

Blessington & District Forum Operating Protocol

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**The following document contains the revisions agreed
at the Forum meeting of 11 September 2023**

OPERATING PROTOCOL

BLESSINGTON & DISTRICT FORUM

(2005, revised 2023)

0 Preamble

60 This Protocol establishes, for the benefit of the community in Blessington and District, the organisation to be known as the Blessington and District Forum ('The Forum' / BDF). It shall operate in the Voluntary and Community space.

The Forum shall conduct all its business in an equitable and transparent manner.

It may form liaisons with other similar organisations in the furtherance of its Aims.

No Member should benefit financially from the business of the Forum.

70 1 Definitions

<i>The Forum / BDF :</i>	The entity established under this Protocol for the purposes defined herein.
<i>Member :</i>	Any resident in Blessington & District appointed to serve on the Forum.
<i>Community :</i>	The totality of residents living in Blessington & District
<i>Blessington & District</i>	The area centred on the town of Blessington but including its hinterland and those residents whose daily activities (e.g. shopping, school, church, sporting, business etc) would indicate a commitment to and interest in the development of Blessington and its hinterland.

80 2 AIMS

2.1 The aims of The Forum shall be:

- i) To advocate for all the people in Blessington & District in the promotion of the societal, educational, cultural, and economic welfare of the whole community,
- ii) To represent each and every Member of the community, and the community as a whole, in dealings with local governmental statutory bodies, and other agencies, in seeking technical, financial or other assistance in the promotion of the common good, and to advise and assist, where possible, the Local Authority in the exercise of its office in the locality, and
- 90 iii) To acquire and hold by rental, lease, purchase, donation or otherwise, such property and effects as shall be necessary or expedient to attain these ends.

3 Membership

3.1 All persons resident in Blessington & District are deemed to be part of the community and, providing they have reached voting age, are entitled to nominate candidates for, and to take part in the nomination of Members to the Forum.

100 3.2 Nominations of persons to the Forum, duly seconded, may be sent at any time to the Secretary for action by the Forum. Any existing vacancies may be filled from these submissions, up to a maximum of thirty two (32) Members.

3.3 The Secretary shall maintain a list of current vacancies.

3.4 Members shall sign and date the attached Code of Conduct on joining the Forum (Annex 1).

3.5 At the end of its term, all Members shall resign from the Forum, to be re-appointed to the next Forum on the basis of nomination to the incoming Forum (see section 5.2 below).

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4 Term

4.1. The Forum shall operate for a minimum period of two years and a maximum of three years, after which appointment of new of Members must take place to form a new Forum.

5 Structure and Organisation.

5.1 General

5..1.1 The Forum shall comprise a minimum of sixteen (16) and a maximum of thirty two (32) Members.

120 5..1.2 The quorum for any plenary meeting of the Forum shall be eight (8).

5..1.3 All binding decisions taken by the Forum at any general meeting shall be on the basis of a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote. The Chair of any plenary meeting may exercise a casting vote,

5..1.4 The Forum may, at its discretion, invite any Member of the community, or any other person, to address a plenary meeting on an item of particular interest before it.

130 5..1.5 In the event of the Forum embarking on any major project, legal advice should be sought regarding a system that would limit the liability of the Members of the Forum.

5..1.6 Plenary meetings of the Forum shall take place as often as necessary but at least ten times in any calendar year.

5..1.7 Unexplained absence from three successive meetings of the Forum will be understood and taken as implicit resignation from the Forum by the Member concerned who will be advised in writing of their impending removal from the list of Members.

140 5..1.8 The Forum may censure, suspend, or remove from its Membership, any Member considered to be acting at variance with its decisions or not in accordance with its Aims. Such a decision must be taken on foot of a motion, given to the Secretary at least one week in advance of the relevant meeting at which the motion is to be taken, and passed by a two thirds majority of Members present at that meeting and entitled to vote.

5..1.9 The Forum may, from time to time, make such bye-laws or pass any Special Resolution not inconsistent with this Protocol as it may consider necessary or desirable for the management and well being of it's activities.

150 5..1.10 The Forum may not rescind any decision already properly taken or repeal any bye-laws without prior notice of motion, given to the Secretary at least one week in advance of the relevant meeting, and passed by two thirds majority of Members present at that meeting and entitled to vote.

5..1.11 From time to time in pursuit of its aims and objectives, some procedures and information may need to be kept confidential. Confidentiality shall be deemed to apply to such matter by a majority vote of

Members present at the meeting where such is discussed. Such confidentiality shall then apply until a majority of Members, at a subsequent meeting, decide to remove the need for continuing confidentiality.

160 **5.2 Appointment of Forum Members**

5.2.1 Prior to the end of its period in office, the Forum must invite members of the Community, in local press and relevant social media, to put their names forward for appointment to the new Forum.

5.2.2 The first thirty two applicants shall be selected from the following order and appointed to the incoming Forum :

- a) Those retiring members who wish to continue;
- b) New members nominated by retiring or continuing members;
- c) Open invitation as above.

