

Tuarascail Bhliantúil 2012

A Chairde,

The basis of any success is deemed by strategically planned, structurally provided for and systemically operated. These may be vital aspects of progress but it is hard to beat teamwork and above all determination. Given the ongoing work of our Association, its Clubs, Counties and above all our members then we can fathom the outstanding community work that the GAA does at a local level for the greater good. Some years ago we talked about inné, inniu agus amárach and this symbolised the Association, its historic investment in Ireland, its games, language and culture and the rationale for how we have evolved. We operate today and plan for the future. We are aimed at being for the whole family for the whole life. This is challenging but we are about the central aspects for our reason for being who we are and what motivates us to achieve extraordinary things on behalf of our Club, our County, our Province and our Association. It is to this end that we dedicate our time, energy and resources and if we set out to adopt, imitate or improve any part of our work it is with motivation and determination that we hope to achieve our objectives.

Emigration is a major problem for many of our Clubs at the present time but we are exporting high quality personnel and while they may be lost at home we should encourage their continued involvement with the Association in their new land. The Association has expanded abroad and the core values of our games, language and culture are vibrant in many parts of the world as the consequence of our young people travelling abroad and bring their community concept and identity with them. We need to encourage the development of the GAA at home and abroad.

The utter determination of Donegal to succeed has inspired us all. They made a valiant attempt in 2011 but they approached the Championship of the past year with even greater relish and by hard work, utter determination and a very high level of skill deservedly won the All Ireland Senior Football Championship. It was a great day for Donegal, their Clubs, supporters and the GAA in Ulster. This achievement was augmented by the success of our Ulster Team in the Interprovincial Football Championship and again demonstrated the dedication of our players, mentors and the Association to our Ulster team and this competition.

The success of Crossmaglen Rangers in the All Ireland Senior Club Football Championship has again demonstrated the total determination of this fine Club to succeed. On St. Patrick's Day 2012 we witnessed a truly outstanding achievement by Loughgiel Shamrocks in bringing the All Ireland Senior Club Hurling Championship to the Club and Ulster for the second time. What a way to celebrate their first success twenty nine years on. Armagh won the Nicky Rackard Cup with an excellent effort while Tyrone won the Lory Meagher Cup on a good day in Croke Park. Fermanagh won the National Hurling League Division 3B with a constant effort throughout. It is good to see the continuing effort of our Counties achieving success in the game of hurling. St. Mary's

CBS won the O'Keefe Cup to demonstrate progress of our National game in our schools. Holy Trinity Cookstown won the All Ireland Vocational Schools Championship with an excellent team effort throughout.

Finance

There has been a substantial increase in the work in the area of finance and this has placed greater responsibility on the Ulster Council and on our Finance personnel. The income of the Council was improved based on the previous year but we are still operating on very stringent budget requirements. The throughput of monies are important for delivering requirements to all of our constituent units but the need for disposable income to increase is still central to all our workings. Our Counties and through them our Clubs and Communities are still fully supported by the Ulster Council, the relevant Sub Committee and our commitment to ensure that we are delivering the strategic needs of the GAA and to be relevant in the communities that we serve. Attendances have shown a constant increase across all our competitions during the past year and for which we acknowledge. We have increased our Marketing and this has allowed our games to be focused on by the full use of all media outlets including social media. Our overall investment in games, games development and other areas of responsibility have been maintained from external sources and from our own resources despite the continuing challenging environment that is applicable to society in general and our Association in particular.

Comhairle Uladh finances are still dependant on the strong level of support for our games programme, from external sources and from the Association in the delivery of several aspects of our Strategic Plan. The total income amounted to €5,311,772 inclusive of all grants. Our gate income, €1,377,289 represented 26% of this compared to 24% of the total income in 2011. In 2012 our grant income, €1,270,747 represents 24% of our total in comparison to 23% in 2011. The expenditure amounted to €5,266,988. In addition, the investment in Grounds and Infrastructure amounted €154,745. There was an operating deficit on the years working equating to €109,961. The monies from Ard Comhairle also assist in achieving our objectives.

The stewards, team officials and members of Comhairle Uladh and our Counties are very active throughout the year and we are tremendously grateful to the dedication and commitment of a great team. The programme of games is now an all year involvement and the complete programme would be impossible without the team effort of a lot of people we would be in a difficult position to deliver everything in the planning and in the post game scenario. Everyone gives of their time in a voluntary capacity and that includes many members of staff who are also vital to our work. An Cisteoir, Micheal O hOsain has been a tremendous support on a wide range of work and his input to the business of the Council is exemplary and he has worked diligently for the greater good of the GAA and to Comhairle Uladh. Our Finance and Business team is led by Michelle McAleer who Heads Business and Finance. The team has been strengthened by the

arrival of Brian Mallon and the demand on their time has been intense and likely to increase in the years ahead. We are grateful to Michelle, Brian and Paul Sanders for their diligent work on our behalf.

Comórtaisí Cúige

The Anglo Celt Cup returned to Dún na nGall for the second year in a row, again from the difficult route that started in the Preliminary Round. Aontroim again retained the Liam Harvey Cup, albeit the return of Doire to the Ulster Senior Hurling Final after a nine year absence was a welcome addition. The Ulster Club Championships returned to two familiar homes. Crossmaglen Rangers and Loughgiel Shamrocks both completed three in a row successes in their respective codes. The attendances at our Ulster Club Championships continued to rise and we experienced particularly large crowds at the Ulster Football and Hurling Club Finals.

At Club level, there were again five divisions in the Tain Club Hurling Club League in 2012 with 58 teams competing, with this including club teams from Ulster, Connacht and Leinster. Ruairi Og (Aontroim), Slaughtneil (Doire), Knockbridge (An Lú), Cushendun (Aontroim) and Clonguish (Longfort) emerged as the divisional winners. With regard to the Quinns Corner Ulster Football Club League, 2012 saw a total of 42 clubs involved, with 18 teams in senior and 24 teams in intermediate. Ballinderry (Doire) and MacCumhailis (Dún na nGall) won the senior and intermediate finals, with both games requiring extra time. This competition again provided clubs with competitive action at their appropriate level prior to the commencement of their internal county games programmes.

Data provided for presentation at the Annual Provincial Fixtures Seminar highlights the huge number of games played in Ulster. In almost all instances the minimum number of games prescribed by the National Fixtures Planning Committee is being provided by our counties. The recommended scheduling target of 80% of games being played on time is also being met. Reserve football is a cause for concern, as is hurling in some of our counties. On a positive note, there are more hurling games taking place at youth level which is encouraging. I would like to take this opportunity to commend all those involved in fixture making within their roles on the Competitions Control Committee in their respective counties.

Ulster had two representatives in the National Football League Finals, where unfortunately both counties were defeated. Cill Dara defeated Tír Eoghain in the Division 2 decider while Cill Mhaintain beat a previously unbeaten Fear Manach in the Division 4 Final. Both Tír Eoghain and Fear Manach will be heartened by the fact that they can look forward to playing in a higher division in 2013. With regard to hurling, I must commend Fear Manach for their success in the National Hurling League Division 3B. Fear Manach narrowly lost out in an outstanding Lory Meagher Cup Final where they were defeated by Tír Eoghain on a scoreline of 2-24 to 3-20 after extra time.

Congratulations to Tír Eoghain. The Nicky Rackard Cup also returned to Ulster with Ard Mhacha defeating An Lú in the final at Croke Park. Congratulations to all involved.

In our first competition of the year, the Dr McKenna Cup, Tír Eoghain collected the title by defeating Doire by 1-14 to 2-08 in a highly entertaining final at the Athletic Grounds. I also extend my gratitude to Power NI for their sponsorship of this important competition in the Ulster GAA calendar.

Senior Football Championship

The 2012 Ulster Senior Football Championship commenced at Kingspan Breffni Park on Sunday 20th May, where reigning champions Dún na nGall, took on An Cabhán. Colm McFadden gave a glimpse of what was to come with a 1-06 salvo that ensured that Dún na nGall progressed to the quarter finals on a scoreline of 1-16 to 1-10. One week later, a strong finish from the Farney County secured a 1-12 to 1-09 victory over Aontroim at St Tiernach's Park. The following Sunday, at Brewster Park, goals from Conor Lavery and Donal O'Hare helped An Dún to a 2-10 to 1-08 win over Fear Manach. Martin Penrose notched eight points in the Athletic Grounds seven days later, as Tír Eoghain withstood a late fightback from Ard Mhacha to record a 0-19 to 1-13 victory in a great game in front of a large crowd. In the last quarter final, goals from Leo McLoone and Colm McFadden helped Dún na nGall defeat Doire by 2-13 to 0-09 at Pairc Mac Cumhaill. Both semi finals were now known and there was no more than a two point margin in either game, highlighting the competitiveness of the Ulster Senior Football Championship. On Sunday 24th June, An Dún emerged from the depths of defeat by overturning a nine point deficit into a remarkable 1-14 to 1-13 win over Muineachán at the Athletic Grounds. The following week, Dún na nGall defeated Tír Eoghain in another tight affair with a last minute save from Paul Durcan securing a 0-12 to 0-10 victory at St Tiernach's Park, Clones.

