



CUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL
COISTE ARD MHACHA

Is Féidir Linn le Chéile *Together We Can*

Strategic Plan: July 2017 - June 2020





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rise to the challenge...

Brollach/Foreword

This strategic plan commits the Armagh GAA family to continue to work with one another and with our partners & stakeholders to better promote and strengthen our Gaelic games & culture.

The plan, which will apply from July 2017 to June 2020, builds on the many achievements to date, while providing a sharper focus over the next 3 years.

In terms of our Association, Armagh has a proud tradition involving a dynamic and diverse range of people & places. This plan has been developed in order to strengthen many features of this rich tapestry, be it – coaching, facilities & infrastructure, culture, competitions, as well as our governance & financial arrangements and other significant aspects.

The plan sets out the strategic vision, themes and actions on how we move our games & culture forward between now and the end of the decade. In doing so, it puts forward a demanding agenda but one that is both necessary and achievable. The actions will be monitored and evaluated to maintain the currency of the strategic plan over the course of the next 3 years. That said, the plan is flexible in order to adapt to any change of emphasis should that be required at any stage.

On behalf of Coiste Ard Mhacha, I want to thank and acknowledge the work that has gone into developing this strategic plan.

The challenge for all of us therefore is to meet the demands set out in this plan and ensure that - *together we can* - better promote & strengthen our games & culture throughout the County as we move towards 2020.

Pól Mac Ardail

Cathaoirleach, Coiste Chontae an Ard Mhacha



Réamhrá/Introduction

In 2008, with support from the Ulster Council GAA, Armagh GAA published its strategic plan – Aibiú an Úllghoirt (Ripening the Orchard). The context in terms of its history, geography, sense of place and community well-being (urban & rural) remains as relevant now as it did then, and while some aspects of the social landscape may have altered including government imperatives, the pride & commitment of Gaels within Armagh remain steadfast. A review of Aibiú an Úllghoirt concluded the previous plan set out some significant challenges and aspirations, a number of which were implemented, either in part, full or not at all and in many ways it provided a valuable lesson – drafting a plan is one thing, implementing it is quite another!

Drawing on those lessons, this latest strategic plan- Is Féidir Linn le Chéile – has been produced in consultation with our Clubs, County Committees and others and takes cognisance of the views/suggestions from an online survey, together with those actions or milestones contained in Ulster Council GAA's latest strategic plan which impact on Ulster Counties. Is Féidir Linn le Chéile also aims to foster a healthier connection between Club & County while providing a sustainable framework for the on-going development of Gaelic games and culture within Armagh so as to make them more vibrant, attractive and stronger.

Sustainability however requires human ingenuity and across the GAA in Armagh we have some of the most hard-working, loyal and adaptable Gaels. That said, set within a

3-year timeframe, past lessons, research and consultation undertaken to develop the plan recognises the need to focus on those priority matters that will enable us to move from where we are to where we need to be by 2020 rather than attempt to address the plethora of issues currently facing our games & culture. The plan for the period 2017 – 2020 therefore is framed within 5 strategic themes, namely:

- Coaching;
- Competitions & Referees;
- Culture;
- Facilities & Infrastructure; and
- Governance & Finance.

The core thrust of these 5 themes is summarised on pages 5 & 6.





Téamaí Straitéiseacha/ Strategic Themes

Each of the 5 strategic themes and related actions are outlined below. Some are relatively straightforward expending less resources and time than others that require additional consideration and collaboration involving a number of parties both inside and outside the GAA family in Armagh.

Theme 1: Coaching

Much improvement has been made especially in recent years with regards to our approach to and the development of coaching within the County. This applies to both football and hurling. It is important that suitable strategies are developed and/or fine-tuned, which enable County, Club and School coaches to work together to ensure that all coaches are suitably up-skilled, their profiles maintained on a coaching database, a common curriculum or pathway taken with regards to various aspects of coaching and this collaborative process is reviewed regularly. This strategic plan sets out a series of actions that build on the progress made.

Theme 2: Competitions & Referees

Our leagues and championships represent the primary image and spine of our sport and while considerable effort is made annually to ensure these are competitive and run to plan, they can and do fall victim to various influences. There is also an unnecessary and at times unhealthy emphasis on winning especially at underage when the emphasis

should be on children & young people having fun, adopting positive attitudes, learning the basic skills and building on these new skills in line with the County's new coaching programme. The strategic plan sets out the steps we intend to take to make our games more competitive and easier to manage.

Without sufficient numbers of competent, fit and committed referees our games could not and would not take place. Despite this, our referees are at times marginalised, often ridiculed by clubs and spectators and, sadly on occasions, been threatened and abused. In response, an Armagh Refereeing Strategy has been developed in order to promote a culture whereby referees and officials are respected, that our referees must comply with agreed standards and the key elements & actions listed in the refereeing strategy are subsumed within this strategic plan.