170 5.2.3 Any willing applicants in excess of this number will be placed on a panel for filling of future vacancies. In the absence of any such panel, future vacancies arising shall be filled following the procedure in sections section 5.2.

5.2.4 Remaining vacancies identified at an AGM may be filled by nominations from the floor should the AGM agree to proceed in this way based on a proposal from the Chair.

5.2.5 Members must declare any conflict of interest at the commencement of all meetings (Forum or sub-committee), the meeting deciding what action to take based on the particular subject matter.

180 5.2.6 The method of conducting the appointment of new Members shall be determined by the Forum from time to time by way of Special Resolution.

5.3 Forum Executive Committee

5.3.1 The Forum, by Nomination and ballot, shall form an Executive Committee from amongst its Members comprising the following :

190	Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson
	Secretary	Treasurer
	Minutes Secretary	Deputy Treasurer
	Public Relations Officer	

5.3.2 All meetings of the Forum shall be chaired by the Chairperson, or, in the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chairperson. The Chair of the meeting may exercise the facility of a casting vote in the event of a tie arising in a vote taken at any meeting of the Forum.

200 5.3.3 The functions of the other officers shall have their normal interpretation and application.

5.4 Sub-Committees of the Forum

5.4.1 The Forum shall establish permanent sub-committees in the following areas - Fundraising, Planning, Environmental, and Social Inclusion.

5.4.2 Terms of reference for all sub-committees shall be provided in writing by the Forum and will also include the timeframe for the submission of its Report(s) to the Forum.

210 5.4.3 The Forum may also, from time to time, set up other sub-committees from amongst its Members to deal with specific items of work or specific work areas.

- 5.4.4 Sub-committees shall have a minimum of three Members, appointed by the Forum. Sub-committees may co-opt additional Members to their group because of their particular expertise. Co-opted Members shall not have voting rights.
- 5.4.5 Sub-committees shall develop their own working methods having regard to the policies and ethos of the Forum. Any proposed project having a cost implication must be supported by a financial budget which must be approved by the Forum prior to any expenditure.
- 220 5.4.6 Sub-committees shall keep proper records. Sub-committees shall deliver a report to each monthly meeting of the Forum on the progress of their work.
- 5.4.7 A final report shall be delivered to the Forum at the conclusion of the work or term of office, whichever comes soonest.
- 5.4.8 Sub-committees may place items on the agenda of any plenary meeting of the Forum provided seven working days notice is given in writing to the Secretary with an explanation supporting the request.
- 230 5.4.9 Unexplained absence from three successive meetings of any sub-committee will be understood and taken as implicit resignation from the said sub-committee by the Member concerned.
- 5.4.10 All sub-committees shall cease to exist at the conclusion of their work or with the appointment of a new Forum, whichever comes soonest.

6 General Meetings

- 6.1 General Meetings of the Forum shall be either the Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting. General Meetings shall be public meetings which members of the community may attend. In exceptional circumstances this may be amended by decision of the Forum.
- 240 6.2 The Annual General Meeting of the Forum shall be held once in each calendar year and in any event before March 31st.
- 6.3 Details of the date, time and place of the Annual General Meeting must be posted on the Forum's website at least 30 calendar days in advance of the date set for the meeting. This notice must be supplemented by announcements in local newsletters and any other available means.
- 250 6.4 Members of the community may submit Motions or Special Resolutions for adoption at the Annual General Meeting; such Motions and Special Resolutions must be with the Secretary no later than twenty-one days in advance of the date set for the Annual General Meeting, and signed by those proposing and seconding the Motion or Special Resolution.
- 6.5 The agenda of the Annual General Meeting shall include a) Minutes of the previous AGM, b) Chairperson's report, c) Treasurer's report, d) consideration of any Motions and Special Resolutions placed before the Meeting and e) the appointment of Members of the Forum based on the provisions of section 5.2 above.
- 260 6.6 Extraordinary General Meetings to consider a specific issue may be called by resolution of the Forum or on the written request of at least fifty (50) Members of the community, stating in writing the reason for such a meeting. The agenda for such an Extraordinary General Meeting shall be limited to the stated issue calling the meeting. This Extraordinary General Meeting must be held within twenty-one days of the written request being received by the Secretary.
- 6.7 Details of the date, time and place of any Extraordinary General Meeting must be posted on the Forum's website at least 10 calendar days in advance of the date set for the meeting along with the item scheduled for discussion. This notice must be supplemented by announcements in local newsletters and any other available means

270 6.8 All members of the community are entitled to attend and to take part in the business of the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.

6.9 The required quorum at the Annual General Meeting or any Extraordinary General Meeting shall be similar to that for any Forum meeting, that is, a minimum of eight (8) members for the commencement of proceedings. Where this number is not present at the stated meeting time, the Chair shall defer commencement for fifteen minutes. Should a quorum still not be present, the Chair shall defer the meeting to a future date. Should a quorum not be present at the due start time of the deferred meeting, the Chair shall proceed with the meeting.