The Ulster Final took place three weeks later where Dún na nGall and An Dún met at St Tiernach's Park, Clones on Sunday 22nd July. Over 30,000 spectators attended the Final on a day when the Ulster Senior Football Champions from 25 years previous, Doire were honoured. With the inclusion of honouring the successful teams from the past, Cumann na mBunscol exhibition games, band entertainment, the Minor Football Final and the Senior showpiece, Ulster Final day continues to be a celebration of our great Association in the province of Ulster. The first half was a tense affair but as the game progressed Dún na nGall showed their quality that would later secure the ultimate honour, as they collected the Anglo Celt for a second consecutive year by virtue of a 2-18 to 0-13 victory. The scenes of jubilation at the final whistle from a county who had retained their title epitomised the importance that counties place on an Ulster title. Congratulations to Dún na nGall for a well deserved success.

All-Ireland Football Championship

The All-Ireland Senior Football Championship for Ulster representatives began with two of our counties involved on Saturday 30th June. There was a narrow victory for Aontroim over Londain in Ruislip while there was disappointment for Doire who were beaten in Longfort by 0-17 to 2-08. The following day, Ard Mhacha were also defeated by Ros Comáin by 1-11 to 1-09 at Dr Hyde Park. In an all Ulster affair, An Cabhán hit Fear Manach with a three goal salvo to run out 3-13 to 0-15 winners at Brewster Park.

In the next round the following weekend, Tír Eoghain made the long trip to Dr Hyde Park and defeated the home side comprehensively, 1-16 to 0-08. The most impressive result from this round came at Casement Park where Aontroim defeated Gaillimh by 0-11 to 0-10 in a historic victory. The following day, Cill Dara defeated An Cabhán emphatically at Kingspan Breffni Park, running out 3-20 to 1-09 winners.

Two weeks later, Aontroim and Tír Eoghain both exited the All Ireland series. Aontroim were defeated in Thurles by 0-10 to 0-08 by the Premier County. On the same evening, a massive crowd saw Ciarraí defeat Tír Eoghain in Killarney by 1-16 to 1-06.

The following weekend, beaten Ulster finalists An Dún travelled to Mullingar where they emerged victorious over Tiobrad Árann on a 1-13 to 0-11 scoreline. This joy was short lived as An Dún were well beaten by Maigh Eo in the All Ireland Quarter Final the following weekend by 3-18 to 2-09 at Croke Park. It was left to Dún na nGall to represent our Province and they did this with aplomb. In the quarter final, they defeated Ciarraí by 1-12 to 1-10 to gain a place in the semi finals. There they faced Corcaigh and produced a tremendous team display to win on a 0-16 to 1-11 scoreline.

Dún an nGall were back in the All Ireland Final for the first time since 1992 and there they would face Maigh Eo. Early goals from Michael Murphy and Colm McFadden laid the foundations as they went on to reclaim the Sam Maguire after a twenty year wait. The scenes of euphoria after the final whistle will live long in the memory while the following weeks saw Dún na nGall come alive with joy and emotion.

As regards the 2012 All Stars, I extend my congratulations to the eight Dún na nGall players who received awards. Well done to Paul Durcan, Neil McGee, Karl Lacey, Frank McGlynn, Neil Gallagher, Mark McHugh, Michael Murphy and Colm McFadden. Special mention also to key defender Karl Lacey who was named the 2012 Player of the Year.

Minor Football Championship

The competitiveness of the Ulster Minor Football Championship was again obvious in the 2012 competition. In the Preliminary Round, Dún na nGall defeated An Cabhán on a 1-11 to 0-10 scoreline. The following week, Muineachán defeated Aontroim and Doire saw off Dún na nGall. An Dún defeated Fear Manach by 1-11 to 1-08 in their quarter final while the tie of the round occurred the following weekend. On Sunday 10th June, Ard Mhacha and Tír Eoghain produced a game of high quality that ebbed and flowed

from start to finish. If any supporters ever needed encouragement to attend the minor game that precedes the senior fixture, then this should be shown at every opportunity.

The ability of Tír Eoghain to hit three pointers proved vital as they emerged 4-11 to 0-19 winners. In the semi finals, Muineachán defeated An Dún at the Athletic Grounds while Tír Eoghain overcame Doire at Clones.

The final meeting between Muineachán and Tír Eoghain was eagerly awaited and it was certainly a tight affair. A strong finishing rally from the young Tír Eoghain side saw them run out champions on a 0-14 to 1-08 scoreline. Congratulations to Tír Eoghain for a well deserved success. As Ulster champions, Tír Eoghain took on An Mhí in the All Ireland Quarter Final in Pairc Esler. The concession of a late late goal was the difference in a tight contest as they were defeated by 2-12 to 1-14. At the same venue, Muineachán lost out to eventual winners Baile Átha Cliath on a 1-16 to 0-08 scoreline.

Under 21 Football Championship

This Championship continues to thrive in its current Wednesday night slot in the fixture programme, where it does not directly impinge on counties preparations for National Football Leagues and also benefits from an increased interest from our spectators. In the Preliminary Round on Wednesday 14th March, Tír Eoghain defeated Fear Manach by 1-14 to 1-03 at Brewster Park. On Wednesday 21st March, the four quarter finals took place and there were wins for An Cabhán, Doire, An Dún and Tír Eoghain. In the semi finals, the reigning champions An Cabhán defeated Doire in Brewster Park by 2-08 to 1-09, while Tír Eoghain beat Muineachán at Casement Park on a 0-16 to 1-08 scoreline. The following week, An Cabhán and Tír Eoghain played out a highly entertaining encounter in front of a large crowd at Brewster Park. Another early goal like the 2011 final between the two teams, proved to be vital as the Breffni men collected the title on a 1-10 to 0-10 scoreline. This was another tremendous success for An Cabhán and augurs well for the future.

In the All Ireland semi final played at Longfort ten days later, An Cabhán were defeated by Ros Comáin by 2-07 to 2-02. No national honours for the Breffni County but two consecutive Under 21 titles coupled with the Ulster Minor Football success from 2011 augurs well for An Cabhán.

Club Football Championship

The Ulster Club Championship evidently has that lure for our supporters and the local aspect means that all clubs at all levels can aspire to the greatest stage throughout the province and indeed, Croke Park. In the Preliminary Round, Tír Eoghain champions Errigal Ciaran easily defeated Mullahoran by 4-15 to 1-07 at Kingspan Breffni Park. In the first of the Quarter Finals, new Down champions, Kilcoo defeated Ballybay at Clones by 0-13 to 0-07. The tie of the round saw Errigal Ciaran defeat Ballinderry in a pulsating encounter at Healy Park with the Tír Eoghain champions emerging 0-11 to 0-10 winners.

In the other Quarter Finals, there were comprehensive wins for St Galls over Tempo and Crossmaglen Rangers over St Eunans Letterkenny.

At the Semi Final stage, Crossmaglen held off a strong Errigal Ciaran challenge as they ran out 2-10 to 1-10 winners at St Tiernachs Park, Clones. In the other game, Kilcoo produced something of a shock when a really strong finish saw them defeat a highly fancied St Galls side by 1-09 to 0-10 at the Athletic Grounds. After both clubs agreed to toss for the venue for the decider, the Athletic Grounds was the choice. Crossmaglen again illustrated all their talent in a whirlwind start in a 3-09 to 1-09 success over Kilcoo and a third successive Seamus McFerran Cup.

The Intermediate Football Club Championship was a compelling competition from the Preliminary Round through to an outstanding final. In the Preliminary Round, Swatragh travelled to Kingspan Breffni Park and were defeated by Lacken in a tight encounter by 0-07 to 1-03. In the Quarter Finals, Warrenpoint went on a goal scoring blitz to defeat Teemore by 5-08 to 0-11 at Pairc Esler. There was also wins for Cookstown, Doohamlet and Aghagallon over Killeavy, Lacken and Termon respectively. Both semi finals were intriguing affairs with Warrenpoint eventually overcoming Aghagallon by 0-10 to 0-06 and Cookstown edging out Doohamlet by 1-06 to 0-08. In the Final, played in the Athletic Grounds, both teams played some fantastic football with extra time being required to separate the sides. Cookstown eventually ran out 3-13 to 1-11 winners to collect the Patrick McCully Cup.

In the Junior Football Championship, there was again no representation from Fear Manach so there was no requirement for a Preliminary Round. In the Quarter Finals, there were wins for Brackaville, An Port Mor, Laragh United and Drumhowan. In the Semi Finals, there were relatively easy victories for both An Port Mor and Brackaville over Drumhowan and Laragh United respectively. The Junior Final was played in Pairc Esler, and it was An Port Mor who held on to record a 2-09 to 0-11 victory, and thus, collect the Paul Kerr Cup.

All Ireland Club Football Championship

Crossmaglen Rangers defeated Dr Crokes at Portlaoise in a pulsating encounter which ended in a 3-08 to 2-08 scoreline to reach another All Ireland decider on St Patrick's Day. They needed all their resolve to secure a hard fought draw against Leinster champions, Garrycastle. In the replay played in Kingspan Breffni Park, a superb start coupled by goals from Francis Hanratty ensured that the Andy Merrigan Cup would reside in Crossmaglen for another year. Congratulations to all involved in another historic success for Crossmaglen.

