin updated the section that an MOU between NutriPD, The Irish Section of Nutrition Society and the INDI has been approved. The MOU was initially approved by the INDI Board and Council and reviewed by Alison Gallagher and Mary Ward. It went to a member’s vote at the INDI AGM on the 9th of November and was passed with a 97% majority. It is anticipated that this will be the beginning of an enhanced collaboration between all organisations, and in particular, be an impetus for shared understanding of competencies across the nutrition profession in the island.

It was noted that considerable discussion has taken place around society sponsorship. The Society plans to review the updated supporter policy at the October 2024 trustees meeting to assess feedback from the July 2024 Belfast Congress.

Dr Heavey informed the section that Member-led meetings have tripled in popularity recently. While submissions were lower in the past, these were more likely to be funded. However, funding is now part of an assessment process.

Finally, members were also reminded of the upcoming IUNS conference in Paris in 2025. (24-29 August). Abstract submission is opening on the 19th of July 2024 and registration opening on the 4th of December 2024.

4. Student Representative Update

Clíona Ní Chonnacháin presented the Student Representative Update on behalf of the Irish Section Student Representatives (Maria Wesolowska and Clíona Ní Chonnacháin). In the past year, the student representatives have hosted two career webinars - November webinar with Dr Aileen McGloin and Dr Ruth Price (55 attended) and April webinar with Dr Laura Bardon (32 attended). In January, Clíona Ní Chonnacháin hosted a journal club with 30 in attendance. Additionally, they also organised a student social event on the evening of day 2 of congress. Throughout the year, two student newsletters were distributed (September, April) recapping recent conferences and highlighting upcoming events, job opportunities and bursaries available. The student representatives remain active on student section X on Mondays and Fridays using #NSIrishSC and also did a twitter takeover during the February PG conference. Finally, Clíona Ní Chonnacháin visited the NS headquarters in London to meet the London-based team and have an in-person student section meeting.

5. Committee Turnover

Outgoing ordinary member Dr Sharleen O’Reilly, outgoing treasurer, Dr Kirsty Pourshahidi and outgoing Student Representative Maria Wesolowska were all sincerely thanked by Professor Alison Gallagher for their work, commitment, and dedication to the IS Nutrition Society Committee over the years. Dr Marianne Walsh (membership secretary), Dr Caomhan Logue (treasurer) and Dr Trish Heavey (ordinary member) were re-elected for a further two-year term.

It was announced that Dr Áine Hennessy will join the committee as Ordinary member and Umair Shabbir as Student Representative. The new members were warmly welcomed to the committee.

6. Meetings of the Irish Section

The 33rd Irish Section Postgraduate Conference meeting took place in Athlone from February 21-23 with 74 delegates in attendance. Our hosts were local student organisers, Ciara Goland, Miriam Murphy, Omid Eslami and Jennifer Whelan from the Technological University of the Shannon, along with academic organisers Trish Heavey and Geraldine Cuskelly. Professor Gallagher congratulated them on a varied and interesting programme, and a fantastic opportunity for connecting, networking and socialising that included 35 postgraduate presentations, four careers talks and presentations from the winners of the Irish section postgraduate competition.

The much-anticipated inaugural Nutrition Society Congress, 2024 is well underway with almost 500 delegates registered for the event. The theme of the conference is Nutrition Science in 2024: new data-focused approaches and challenges and the local organising committee included Professor Jayne Woodside and Dr Anne Nugent at Queen’s University Belfast. Professor Gallagher congratulated them on an exciting and thought-provoking programme.

The 2025 Irish Section Nutrition Society postgraduate meeting will also be hosted by Queen’s University Belfast, during February 2025. A team of local organisers has been appointed (Hannah Griffin, Eva Leanne Thomas, Alexandra-Irina Mavrochefalos (Irina) and Rachel Moore). The team has completed a handover from the TUS PG 2024 team and have begun to search for venues and to consider options regarding sponsorship, speakers and activities. They hope to firm up the location over the next few weeks and will relay this info the Society Offices then. Likely date will be first or second week in February but will again depend on venue availability.

There was also discussion of the 2025 Irish Section Summer Meeting which will take place in TU Dublin and the local organisers will be Dr Liz O’Sullivan and Dr Eileen O’Brien and the conference Theme/Title will be ‘Promoting optimal nutrition for people and planet’. As per convention, the Postgraduate Meeting in 2026 will take place in Dublin. Future meetings will be hosted by Ulster University (2026) and Atlantic University of the Shannon, Sligo (LO Amy Mullee). Exact dates and organisers for these remain TBC.

7. A.O.B.

No other business was noted.