280 **7 Financial Matters**

7.1 All monies and funds of the Forum shall be deposited as soon as possible after receipt in such Bank¹ as the Forum may by resolution designate. All such funds shall be held in the name of the Treasurer, Chairperson, and Secretary for and on behalf of the Forum. All cheques and other withdrawal of funds, monies, or cash on behalf of the Forum shall be signed by two authorised signatories (nominally, the Treasurer and Chairperson or Secretary in the absence of the Chairperson).

7.2 Monies and funds in the Bank belonging to the Forum may be put on deposit in the same manner to gain interest.

290 7.3 The Forum, at its discretion, may operate a credit card through its bank to facilitate paying its bills online. This shall have a limit of €3,000. The Treasurer shall act as authorised signatory and shall present a monthly statement to the Forum on all activity on the card. A Special Resolution must be agreed by the Forum to initiate this.

7.4 In the event of the cash assets of the Forum becoming deficient to the extent of €250 for a period of more than two months, the Forum shall call a special meeting to consider the matter and its resolution.

7.5 The Treasurer shall only be liable for such monies as he/she may actually receive.

300 7.6 The financial year of the Forum shall end on the thirty-first day of December of each year, to which date the accounts shall be balanced and a statement shall be presented by the Treasurer to the next Annual General Meeting. The accounts of the Forum shall be audited thirty days before the date of each AGM by two independent Members of the community appointed by the Forum.

5.4.11 The Fundraising sub-committee shall be responsible for the day-to-day operating expenses of the Forum. Fundraising in respect of projects proposed by any other sub-committee is the responsibility of that sub-committee in the first instance.

310 **8 Insurance**

8.1 The Forum shall indemnify themselves and/or any Trustee or any agent of the Forum against all or any claims, damages, demands, actions, costs or proceedings arising from, or in any way connected with the employment of any person or persons or company or of any person or persons who may at any time render voluntary assistance or help in any manner whatever to the Forum, including public liability cover.

¹ or other suitable financial institution

9 Communications

- 320 9.1 The Forum shall endeavour to maintain continuous contact with the Community and to keep people informed of all plans, activities and progress, by maintaining an up-to-date website and social media presence, supplemented by announcements in local newsletters and any other available means.

10 Privacy and Confidentiality

- 10.1 The Forum shall safeguard all personal information coming into its possession and shall follow all the provisions of relevant privacy legislation and regulations in force to the extent required.

11 Interpretation of this Protocol

- 330 11.1 The Forum is the sole authority for the interpretation of this Protocol and of any rules or bye-laws made thereunder.

12 Amendments to the Protocol

- 340 12.1 Only the Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Forum shall have the power to alter or amend this Protocol. Written notices of any proposed alteration or amendment shall be submitted to the Secretary not later than thirty days before the date of such a meeting. A quorum of members must be present in order for any vote to be valid. All members of the community must be notified of any proposed amendment to this Constitution in accordance with the provisions of sections 6.3 and 6.6 and above.

13 Staff

- 13.1 The Forum may appoint such full or part-time staff as it shall deem necessary for the efficient administration of the organisation.

14 Dissolution of the Forum

- 350 14.1 The Forum may be dissolved by a special resolution passed by a two-thirds majority at the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 14.2 If upon the dissolution of the organisation there remains, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the Members of the organisation but shall be given or transferred to some other institution, association or organisation and which shall prohibit the distribution of its or their incomes and properties amongst its or their Members to an extent at least as great as is imposed on the organisation under or by virtue of this Protocol.
- 360 14.3 Such institutions, associations or organisations shall be determined by the Members of the Forum at or before the time of dissolution.
- 14.4 If no such suitable organisations exist, then they shall be transferred to a local charity organisation.

15 Proxy Voting

- 15.1 If a Member of the Forum is unable attend any meeting of the Forum, he/she may, in writing, nominate a proxy who may participate in any debate and vote on his/her behalf.
- 15.2 Such written nominations shall be presented to the Secretary before the relevant meeting.

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380 Adopted by Blessington Forum at its meeting on October 9ⁿ. 2023
and witnessed by the Members of the Forum subscribing hereto.

Camel Casto

Michael Doyle

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Allyson

Paul P. Giffell

Ernest Welch

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Maia Langline

Susan Rossetti

John Doyle

William Fay

Joan Niles

Andrea Johnston cc Joan Niles

ANNEX 1

Applicable Code of Conduct for Members

Code of Conduct for Members of Blessington & District Forum

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1. The purpose of the Code of Conduct for Members is to set out standards of behaviour expected from Members of Blessington & District Forum (BDF).

2. Members should ensure that they have read and signed this Code of Conduct.

3. Members are expected to maintain the highest standard of behaviour in carrying out tasks on behalf of BDF

4. Members shall NOT:
 - Bring the Blessington & District Forum into disrepute (including using email, social media, and other internet sites, engaging with media etc.).
 - Misrepresent themselves or the Forum with external agencies or other third parties.

Any Member found to be in breach of the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct will have their membership terminated forthwith..

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Members acknowledge that no employment relationship is created in the context of their role with Blessington & District Forum

Blessington & District Forum Executive will review the Code of Conduct for Members at 3-year intervals or as appropriate. The Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively.

Signed

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Name

Date