In the All Ireland Intermediate Club Championship, Craighane from Doire were narrowly defeated by Milltown- Castlemaine at Portlaoise by 1-07 to 1-06.

In the junior grade, Derrytresk fell at the final hurdle to Naomh Padraig, Clonbur on a 1-08 to 1-07 scoreline played at Croke Park. Derrytresk had defeated Munster champions, Dromid Pearses in their semi final and the negative publicity that emerged in the aftermath of this particular game was beyond belief. Such a development was obviously detrimental to the clubs chances in the All Ireland Final and I would add that such coverage was also extremely detrimental to our Association.

Senior Hurling Championship

The 2012 Championship returned to a four county competition with Aontroim again receiving a bye to the Ulster Final. In the quarter final, played in the Athletic Grounds on 17th June, Doire defeated Ard Mhacha in a great game of hurling, edging out the Orchard County on a 4-14 to 1-17 scoreline.

The Semi Final saw Doire take on An Dún in Casement Park and the Oak Leaf County easily defeated An Dún by 0-24 to 0-13 to reach their first Ulster Final since 2003. The following week, Aontroim comprehensively defeated Doire by 3-18 to 0-09 to collect their 11th successive Liam Harvey Cup. Congratulations to Aontroim on securing another Ulster title.

All Ireland Hurling Championship

Aontroim were involved in the MacCarthy Cup where they were drawn against Luimneach in the First Round. In a one sided encounter, the Saffron County were defeated by 8-26 to 1-15 at the Gaelic Grounds to end their involvement in the All Ireland series.

In the Christy Ring Cup, An Dún and Doire were Ulster's representatives. Ironically, Londáin ousted both counties on their way to claiming the title. They defeated Doire by 3-11 to 1-15 at Celtic Park. They then faced An Dún at Pairc Esler where both counties played out a thrilling 1-21 apiece encounter after extra time. The following weekend, An Dún travelled to Ruislip and were defeated by 2-16 to 2-13 after extra time in another great game of hurling.

The Nicky Rackard Cup saw Ard Mhacha, Dún na nGall and Muineachán as the competitors from the province. Ros Comain defeated Muineachán to end their involvement while Dún na nGall were defeated by An Lú at the semi final stage. Ard Mhacha emerged victorious in the competition as they easily defeated An Lú by 3-20 to 1-5 in the final at Croke Park. Congratulations to Ard Mhacha.

In the Lory Meagher Cup, Ulster had two representatives, with Fear Manach and Tír Eoghain both winning their way through to the final. In an all Ulster final at Croke Park, Tír Eoghain finished strongly in extra time to emerge 2-24 to 3-20 winners over Fear Manach in a fantastic game of hurling. Congratulations to Tír Eoghain.

Minor Hurling Championship

Five counties competed in the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship in 2012. As in the Senior Championship, Aontroim got a bye into the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship Final. In the First Round, there was a facile victory for An Dún over Dún na nGall at Clones. In the quarter final, Ard Mhacha defeated Doíre by 1-14 to 1-12 at the Athletic Grounds. In the semi final, An Dún defeated Ard Mhacha by 3-16 to 2-10 to reach the final. The final was played as a curtain raiser to the senior decider and it provided massive entertainment for all spectators with Aontroim and An Dún playing out a 2-13 apiece draw. The following weekend, An Dún completed the task in hand as they ran out 0-18 to 1-12 winners to claim their first Ulster Minor Hurling Championship since 1994. Congratulations to An Dún. In the All Ireland Quarter Final, An Dún were well beaten by An Clár by 3-19 to 0-05 at Mullingar, illustrating the gap that currently exists at this level.

Under 21 Hurling Championship

Five Ulster counties competed in the Under 21 Championship, which was played on a knock out basis again. The quarter final brought Ard Mhacha and Under 21 Shield winners Fear Manach together, with Ard Mhacha progressing on a scoreline of 4-15 to 0-11 at Healy Park. In the semi finals, Aontroim defeated Ard Mhacha at Pairc Esler while Doíre defeated An Dún in a good game at Casement Park. The Ulster Final was fairly one sided and it was Aontroim who took the title courtesy of a 2-20 to 1-12 victory. In the All Ireland Semi Final, Aontroim came up against An Clár as they suffered a demoralising 4-24 to 0-08 defeat at Thurles.

Under 21 Hurling Shield

In the Ulster Under 21 Hurling Shield Semi Final, Tír Eoghain defeated Dún na nGall by 2-16 to 2-08 at Healy Park to advance to the final against Fear Manach. The Shield Final was played the following week in St Tiernachs Park, Clones. In a tight game, it was Fear Manach who edged out their neighbours by 0-12 to 0-10. They went on to compete in the All Ireland Under 21 'B' Championship, where they were narrowly defeated in the Semi Final by Ros Comáin by 1-20 to 1-15 at Ballinamore.

Club Hurling Championship

In the Ulster Senior Club Championship, Antrim Champions, Loughgiel Shamrocks made it three Ulster titles in a row with comprehensive victories over both Middletown and then Portaferry in the Ulster Final. A tremendous success for a great club. In the Intermediate Club Hurling Championship, Fermanagh champions Lisbellaw created history by collecting their first ever Intermediate title by defeating St Brigids Cloughmills by 3-13 to 2-10 in the final at Pairc Esler. In the Ulster Club Junior Hurling

Championship, Bredagh won their first ever Provincial title after defeating Na Magha by 3-18 to 2-07 in the final at Casement Park.

All Ireland Club Hurling Championship

Loughgiel Shamrocks were Ulster's representatives in the All Ireland Club Championship, having won the 2011 Ulster Club Championship. In the All Ireland Semi Final on 11th February, they came up against Munster champions, Na Piarasaigh and then emerged victorious by 0-27 to 2-13 after extra time. In the final at Croke Park, Loughgiel Shamrocks brought home their second All Ireland title as a great team display against Coolderry ensured they secured the title on a 4-13 to 0-17 scoreline. In the All Ireland Intermediate Club Championship, Middletown narrowly lost out to Mount Leinster Rangers in the final played at Croke Park, going down on a 1-13 to 1-11 scoreline. In the junior grade, Burt were defeated in November 2011 in the All Ireland quarter final by British champions, Fullen Gaels.

Inter Provincial Championships

The Inter Provincial Championships in both football and hurling returned to the games programme in 2012. Ulster were delighted that this was included in the fixture calendar in 2012 and again in 2013 and hopefully, this is a permanent measure. The hurlers were defeated by Connacht in the semi final by 3-19 to 1-15 in a game that was played in Ballinasloe. On the same day, our footballers travelled to Sligo and emerged 3-16 to 0-13 winners over the same opposition. In the final played at the Athletic Grounds in front of a sizeable crowd on February 26th, the supporters were treated to all that is good about our game. In a thrilling encounter, Ulster full back Neil McGee emerged as the unlikely hero as his late goal ensured a 3-11 to 1-15 success and another Inter Provincial title for the province. Congratulations to all involved.

Hurling Development

The work in the development of hurling continues to bring many challenges. The success of the Ulster Hurling League was used as a template to provide a structured programme of games in a new Táin Hurling League, which targeted club teams from Ulster, Leinster and Connacht. The inaugural Táin League was enshrined within the National fixtures plan to ensure that group games could be played from February through to April without clashing with County National League fixtures. During this first year teams from Louth, Longford, Leitrim and Sligo joined all Ulster Counties in what was a very successful competition involving sixty clubs.

The work of the development squads was consolidated to focus on the Under 14 and Under 16 age groups. Our counties have embraced these structures, which have seen increased activity throughout the Province, including the running of summer training camps for development squads, culminating in the participation in several Provincial

blitzes and National blitzes early in September. At Under 16 level our most talented young players attended the annual Elite Camp in July and were successful in defeating Connacht Under 16 squads at the Connacht Centre of Excellence, Ballyhaunis in July. Further development at schools level has seen the setting up of amalgamated schools teams to compete in the Ulster Colleges Mageann Cup competition. This idea was first introduced in 2011 when An Dún competed, with limited success. In 2012 the number of amalgamations increased to three with Divis from Belfast and an East Tyrone team competing. With the full support of the Down County Board the team from An Dún surprised many when they were narrowly defeated by St Mary's Belfast in the Mageann Cup Final. This initiative has received further support from the Provincial Council with support being given to a Coilaistí Uladh team who will compete in the All Ireland Colleges 'A' quarter final in March.

Other areas of development have seen our Feile Uladh competition continuing to grow from strength to strength as we continue to work closely with our sister organization, Ulster Camogie. We have been instrumental in developing a new club competition involving Cavan, Fermanagh and Monaghan at Under 12 Go Games and Under 14 levels. This 'tri-county' arrangement will see additional, much needed, competitive opportunities for three of our developing counties.