Theme 3: Culture

Many in the County would accept that Gaelic games & culture are inextricably linked and a weakening of one diminishes the other. That said there has been a noticeable decline in Scór activity in Armagh, especially Scór Sinsear while there appears to be scope for greater use of the Irish language when it comes to managing Club & County business. The actions listed in the strategic plan are aimed to facilitate positive growth in both Scór and the Irish Language.

Theme 4: Facilities & Infrastructure

A review of Club & County training and playing facilities in late 2016 /17 would suggest facilities across Armagh fall short of an acceptable standard. At Club level, few can boast at having



a minimum of two pitches, suitable floodlit provision, appropriate changing facilities and covered accommodation for spectators. In terms of the County, much investment has gone into the Athletic Grounds but further investment is required to maintain the AG as a county and regional stadium and simultaneously Davitt Park as a County secondary ground, should be upgraded to the required standard, while a strategic focus is also needed to ensure all teams – football & hurling – have access to fit for purpose training facilities. This strategic plan sets a challenging agenda to realise this requirement.

Our premier stadium provides a venue for a plethora of games on a year-by-year basis. However steps need to be taken to ensure all Clubs in the County provide an appropriate stewarding presence for open- air events held in the stadium. This strategic plan carries a commitment to address the stewarding deficit and strengthen the quality of stewarding at the Athletic Grounds and other designated County venues.

Theme 5: Governance & Finance

In general GAA activity within Armagh is well- governed. Credit for this resides with the many committed Club & County volunteers and others who continue to apply the core principles of financial probity, solid structures, clear communications, effective policies and good practice as well as a capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. The strategic plan has identified a series of measures that will enable this good governance to be sustained and where possible improved.and where possible improved.





The 5 strategic themes and corresponding actions are further defined in the tables below.

Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>Coaching Develop/finalise/publish Armagh Coaching Strategy for Football & Hurling.</p>	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p> <p>County Management Committee</p> <p>Clubs</p>	July 2017 onwards	A series of pathways that enable county, club & school coaches to work together to a defined standard that is monitored/reviewed resulting in greater competition in our leagues & championships, and achieving consistent success at provincial & national level.
Increase the number of quality & qualified county coaches ensuring all county coaches have a minimum of Level 1 and have Level 2 as a minimum accreditation so that they can work closely with clubs, primary & post primary schools, county academy, development squads and county teams.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p> <p>Clubs</p>	2018 onwards	
Increase the quality & skills of club coaches via a series of coaching workshops & programmes involving clubs & schools.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p>	2018 onwards	
Establish a rolling coaching review process that ensures issues are addressed efficiently & effectively.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p>	July 2017 onwards	
Develop/maintain online databases containing - profile of coaches operating under the Armagh Coaching Strategy; and profiles of players through the academies & squads.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p> <p>Clubs</p>	July 2017 onwards	
Review & publish the current links with primary schools and create changes as required.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p>	July 2017 onwards	
Review & publish the current link with secondary schools and create changes as required, including having a stronger alignment with the County Coaching Strategy.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p>	July 2017 onwards	
Focus on those areas in the County where playing numbers are especially low and provide coaching & other support as required.	<p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p> <p>Participating Clubs</p>	2018 onwards	



Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
Pilot small sided games to encourage greater emphasis on skills development with a view to rolling this forward.	Coaching Committee Games Development Officer Clubs	2018 onwards	
Introduce Armagh GAA Cúl Camps starting in the Athletic Grounds and grow the number of GAA Cúl Camps & participation levels, to better anchor the Armagh Coaching Strategy and Armagh GAA brand.	Coaching Committee Games Development Officer Clubs	2017: 16 camps (1800 participants) 2018: 17 camps (2000 participants) 2019: 18 camps (2200 participants)	





Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>Competitions At the end of each calendar year reviews shall take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the prior year's competitions to ensure they are fit for purpose for clubs and players; - On the structures of all leagues – underage & senior – to ensure they are supportive of clubs and players; that struggling clubs are identified for assistance; and that players are getting regular games at their level. 	<p>County Management Committee</p> <p>Coaching Committee</p> <p>Minor Board</p> <p>Games Development Officer</p>	<p>2018 onwards</p>	<p>Clubs and players are getting regular games and clubs & their teams are playing at a level that challenges them and their players.</p>
<p>Implement agreed outcomes from the Referee Development Review in 2016, with particular emphasis on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment drive for new referees; - Training and development programme including rules knowledge & administration; - On-going assessment and health & well-being tests; - Pathways for referees to progress from underage to senior to inter-county; - Improved communication between CB and referees; - Assistance & support including provision of suitable attire; - Greater courtesy afforded to referees by clubs, including meet & greet and escort arrangements; - Develop and apply a Respect for Referees charter. 	<p>Referees Committee</p> <p>Clubs</p>	<p>July 2017 onwards</p>	<p>By 2019, each Club to provide at least 1 referee for underage games & at least 1 referee for senior games performing to the standard set by the County referee committee thus enabling a steady & consistent supply of effective referees; helping to create more enjoyable games; and creating a more positive environment for referees to participate.</p>
<p>Implement the agreed outcomes from the strategic review of hurling within the County thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling hurling to be appropriately resourced and managed; - Achieving a 25% growth in the number of hurling clubs; - Facilitating higher levels of participation especially at underage level and in schools; - Improving the quantity & quality of coaches; - Creating a sharper focus on performance at county level, from development squads upwards; and - Establishing annual underage & senior Poc Fada competitions. 	<p>Hurling Committee</p> <p>County Management Committee</p>	<p>July 2017 onwards</p>	<p>Hurling clubs to take more interest in the promotion of hurling ensuring the game progresses especially at underage.</p>



Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>Culture Take steps to revitalise Irish Language use at county & club level thus creating a more profound sense of Irishness in/around GAA activities.</p>	<p>Cultural Committee</p> <p>Marketing PR Committee</p> <p>Clubs</p>	<p>July 2017 onwards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two clubs annually with the Joe McDonagh award; - Administer annual Armagh GAA Gaeltacht scholarship scheme; - Facilitating Irish Language classes to meet demand; - Annual event for Irish language week; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase visibility of Irish language on GAA posters & programmes; - Make bi-lingual announcements at Armagh GAA events; - Maintain/develop links with cultural organisations, including – Conradh na Gaeilge, Glór na nGael; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops to teach Amhrán na bhFiann and basic Irish greetings to members, players & parents;
<p>Develop and improve the profile of Scór activity at county & club level.</p>	<p>Cultural Committee</p> <p>Scór Committee</p> <p>Clubs</p> <p>Schools</p>	<p>July 2017 onwards</p>	<p>Increase Scór Sinsear participation by 20% by the end of the strategy; Increasing participation in Scór na bPáistí (informal primary school Scór); Organise quality Scór na nÓg and Scór Sinsear events throughout the county; Develop a club twinning programme, i.e. strong Scór club working with a weak club; Organise an annual Scór showcase event;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain/develop links with cultural organisations, including – Comhaltas & Armagh Pipers Club.



Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>Facilities & Infrastructure Identify and investigate the establishment of a single county training facility that will accommodate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 full size pitches & 1 full size 3G pitch complete with catch nets & floodlighting; - Strength & Conditioning and High Intensity work; - Meeting, Changing, Toileting & Catering facilities; and - Suitable car parking. 	County Management Committee	<p>Phase 1: Identification & Investigation in 2017;</p> <p>Phase 2: Consolidation & Funding in 2018 - 19</p>	Modern, fit for purpose GAA facilities the control and management of which can be through a partnership approach, where access is shared between county and its strategic partners where those partnerships add value to the Armagh GAA family.
<p>Identify and investigate 3 satellite areas for county training facilities that will accommodate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 – 3 full size pitches complete with catch nets & floodlighting; - Strength & Conditioning and High Intensity work; - Meeting, Changing, Toileting and Catering facilities; - Suitable car parking; - County, Club & School use; and - County academy squads. 	County Management Committee	<p>Phase 1: Identification & Investigation in 2017;</p> <p>Phase 2: Consolidation & Funding in 2018 - 19</p>	
<p>Improve spectator experience at club grounds by helping & encouraging clubs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of covered stands; - Provide at the very least, basic catering & refreshments; and - Ensure facilities are regularly risk assessed and grounds access is wheelchair friendly. 	Development Committee Clubs	July 2017 onwards	Improved comfort, higher attendances & healthier revenue streams.
<p>Improve collaboration with schools/education sector with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offering schools access to GAA facilities; - Enabling clubs and county to have access to school facilities; and - Maintaining positive relations between county, clubs & schools to facilitate on-going support for Gaelic games & culture within the school environment. 	Underage Committee Clubs Schools	July 2017 onwards	Maximise accessibility and best value to suitable facilities that already exist within county and local communities.
<p>Undertake a review of stewarding at the County's Designated Grounds and publish a way forward paper for consideration by clubs.</p>	<p>Development Committee</p> <p>County Management Committee</p> <p>Clubs</p>	July 2017 onwards	A more sustainable stewarding model for open-air events at the County's Designated Grounds.



Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>Governance</p> <p>Each club to have its Club Development Plan in place or be working towards that aim and greater number of trained facilitators in place to advise & support our clubs.</p>	Development Committee Clubs	50% by 2019	Clubs to be more sustainable with a clear understanding of their direction of travel coupled with sufficient qualified Club Planning facilitators.
Each club to be working towards Club Maith or to have achieved at least bronze award.	Development Committee Ulster Council Clubs	50% by 2019	Clubs to be more sustainable with effective structures & policies in place.
Safeguarding policies & procedures reviewed annually to ensure they are compliant.	County Chairperson (Designated Officer) County & Clubs' Children's Officers	100% compliant by 2018	Safe environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults across Armagh GAA.
All club officers to have completed GAA club officer training every 2 years.	Development Committee Clubs	100% by 2019	More sustainable GAA clubs operating to required standards.
Role descriptions for all County Officer positions to be finalised and uploaded onto the County website.	County Management Committee	July 2017 onwards	Shared & sharper understanding of officers' & committees responsibilities and assisting succession planning to & of County Committees.
Review and define the role of County Committee and upload onto the County website.	County Management Committee	2018	
Generic role description to be developed for Club delegates attending County Board meetings.	County Management Committee	July 2017 onwards	Clarity of role and better lines of communication between clubs and CB.
Best practice shall apply to the recruitment, retention, management and development of GAA volunteers by undertaking the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better promotion of the GAA Volunteer Recruitment toolkit; - All clubs to register with the GAA Gold-Mark volunteering programme and actively encourage its younger members (14 – 24 years of age) to avail of the programme; - All clubs to attend at least one annual Ulster GAA Club Volunteer conference with attendance recognised as part of the Club Maith scheme. 	Development Committee Clubs	July 2017 onwards	More sustainable clubs with greater appreciation on the role of our GAA volunteers.
Have all Declaration of Trusts up to date and held securely with a copy held by the County Board.	Development Committee Ulster GAA Clubs	100% by 2019	Club's legal status protected in line with GAA requirements.



Strategic Theme & Actions	Lead Responsibility	Timeframe	Desired Outcome
<p>County and clubs shall adhere to the accepted financial principles & standards as defined by Ard Comhairle. In supportive of this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audited set of county accounts to be presented at the Annual Convention; - Each club to provide the County Board with its annual audited accounts within 1 month of the club's AGM. 	<p>Finance Committee</p> <p>Ulster Council</p> <p>Clubs</p>	2017 onwards	Year-end annual accounts published to the required standards and available for scrutiny in accordance with agreed timeframes.
Clubs and county to be kept informed of potential grant opportunities from both the GAA and external sources.	Development Committee	July 2017 onwards	Grant income maximised for Armagh GAA.
Review the county funding model with greater emphasis towards self-sufficiency.	<p>Finance Committee</p> <p>County Management Committee</p>	2018 onwards	A stronger, more sustainable GAA in Armagh.
County to facilitate club participation in the GAA health & wellness programme while also encouraging clubs to undertake local initiatives consistent with the H&W programme.	Health & Well-Being Committee	July 2017 onwards	Improved quality of life, community cohesion & well-being.
Following each annual convention, a process to be established to examine the communications arrangements between clubs and county and steps taken as appropriate.	County Management Committee	On-going starting in 2017/18	Ensure club and county lines of communication are unambiguous.





Monatóireacht & Cur I bhFeidhm/Monitoring & Implementation

The actions that underpin the 5 strategic themes listed above will benefit the GAA family in Armagh little if they are not implemented and/or replaced with more appropriate actions to fit changing circumstances. The true value and success of this 3-year strategic plan therefore lies in its effective implementation. To this end, the plan will be monitored and reviewed using the outcomes listed as criteria for success with appropriate governance & accountability structures in place to help develop and roll forward the various actions while ensuring ownership of the plan and responsibility for its success is shared equally by Clubs & County. To ensure this happens, the management & coordination will rest with the Chair of the County Development Committee who shall:

- Obtain progress reports twice yearly from those officers & committees charged with taking elements of the plan forward;
- Provide update reports on progress twice yearly to the County Management Committee; and
- Include details of progress in the Development Committee report to the annual County Convention.





Acknowledgement

The Armagh County Committee would like to thank all Club members who took part in the on-line survey, which served as a barometer for the issues listed in this strategic plan. The Committee also recognises those other GAA stakeholders within the County who provided comments and suggestions. In addition, the County Committee would like to thank Jarlath Burns, Paul Gribben, Donal McCarthy, Brian Mallon & Mickey Savage who critiqued the previous strategic plan (Aibiú an Úllghoirt), and members of the strategic planning sub-Committee who helped to construct this latest plan, namely - Jarlath Burns, Gary Farrell, Padraig Haughey, Paul Kelly, Jimmy Magee, Brian Mallon, John McEntee, Kieran McGeeney, Seán Ó Maoilisté and Brian Turbitt.

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