The work of our Hurling Development Committee and hurling staff has also contributed to the advent of the 'midnight hurling blitz' as many of our counties are now utilising the growing number of third generation astro turf pitches with small sided games for clubs throughout the winter evenings. Despite all this great work, with the exception of Loughgiel's success, Ulster still continues to languish behind the other three provinces when it comes to our National competitions. Initial research carried out with our Sports Science Officer has provided the evidence that our county teams are not playing with the intensity required to compete with our illustrious counterparts from Leinster, Munster and Connacht. It is therefore evident that our coaching resource at the competitive levels is continuing to fall far short of what is expected to prepare our county teams for All Ireland competitions. This imbalance needs to be addressed if we are to have any aspirations of success in national inter county competitions. The members of Coiste Iomana do tremendous work in the cause of our National game and we are indebted to everyone for their efforts. I would like to thank Maitin MacAibhne for his role over the last three years as Cathaoirleach of the Coiste and also Jimmy Darragh for his outstanding work on behalf of hurling and our Association.

Referees

The cause of refereeing is never far from the scrutiny of our Association or indeed the input of supporters and the general public. The central position focuses on the referee and the application of the Playing Rules. The impact of this is to be provocative and to challenge the Rules or the perceived interpretation of the Rules or worse still the decision of the referee. The danger for the Association is the perception that the referee is to blame for the level of fouling that is prevalent in our games when in reality it is the

responsibility of the referee to ensure that the games are played in accordance with the Rules. Should there be too much fouling then that is the responsibility of the team managements and the players. Given that many games are truly wonderful spectacles and others are not to the standards that were envisaged by the Rules then this demonstrates that the referee and the rules are not the difficulty but the attitude that permeates some of our games. Winning is important but it is not superior in importance to playing the games in accordance with the rules and being respectful to the portrayal of our games in the public domain. We must work to create a climate of proper application of the Rules and these do require umpires, linesmen, players and team managements to know the Rules and to respect the bona fides of everyone involved in the control of our games.

The Referees Committee continued to work diligently for the benefit of refereeing. Their efforts continue to assist in the development of the referee and also carry out the recruitment, training and assessment of our referees and we are indebted to those that work to support the referee. The work of the tutors, assessors and administrators are at the fore of this development and we are indebted for the efforts of everyone involved. Joe Jordan, as Chairman of our Referees Committee has been totally committed to the work of the Committee and all aspects of refereeing throughout the year. He has been fully supported throughout by our Referees Administrator and Secretary, Tiernach Mahon for which we record our thanks. We are grateful to the members of the Referee's Committee for all their work in this vital area for our Association. We thank all our referees for their time, commitment and involvement in the delivery of our games programme. We also acknowledge the ongoing work of the County Referees Administrators, Assessors and Tutors to whom we are also indebted and who continue to do outstanding work for our Association.

Provincial Council

The past year has seen continued progress in the development of the GAA in Ulster. There have been many big decisions, occasions and successes. To achieve these requires a coordinated input by our membership, Clubs, Counties and the Provincial Council and also by our Sub Committees. Right across the spectrum of Games Development, Refereeing, Gaeilge agus Oidhreachta, Cultur agus Scór, Finance, Child Protection, Facility development, Integration and Community outreach we continue to see recognition for the work of our Association. The tremendous input of the Officers and members of Comhairle Uladh assisted by the membership of our Sub Committees and the dedicated input of our staff have ensured that we are meeting the objectives set out in our Strategic Plan. The recognition of our Business Development and Marketing work by the receipt of external awards demonstrates that we are working to exacting standards.

We have continued our engagement with a range of groups, bodies and agencies. It is important that we engage with anyone that wants to improve their understanding of

the GAA, to engage with our games or to understand the importance of our language and culture to the wellbeing of our Country and its Diaspora. We have been recognised by receiving an award for our business excellence and also for our work in developing a Marketing Strategy. We have portrayed our Clubs at the centre of communities which is a wonderful example of volunteers investing their time and money for the benefit of their community which is hugely important for the future development of Ireland. It needs to be emphasised that we, through our constituent units, deliver the ingredients that build a strong and sustainable society. The work of community development has also been strongly advanced by our engagement with Churches, representative bodies including political parties and non Departmental Public Bodies.

The support for our work by the Irish Sports Council, Sport NI, the Departments of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Environment, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Department of Justice, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the Department of Tourism and Sport, the Department for Foreign Affairs, the North/ South Ministerial Council and all political parties, the NI Tourist Board, who have been encouraging us in what we do is acknowledged and very much appreciated by the GAA in Ulster. The GAA are grateful to all of the staff at Sport NI with whom we work and in particular reference to Nick Harkness, who is Acting Chief Executive and in whom we find a person fully conversant with the issues and demands of sport. We also acknowledge and thank Eamonn McCartan, who was Chief Executive of Sport NI for many years. We record our appreciation to Eamonn for his immense work for sport and the excellent working relationship with the GAA, I hope that he has a long and healthy retirement and we shall not forget the work that he did on all our behalf's and for all his work and his consideration of the issues that arose from time to time.

Our appreciation is also due to the various staff of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure who has worked diligently with us in dealing with the matters that arise from time to time. We also acknowledge the work, help and support from Carál Ní Chuilín, who as the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure has progressed matters for sport and social inclusion that are helping the development of our Association and other sports at this time.

The Ulster Council organised their first Ulster GAA President's Awards evening which was held in the Armagh City Hotel on Friday 30th November 2012. The event recognises the significant contribution of our members and clubs of their work for the GAA. This event was well attended and it is our intention to hold this awards function on an annual basis. I would like to thank Geraldine McKavanagh for her organisation of the Awards night and Lynette Fay who acted as our host for an memorable evening with many representatives of the GAA family present.

An tUachtarán, Aogan Ó Fearghail concludes his three year term at the helm of our Council and he has made a tremendous contribution to the Association at all levels. He has given clear, incisive and forthright leadership to the GAA in Ulster. He has given very generously of his time and is true to all aspects of our Association's affairs. In his dealings at all levels he has contributed substantially and articulated the views of Ulster on many occasions with clarity and decisiveness. He has given tremendous support to all of our work and to the programmes that we as a Council have advanced. It would be impossible to recount all of his involvements but we were well served by Aogan and after his exemplary work for this province I hope that he can continue to advance the cause of the GAA in the years to come. I thank Aogan for his work, his representation of Ulster and for his leadership within the work that we do.

Mairtin Mac Aibhne, Leas Uachtarán, has also given generously of his time in the best traditions of the Association in Ulster and has been heavily involved in the work of Council and he has been the Chairman of our Coiste Iomána. He has also chaired the Integration Committee that plays a vital part of the work of Comhairle Uladh. In all his functions he has been diligent and has represented the Council at a wide range of events. We acknowledge his work on our behalf and thank him for his work and support across the full spectre of our activity.

Our Cisteoir Michéal Ó hOsáin has given generously of his time and has played a very important part in the administration of the affairs of Comhairle Uladh. He has contributed to the match programme particularly from the finance point of view and has contributed to several areas of activity including stewarding, financial management and the work of several sub committees and workgroups. He has represented Comhairle Uladh on many occasions. I would like to record our thanks to him for his work and his input to the affairs of the GAA in Ulster.

Oilibhear O Gealagain, our OCP, has also been very much to the fore in our work over a wide area and has represented our Council on many occasions. He has developed the relationship with the media and has dealt efficiently with the various issues and statements in a most positive manner. He also ensured that our results were available to the media outlets and he was always on call to our units and the outside requirements. We record our appreciation to him for his help, support and advice on many occasions.

The members of the Ulster Council have continued to give generously of their time and through this have provided a substantial service to the overall workings of the GAA in Ulster. They operate across the administration of our affairs including our sub committees as well as supporting the operational requirements on match days. We are indebted to the members for their dedication, work and support throughout the year. We record our deep appreciation of the work of Harry Gribbin and Edward Molloy who both leave the Council at Convention and have demonstrated their dedication to our

Association over many years. We thank them for their work on behalf of Comhairle Uladh during their time as members.

The increased work of the Hearings Committee continues to tax the voluntary efforts of this body. The number of cases was around seventy; between appeals, where decisions of our Counties are challenged and of hearings were recommended penalties are set aside and the facts are established. We are indebted to Nollaig Mac Cumhaill and Eamonn Mac Mathuna who as Chairman and Secretary respectively of our Hearings Committee and through whom we have carried out a tremendous amount of work and who have dealt these matters with diligence and integrity. We are also grateful to the members of the Hearings Committee for their fortitude and availability and in ensuring that the large workload is able to be dealt with efficiently and well. We acknowledge the work and support of Damian Kelly in servicing the Committee and to the required administration.

Our Coiste Cheannais na Chomortaisi do an enormous amount of work on behalf of the Association, our Counties, Referees, Clubs and to other fixture making bodies as required from time to time. Stephen Donnelly is a tremendous asset to our Council and the CCC. He is diligent and during my incapacity represented me on the Central Competitions Control Committee. His effort surrounding programmes is outstanding and we are well served by his total commitment and dedication this critical area of our work.

We acknowledge the work of Ryan Feeney who acts as servicing Officer for our Coiste Bainisti and has been a tremendous support in the outworking of this very vital Committee in the affairs of Comhairle Uladh.

We are indebted to the Senior Staff Committee who act as the operational arm of our Management Committee and we acknowledge all for their outstanding efforts on behalf of the GAA in Ulster. Kathy Kelly has acted as servicing Officer to the Senior Staff and in conjunction with Eugene Young, Michelle McAleer, Ryan Feeney and Stephen McGeehan have ensured that the Operational work is carried out efficiently and as agreed by Coiste Bainisti.

Bernie Fox has taken over responsibility of Children's Officer since the beginning of the year and replaces Geraldine McKavanagh in this vital area of work. I would in welcoming Bernie to her new area of responsibility and I would also like to pay tribute to Geraldine who has been exemplary in these duties from the inception of this post.

Geraldine McKavanagh has continued to service the work with our County Secretaries as well as being my PA. Geraldine has also been assigned to be the Administrator of all of the structures in conjunction with the Stadium including servicing the Stadium Project Board and the Project Steering Group. Geraldine has operated at all time to the highest standards and also by her endeavours operates well beyond the call of duty. I would

like to thank her for all her work and support to me at all times. Our staff are enthusiastic and give generously of their time in the interests of the GAA in Ulster and for which I record our appreciation.

Strategic Development

I am pleased report that Ulster GAA continues to deliver in the area of Strategic Development. Following a review of the Ulster GAA strategy "*Teaghlaigh agus Pobail An Fabraic de CLG*" 2009-2015 we concluded that we have achieved 90% of the strategic targets set two years ahead of schedule as a result we are currently in the early stages of developing a new Provincial Strategic Plan which I hope will be launched in late 2013. Derry, Tyrone and Antrim also completed or are close to completing their second five year plans with significant success and delivery being identified in the review of their first strategies. Cavan, Donegal and Fermanagh will be putting in place new plans this year and I would again highlight the importance of strategic planning and development across the Association. Ulster GAA continued to feed into the overall National GAA strategy and provides ongoing reports to the Director General in this regard. I would also like to thank Mark Conway for his voluntary work and support for Ulster GAA in the Strategic Planning Process.

Public Affairs and Engagement

There is significant and constant work in this field as Ulster GAA continues to engage with government and public sector across the island. Our main goal in this work is to strongly encourage investment in the GAA by government and to heighten awareness of our Association and its positive contribution to our communities and society in general.

There is also ongoing engagement at both departmental and Ministerial level with all government departments and the North South Ministerial Council in addition to constant engagement with the Assembly through its scrutiny committees and MLA's. Ulster GAA also has a constant link to the joint Oireachtas Committee on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and the TD's and Senators representing Ulster. This work in is vital core business for Ulster GAA and the continued investment of public funding in our programmes and projects is dependant on a robust lobbying strategy. I am grateful for Ryan Feeney who leads this work at Senior Staff level supported by Aileen Cummins and Sharon Haughey for all their work and effort in our ongoing public engagement.

Urban Development

At present our urban development strategy is focused on our two largest urban areas with plans to expand this programme under the next Ulster Strategy.

Belfast

Significant developments will result in 2013 seeing several milestones being achieved in the ongoing development of the GAA in the City. A new partnership between Belfast City Council will result in the following new developments:

- New 4th Generation Flood lit GAA pitch on the Cliftonville site in North Belfast
- New Club House, Flood lights and a second pitch on the Musgrave Park site
- New 4th Generation Floodlit GAA pitch, two sand based pitches and changing facilities on the Cherryvale site
- New 4th Generation Floodlit GAA pitch, sand based pitch and changing facilities at the Woodlands site.

A new Management Board will be established between Belfast City Council and Ulster GAA to manage these sites in conjunction with Antrim GAA, Down GAA and the Clubs based on each site. The investment by Belfast City Council amounts to just over £7 million and the GAA will also be investing £1 million in the project. These developments when coupled with the Development of Casement Park highlight Ulster GAA's ongoing commitment to development Gaelic Games in Ireland's second city. I am also confident that our discussions with Belfast City Council will result in a new Full-Time GAA Development Officer post being established within Belfast City Council sports development department. I would like to thank our own staff, the Belfast City Council officials, Councillors and local Club officers for their work in this on project. I would also recognise the input of the Director General Paraic Duffy for his steadfast support for this vital project.

Derry

Following significant developments within Derry City in the development of the GAA from 2004-2010, I am disappointed to report that in my view Derry City has not progressed as Ulster GAA would have liked. While our relationship with Derry City Council was strong and productive in the early years of this project I am concerned recent changes in the City Council structure has resulted in the GAA at present not receiving parity with other sports in the City. In my view there is a perceived lack of commitment by the City Council to the GAA. The redevelopment of Celtic Park with investment by both the GAA and Sport NI has resulted in a modern state of art Stadium in the City which hosted over 180 matches in 2013, it is disappointing that Derry City Council have to date not provided investment of any sort in this facility which is the largest sporting venue under the Council's jurisdiction. There will be meetings taking place with officials at the City Council in the coming months and I hope that I will be able to report progress on this vital issue next year.

Derry City of Culture 2013

Ulster GAA continues to support Derry GAA in the roll out of their City of Culture 2013 Programme, which is integrated with the Derry GAA 125th Anniversary Celebrations. I would commend Derry GAA for ensuring that GAA activities remain at the core of the programme which will include the World GAA Congress, the National Feile and the

National Scor and Scor na nOg Finals. However, again I would register my disappointment at the engagement the Derry GAA Organisation Committee have had with the City of Culture Company and I hope that the relationship with the Culture Company will improve as we enter this important celebration of Culture in Ireland's fourth City.

Ulster GAA have also agreed to host a historical symposium, our first since the GAA's 125th Anniversary and this event which will be focused on the early years of the GAA in Derry City will be held in May.

Community Development

Ulster GAA continues to play a significant role in the promotion of Community Relations and Engagement. As an anti-sectarian and anti-racist Association we remain committed to developing a shared future built on mutual respect and understanding. Ulster GAA continues to work proactively in promoting engagement and involvement of non-traditional GAA individuals and groups through a number of programmes. I continue to lead this work on behalf of the entire GAA supported by the staff of the Community Development department, this work is important work and is now core business for Ulster GAA.

We have forged meaningful relationships with a variety of groups in this area ranging from local government, the Rural Community Network, Church of Ireland, the Community Relations Council, Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster and others. I would like to put on record our gratitude to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in particular the staff of the Reconciliation Fund for their continued endorsement of our work.

Through work with the Rural Community Network "Getting To Know Your Institutions" talks have been organised in several locations over the course of 2012. Such talks present an opportunity for the GAA to address some of the myths which exist about the GAA. Culture and Education Officer Donal McAnallen has taken on this role and the feedback from groups has been hugely positive. It is hoped that similar talks will be incorporated into the Cúchulainn Cup project to further enhance the value of the programme. Similar talks have been held in five county meetings of the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster. Inclusion work with Young Farmer Clubs of Ulster is ongoing through a series of cross-community workshops at present.

I would also thank Central Council and in particular, Director General Paraic Duffy for their continued support in all of this work. The nature of this work requires that it is dealt with sensitively, and often much of the good work, which has been achieved, is not widely promoted. We are reminded of the fragile nature of building good community relationships yet we endeavour to continue in our efforts as we believe in and remain steadfastly committed to a shared future built on the foundations of tolerance and respect.

Following representations made to the Minister Carál Ní Chuilín MLA the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has also supported this work under the guise of the Cultural Education Fund which supports Ulster GAA's cultural and outreach reach work. Funding was secured on a three year basis to appoint a Cultural Education and Outreach Officer to support us in the ongoing outreach work and to coordinate the cultural and language operations of the Council. Following a recruitment process Dr. Donal McAnallen was appointed to the post in November 2012 and serves as member of the Community Development Department Team.

I am delighted to report that the Department of Social Development has continued their investment in Ulster GAA by supporting two full time posts through the Community Sports Project. This programme has allowed us to sustain the staff and programmes that have been in place for the past 3 years and ensures that we continue to attract new volunteers to the Association as well as developing our existing base of volunteers.

Sport in the Community from 2012-15 has seen Ulster GAA enter into a formal partnership with the Irish Football Association (IFA) and more recently Ulster Rugby. Since this partnership has been initiated in April our relationship with the IFA has never been stronger. A huge amount of joint work has been undertaken to promote volunteerism, build capacity and enhance community relations. Club members from both codes have come together to build knowledge across a number of related themes. The diversity of knowledge across the two organisations will undoubtedly bear fruit for each as the information is put into practice at Club level.

A key event of the past year was the Sport in the Community Good Relations Forum. This took place at the end of October and showcased some of the excellent work being undertaken at both Governing Body and Club level in the area of Diversity and Inclusion. The event was a huge success and drew attendees from across the political spectrum, alongside a range of community and voluntary bodies. The debate and discussion on the day was most thought provoking but perhaps the highlight was the case studies as delivered by 2 Club persons on the day. On behalf of the GAA, the St. Peter's GAA Warrenpoint story was colourfully delivered by Feargal McCormack and it most certainly represented the range of activity that our volunteer members engage in year round. It was both inspiring and humbling to hear of these efforts as representative of that of our thousands of members across Ulster.

The work of Sport in Community will continue in 2013 and new to the table are Ulster Rugby. I welcome them to the partnership and look forward to the value they will add to the programme.

Cúchulainn Project

The Belfast Cúchulainns were this year's winners of the cross-community Gaelic football and hurling Cuchulainns Cup blitz held in April. This year the programme was extended

to new teams from Coleraine and Monaghan. 240 young men took part in the blitz, and it is hoped to extend the invitation to other areas in 2013. It is hoped that the recent appointment of a Cultural Education Officer will enable "Getting to Know the GAA" talks to be delivered to all participating schools in 2013.

In July, Belfast Cúchulainns representing Corpus Christi College, Ashfield Boys School, Belfast Boys Model, and St Patrick's College were selected to travel to London to compete in the inaugural All Britain GAA Championships prior to the visit the group visited Croke Park and Arás an Uachtarain. The group trained diligently with team coach Ryan Mellon. Unfortunately the tournament was cancelled days prior to the event due to waterlogged pitches. Despite the set-back the group of 20 players, four teachers, and Officers and staff from Ulster GAA travelled to London where three competitive challenge games were organised against an U-16 London Select, London's Taras and Naomh Pdraig from Leicester. The group visited Wembley Stadium as part of a sight-seeing tour of London, and spent a day at Thorpe Park. With positive results both on and off the field the Belfast Cúchulainn's Trip to London 2012 will live long in the memory of those involved.

Game of Three Halves

Ulster GAA continues to work closely with Ulster Rugby, the Irish Football Association and Peaceplayers in delivering the Game of Three Halves project. The project is overseen by the Sport 4 Change working group which Trevor Ringland sits a Chairperson and Ryan Feeney acts as Ulster GAA representative to the group.

Through the Young Enterprise LET Programme 600 young people took part in a ten week Game of Three Halves project in Omagh from November 2011 – January 2012. Coaching was provided by Ulster GAA and Tyrone County Board coaches with young people getting the opportunity to take-part in Gaelic games. Given the success of the programme in 2011/2012 it has been repeated in 2012/2013. On this occasion the programme was divided across two locations in Woodhall Recreation Centre Kilrea and the Share Centre Lisnaskea. Derry County Board and Fermanagh County Board provided the coaching in the respective locations. Over the course of the ten week programme 600 young people were coached the basic skills of Gaelic games in a cross-community, fun environment. Thanks to Tyrone, Derry and Fermanagh County Board coaches for their assistance in providing an excellent standard of coaching.

Ulster GAA were delivery partners in the inaugural "Belfast Interface Games" which took part during the summer of 2012. The idea behind the project was to involve young people in positive activities during periods when anti-social behaviour has become common. A Game of Three Halves event took place at interface areas in the North, South, East and West of the city culminating in a celebratory Flagship Event at Seaview Stadium in early August. Over 250 young people actively engaged in the programme promoting good relations between all sections of the community and making the sports of Gaelic Football, soccer and rugby acceptable to all. The Final event saw stars from the

three respective sports turn out to show their support while mixing with the young people. Thanks to our staff and County Players who supported this event Tyrone's Maura Kelly, Armagh's Brian Mallon and Derry's Ruairi Convery who represented Ulster GAA.

One-off Game of Three Halves events continue to be requested on a regular basis, and where possible Ulster GAA strive to accommodate as many of these requests as possible. It is heartening to know that where a Game of Three Halves event has taken place a request to repeat the programme is always forthcoming. The Sport 4 Change steering group recognises that it is impossible to accommodate all requests and have endeavoured to streamline the programme based on projects which will deliver greatest impact. It is a hugely positive sign of the programme that the programme is in great demand.

Club Planning and Development

Club Maith

Club Maith has increasingly become the benchmark against which clubs compare themselves. It is testament to the commitment of our GAA volunteers that Clubs are setting an excellent standard in all areas of Club business. To date there are 24 clubs accredited, with two more in the assessment phase at present. Recognition must go to Castleblayney on receiving a Platinum award, the second club to achieve this standard. Clubs are supported through the process via workshops at Club Officer Training and from the Club Maith website. There are over 100 clubs working towards accreditation receiving support from Ulster GAA. The Club Maith Year has been streamlined in 2012 whereby an "Open Season" has been identified for when Portfolios can be submitted to Ulster GAA for assessment. This takes place each year from the first Monday in August to the first Friday in December. With over 80 Facilitators trained and ready to take-on the assessment of Portfolios it is hoped there will be many other Clubs accredited from autumn onwards.

Club Development and Support

The National Club Planning programme continues to be rolled-out in Ulster. Training for "Club Planners" has taken place during 2012 resulting in each county having a bank of "Club Planners" who can be despatched to clubs as they are needed. Ulster GAA delivered this training and continues to support County Development Officers in this programme. County Development Officers continue to meet quarterly through the established Comhairle Uladh Network.

As part of its support to clubs Ulster GAA delivered Advice Clinics to Monaghan, Cavan, and Donegal clubs wishing to make applications to the Sports Capital Programme 2012. In total 28 letters of support were issued to clubs. Thirteen clubs were successful and were awarded €660,000 in total. Advice and support to clubs who remain on the list for Sport NI Community Capital Fund have been supported through the department also.

Health and Wellbeing

Live to Play - This campaign continued in force throughout 2012 and I am heartened to see a continued decrease in the numbers killed and seriously injured on our roads. Undoubtedly the efforts on behalf of GAA members in Ulster, has contributed to this downturn in collisions and I highlight the comments of the PSNI Chief Constable and Garda Commission over the year which paid tribute to Ulster GAA's work in road safety.

A further 10 Club education events took place throughout the year, with Derry and Down completing a comprehensive rollout of the programme. I commend Paul Gaile (Derry) and Anthony Crozier (Down) for their efforts in making these events a success. They, alongside their compatriots in the other Ulster Counties who have taken on the role of Live to Play co-ordinator (Cuthbert Donnelly; Tyrone, Tony McCollum; Antrim, Brian Armitage; Fermanagh, Mick McGrath; Donegal, Liam McCabe; Cavan); have contributed immensely to this hugely important programme. We remain indebted to our delivery partners in the emergency services; An Garda Siochana, PSNI and NI Fire & Rescue Service, for their expertise at these events.

The Live to Play Primary School colouring competition took place for the second year and saw an increase in uptake from Year 1. I am delighted that so many of Schools have engaged with the programme and have been greatly impressed with the imagination and diligence shown by young pupils partaking in the initiative.

I was delighted to be present at the Launch of Ulster GAA's Live to Play Social Media Campaign in November. This launch coincided with European Road Safety week and once again reinforced the Council's commitment to this public health issue. The Social Media campaign has been in effect since with a series of media messages being 'shared' across a range of platforms to promote Road Safety. I commend the input of the Ulster players and managers who feature in these messages - showing that they are both a true inspiration off the pitch as well as on it. The financial input of the DOE, in addition to the contribution of O'Neill's, has made the promotional side of Live to Play possible and to both Ulster GAA in sincerely grateful.

The year was rounded off by the excellent news that our Community Development Manager Aileen Cummins was recognised for her work in leading this project by being a recipient of Michelin Award, I congratulate Aileen on her Award and thank her for her continued work on this important campaign.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Established in 2006 it has now become totally embedded in the Association at all levels. It is a most worthwhile initiative and has established a reputation for both preventing alcohol related incidents from occurring and for increasing the capacity of our members in dealing with such difficult issues.

The ASAP programme delivered a number of exciting new programmes throughout 2012, including Off the Booze, On the Ball and SAOR training. Off the Booze, On the Ball encouraged a healthy lifestyle during the month of January (and in some cases beyond!) by abstaining from alcohol and getting active. A large number of clubs across Ulster entered this initiative while at the same time raising money for their unit. I commend the Currin Club from Co. Monaghan who were selected as the Ulster winners in this initiative.

SAOR training, a programme to equip coaches with the skills necessary to handle a brief intervention in their Club, has just been piloted through the ASAP programme and early indications are that this model is something which could be expanded throughout the Association. Our coaches interact with young people day and daily and such is the rapport that is established that commonly it is they who are approached as a confidant or support. Ensuring that coaches know how to react when these scenarios arise is essential in assisting our young people in the difficulties they may be experiencing.

I thank the many volunteers at County (Emma Murray; Derry, Gerry McClory; Antrim, Gary Doherty; Down, Cuthbert Donnelly; Tyrone, John Moley; Armagh, Patricia Durnien; Fermanagh, Bill Vaughan; Donegal, Cathal Hand; Monaghan and Gerry Soden; Cavan) and Club level who have taken up roles as officers in their respective units to coordinate and promote the ASAP programme.

Drink, Drugs and Sausage Rolls

Perhaps the longest established Health and Wellbeing programme within the Council, remains one of the most innovative. Delivery continues to be made possible thanks to the sponsorship of Squareball.com, the programme took place at 6 University campuses in 2012. The light-hearted programme continues to address serious challenges faced by students in a manner to which they appear to appreciate. The feedback to the programme is hugely positive and I trust the impact will be played out through a healthier body young people currently in third level education.

Social Initiative

This project continues to grow in strength in Ulster. The initiative is hugely commendable as it seeks to ensure that older people are retained as important members of our Clubs and our Communities. Through a range of social, recreational and entertaining programmes, older people have once more been integrated to Club life. As an Association who prides itself for being 'from the cradle to the grave' it is appropriate that all ages are catered for within our activities.

A number of members have in the past year taken on the role of County Social Initiative officer and they have done great work alongside an ever increasing number of Clubs on the initiative.

I thank Liam Peoples (Derry); Gloria McLaughlin (Antrim); Maureen O'Higgins (Down); Dermot McCaughey (Tyrone); Joe Jordan (Armagh); Peter Carthy (Fermanagh); Ailis Nic An tSaoi (Monaghan); Maire Graham (Donegal) and Paddy McDermott and Tom O'Reilly (Cavan) for their work in the past year. I thank also Cuthbert Donnelly for his contribution to this programme at provincial level and for his hard work in ensuring its development at Club and County.

I note that Sean Kilbride left his position as National Co-ordinator of the Social Initiative in August and I thank him for his work on the programme during his period in office. Colin Regan has taken over the role and I am confident that he will continue the great work which has been undertaken.

The Social Initiative, aiming to tackle the problem of isolated elderly citizens, especially men in rural areas, continued to be pursued within Ulster. The headline event within the scheme was a national meeting at Croke Park on Saturday 13 October, at which representatives of five Ulster counties and the provincial coordinator of the scheme attended. Senator Martin McAleese delivered the opening address, outlining the background to the initiative. Next, Colin Regan, the GAA Community Health and Promotion Manager with responsibility for the Social Initiative, delivered a presentation on how members could refocus their efforts to enhance the scheme. Following on, a number of speakers outlined their experiences of working on similar projects and identified ways in which the target group could be drawn out from their isolation. These speakers were Richard Farrell and Michael Foley, of Age & Opportunity; Pat Love, of the North Leitrim Men's Group; Paula Kennedy and Henry Healy, of Ireland Reaching Out; and John Kelly, of Spa GAC, Kerry.

Match for Michaela

2012 saw Casement Park play host to one of the most significant and important events that Ulster GAA ever organised. As part of the of the Casement Park redevelopment planning process Ulster GAA were required to host an 18,000 capacity event in Casement Park. Following discussions with the Michaela Foundation the organisation set up in memory of the late Michaela McAreavey it was agreed to organise a challenge match that would see the Inter Provincial Champions Ulster play the All-Ireland Champions Donegal with the proceeds of the game going to the Michaela Foundation. Ulster GAA are committed to support the Foundation who conducts its activities under the leadership of Michaela's Father Mickey and Husband John.

I cannot in this report express my absolute pride at the unity that the province of Ulster displayed at Casement Park on the evening of Saturday 3rd November and I want to express my sincere thanks to the officers of the Donegal GAA County Committee, Jim McGuinness (Senior Manager) and the Donegal senior squad under the captaincy of Michael Murphy, all of whom supported the event from its concept. I want to also

recognise the excellent support and effort from our Provincial Manager Joe Kernan and our Captain Darren Hughes in the organisation of this event.

Officer Training

County Officer This session was a new addition to the Officer Training Programme with the key target being training and development of County Officers. This session was held on Saturday 7th January 2012. Key addresses included: Ulster President, Provincial Secretary (Review of Ulster Strategy) and Kieran Leddy (One Club). Nine workshops were held as part of this session on the following themes: Leadership in GAA, Management & Executive Administration, Finance & Budget Procedures, Communications & Media, The Rule Book, ASAP – Programme Focus, Capital Development and Club Development, Coaching in your county, and Keeping ‘Gaelic’ in GAA.

Club Officer This session was held on Saturday 14th January in a central location – Cookstown. This Provincial event provided role specific training for clubs officers new to their role in 2012. Eight role specific training workshops were held as part of this session: Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, PRO, Culture & Community Officer, Development Officer, Coaching Officer and Children’s Officer Training.

The Training Programme ran on Saturday mornings from January to April, in 6 of the 8 in Ulster, Antrim and Donegal both opted for evening time sessions and the training Clár was amended accordingly.

The Training Programme focused on key issues facing club officers in 2012, and as such three plenary sessions were: the One Club Model, Club Development Plans Process, and Respect and Discipline. Each session also included four workshops on key areas of Club Governance including: Applying for Club Maith, Club Finance and Insurance, Club Health Matters and Designated Officers in Child Protection.

Council of Britain Training Day This session was held to explore with CDAs and officers of the Council of Britain the possibility and opportunity of delivering a Club Officer Training Programme in Britain similar to what has been delivered over the last three years in Ulster. Topics covered as part of this training day included: Club Governance, Developing a Club Officer Training Programme, Club Development Plans, and Rolling out Health and Wellbeing Programmes.

This Programme would not be possible without the assistance of workshop facilitators who delivered the training across Ulster. We thank all those who contributed to the Programme, and in particular our volunteer facilitators who gave up their time freely to help deliver this programme. We appreciate the knowledge, expertise and strong delivery of all our facilitators.

Grounds

The past year has been an historic one in many ways when we look back to chart the progress in relation to the Casement Park stadium project. At last year's convention I reported on the structures and systems that CLG Comhairle Uladh put in place to deliver effectively and efficiently on behalf of the Association to achieve our ambition for the West Belfast site.

Our Stadium Project Board led by our enthusiastic and hard-working Chairman and Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) Tomas O Dalaigh who has worked diligently, courageously and with forthrightness in advancing the project through difficult and at times extremely challenging issues to ensure that we have a project that is strategic and deliverable. The Council continues the progress of the Stadium design dealing with a litany of complex, challenging and at times frustrating issues on a daily basis.

Our Stadium Project Group which is the operational side of our delivery is led by Stephen McGeehan, the Project Sponsor, and supported by our Independent Technical Advisor, Tim Harkin have ensured the stadium project management via the Project Steering Group. The support from Michelle McAleer, Ryan Feeney, Eugene Young and the task of administering and supporting the Stadium inputs continues to be managed by Geraldine McKavanagh as Stadium Administrator and are vital to the delivery of the project within the stated timelines.

One year on from advising Convention of our new structures and systems for a £76m value strategic capital project I am pleased that our team is delivering as planned to date. The year began with a major policy decision from Comhairle Uladh and Ard Comhairle to officially support our efforts for the modernisation of Casement Park off the back of the letter of offer to invest up to £61.4m from DCAL at the venue in line with the NI Executive Regional Stadium Programme. The support from Ard Comhairle included the confirmation of a funding package of £15m sterling which represents a very significant private partnership funding from the GAA secured in February last year. We place on record our appreciation to our Central Council and in particular Criostar O Cuana and Paraic Duffy for their support in that regard.

Our Project team initially worked closely with Sport NI (SNI) tasked with developing the scheme however during last summer it became apparent that the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) became increasingly involved directly in stadium matters and it was no surprise when in June, Ulster GAA were advised that the Stadium delivery function had been relocated to DCAL and the heretofore SNI team re-located under a new Programme Director Noel Molloy at the Department.

I wish to place on record my appreciation of Eamonn McCartan, with whom we had a positive relationship and thank him sincerely for his inputs to the stadium project and many other GAA initiatives over many years in conjunction with the Sports Council and latterly with SNI.

Working with DCAL and officials from the Central Procurement Directorate (DCAL) our team set about the task of appointing our Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT Design Team). After an extensive and competitive process of pre-qualification and tender assessments in August 2012 the GAA awarded the contract to Mott MacDonald Ltd, Belfast a renowned construction consultancy firm in the market. The Architects within the team are Populous Ltd, London who are world leaders in stadium design for sports venues. Previous work includes Wembley Stadium, Aviva, Emirates Stadium and most notably recently the Olympic Stadium, London.

In total the Integrated Consultancy Team interacts with Stephen McGeehan and Tim Harkin and has sixty members covering a variety of disciplines and professional inputs.

Following the formal announcement of the appointment of Mott MacDonald in early September much work has been undertaken on the concept design of the stadium which has included inputs from many stakeholders within the GAA and other third parties including Stadia Safety Group, Inclusive Stadia Group (Disability), Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG Reviews) and Design Quality Indicator (DQI) Group. The designs for the Stadium are currently at RIBA Stage C and by the end of March and early April the detailed design work and planning submission should be completed and lodged with the Strategic Planning Unit of the NI Planning Service.

The procurement of the Contractor and Design team to build the stadium is underway and the initial short-list referred to as Pre -Qualification (PQQ) will be completed by the end of February 2013. The target is for the Works Contract to be awarded in September 2012.

Another major project milestone occurred in November 2012 when the 'security' for the £61.4m of grant aid from DCAL was approved by the Trustees of Casement Park to be attached to the Stadium. Effectively a charge has been affected over the property for a defined period to enable the works to proceed, funding to flow from Government and stadium to be built. Thanks are due to Gerry O'Hare and the Trustees of Casement Park for their forbearance and dutifulness in executing this important task.

We remain on target to achieve our objectives at Casement Park on time, within budget and to a quality specification. The capacity will be defined within a threshold up to 40,000 which is sympathetic to the site size with regards to the neighboring properties and the maximisation of the quality of the general catchment areas. This project is a major operation by our elected Officers supported by our staff team. We are grateful to the members who serve voluntarily on our various committees. Michael Hasson, who represents the Council on the DCAL Sponsor Board, Project Board members, Project Steering Group members and to the three sub work, groups namely Community and Engagement, Planning and Design and Finance and Governance. We are also grateful to fellow Officers, our President Aogan Ó Fearghail and OCP Oliver Galligan who represent the Council on the Project Board and Project Steering Group respectively.

We acknowledge the inputs of our outgoing President, Aogan O Fearghail, and the on-going support of Uachtaran CLG Liam O Neill and at operational level Tom Ryan and Peter McKenna within the Croke Park team. To the Antrim County Committee and in particular to Jim Murray and Frankie Quinn for their co-operation and support we thank them for their efforts. At Departmental level we convey our ongoing appreciation to Carál Ní Chuilín, MLA Minister for DCAL and her officials in the Programme Team for their support, inputs and on-going financial resource.

There are many challenges remaining for the successful delivery of our ambitions for Casement Park. A positive planning approval is critical as without planning we have no project and that decision will be eagerly awaited in and around September 2013. The appointment of a contractor with the relevant experience and business acumen to undertake a stadium project with a cost in the region of £60m to £70m is also a major milestone that we look forward to achieving. I must say that while the rewards are high so too are the risks and the pace, complexity and demands of the project and our inputs will require leadership and management over the year ahead.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and our stakeholders in the year ahead and hope to be able to report to convention in a year's time that further significant progress has been made in our ambition to develop Pairc Mhic Asmoint as an iconic stadium for the greater good of our Association.

Games Development

Ulster GAA continues to support all GAA codes. Programmes and support are designed using the Lifelong Involvement in Sport and Physical Activity model (LISPA). The delivery focus is on four key areas: High Performance, Organised Sport, Active Recreation and Active Living. Implementation of programmes receives support from a number of key agencies that include Ulster and National GAA, our County units, Local Authorities and Government Departments (Culture, Arts and Leisure and Education).

Delivery is through our programme of games, coaching programmes, coach education, sports science support, academy development and twinning with Britain and Canada. To maintain the quality of provision there is continuous external review from and reporting to the key Government Departments, Coaching Ireland, National GAA our County units and our own membership. This external review is important as it provides a benchmark for the provision that we make.

Games Programmes are central to our activity. This past year the County Development Squads have competed at all age groups and the successful introduction of the Jim McGuigan Cup for U17 football that has complimented the Bunrana Cup. Indoor hurling activity continues to be successful across the Province and the success of Ulster Og Sport and Feile Uladh continues to grow. Games programmes for children and young

people with physical and learning disabilities have taken place at all levels with opportunities to play in our major sporting venues including Croke Park. The advent of an inter-county competition for this target group has been very successful. Cross community programmes have been delivered through the Game of Three Halves, the Cúchullian Cup and the Integrated Schools competitions. We continue to support the development of our Ladies Codes through their school blitzes, development squads and Ulster programmes. This was an important year for handball with the World Championships hosted in Dublin. To build on the Regional Development Officers working with the National Handball Development Officer initiated County inter schools handball competitions with the Ulster finals hosted in St Ciaran's Ballygawley. This programme will be expanded in 2013.

Coaching is being delivered directly within 380 primary schools through the KS1 Curriculum Sports Programme. The programme impacts on approximately 18,000 children weekly and delivers the key fundamental movement skills for our codes. Other key messages are delivered through this programme on healthy eating, obesity and road safety providing added value to the programme. Coaching is also delivered in special needs and integrated schools, to older people and within clubs through the Regional Development Officers and Active Communities Coaches. Active Communities Coaches target females, disability and special needs and older people. They are employed (in most cases) by Local Authorities with a contribution from Ulster and Counties. The programme needs to move forward in 2013 to improve the school club links. The Regional Hurling Development officers target hurling clubs and the feeder primary and secondary schools. They also provide support to the coaches within the development squads programme. This has developed into a mentoring programme where they support and guide hurling coaches for both clubs and counties.

Coach Education workshops are delivered on a regional basis and centrally and continue to be very popular. The Annual Coaching and Games Development Conference continued to provide an excellent channel to expose coaches to best practice. High Performance Workshops have challenged our County Team staff and in particular the engagement with our medical practitioners and the Sports Institute created the Gaelic Groin Publication. Ulster has provided a forum for discussion and debate around key issues that affect our players on the Performance pathways. Issues of over training and over use continue as managers are challenged to put the player at the centre of the decision and not the team. The National Coaching Programmes at Foundation and Level 1 remains popular but there is a lack of commitment by coaches to take the next step to Level 2. Issues around course duration and costs are being reviewed and the method of delivery of all programmes with the introduction of e-learning will go some way to reducing contact time on courses. Ulster has moved ahead and looked to accredit some programmes within the boarder National Qualifications Credits Framework (NQCF). The Team Management and Performance Coaching Programme have been put on NQC framework and accredited externally by the Open College Network. The first cohort of students graduated with a Level 3 qualification. Work has been done to expand this

opportunity to a broader audience by delivering it through the Regional Colleges network. Additional units and programmes are being designed at present. A Performance Analysis unit has been accredited and delivered to transition year students within second levels schools. The students were then encouraged to link with their local clubs and provide the service and expertise they gained directly to their club.

Sports Science support has been delivered within the third level institutions and directly to county and Ulster development squads as well as inter-county minor, under 21 and senior teams. This work is complimented by research projects that have informed best practice. The Ulster Referees Committee have also benefited through implementation of a fitness assessment session with the referees and exercise prescription and the continuation of the Referees Academy.

The Further and Higher Education sector has gained momentum with eight GAA Academies now established across the Province. Students in these sectors now get an opportunity to take our courses and benefit from support that will help enhance their performance. Work continues with University of Ulster in establishing a GAA specific conditioning programme that is accredited and controlled by GAA.

Support to counties and our constituent sports remains a priority. We work closely with our Counties through the Games Development Manager and County Coaching Officers networks. Regular meetings ensure a good working relationship and clear communication with the key people. Support has been provided for in-service opportunities and KS1, Regional staff, Sports Science and Third Level Officers work directly on the ground with our clubs and counties through coaching and games programmes. The involvement with Cumman na mBunscol in our Provincial Championship is being continually refined. Our work with Ulster Colleges has developed further with the introduction of an Ulster Colleges Hurling team. Rounders remains high on the agenda with schools coaching programmes delivered through our KS1 and KS2 coaches within designated periods. Ladies Football and Camogie remain active and involved in our Provincial Coaching Committee with support and advice offered on a regular basis.

Twinning activity with Canada and Britain has continued. The development of Action Plans in 2011 was taken forward but the Coaching and Games development activity has focused on work in Britain. Referees have visited both Scotland and Canada to referee games and to provide referee education programmes. A visit to Birmingham delivered an in-service programme and the first part of a Level 1 Coaching Programme to the Community Development Officers (CDAs). The Cuchullians Cross Community Team travelled to London for a series of games in the summer. The CDAs travelled to Ulster for a weeks in-service hosted by the counties and by Ulster and to attend the Coaching Conference.

A number of coaching staff have moved on to higher education, other coaching posts and to teaching appointments in Britain, Ireland and Dubai. The Council continues to provide opportunities for young graduates to gain employment and to use the valuable experience gained to move onto other employment. Coaching and Games remains vibrant and it faces the challenge of keeping our games open, honest and attractive. Respect and Fair Play must remain high on the agenda and coaches are in control to ensure this message is delivered.

Gaeilge agus Oidhreacht

Tá Cúrsa Cuimhneacháin Sheamuis de Faoite fiche ceathair bliain ag fás, agus tionóladh é sna Dúnaibh i mí Iúil arís. D'éirigh go maith leis an chúrsa arís agus molaim go hard obair na n-eagraitheoirí, Nollaig Mac Cumhaill agus a fochoiste. Is léir, áfach, go gcaithfidh tuilleadh iarrachtaí a dhéanamh glúin óg Gaeilgeoirí a mhealladh chuige as seo amach chun an cúrsa a choinneáil beo go ceann ceathrú-chéad bliain eile. Ag an am céanna tá Campa Chormaic ag dul ó neart go neart. Tionóladh campa úr i gColáiste Cholmáin anuraidh. Ciallaíonn sé sin go bhfuil sé ar siúl i gcúig chontae sa chúige, le breis agus ocht gcéad daltaí scoile i láthair i rith an tsamhraidh.

A most positive development from the year just passed was the launch of the GaelGo 'app.' This device, which was provided in collaboration between Comhairle Uladh, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, enables users of new technology to keep in touch with cultural activities through bilingual updates (in Irish and English). The assistance of DCAL was important to the appointment of a new Oifigeach Oideachais Chultúrtha & Rochtana. Comhairle Uladh is currently exploring ways of promoting the DCAL 'Líofa 2015' scheme and other educational initiatives, with a view to increasing the fluency of many members across the nine counties of Ulster.

Matters of heritage continue to occupy a significant place in the activities of Comhairle Uladh. This was seen most graphically on the occasion of the commemoration of the Aontroim footballers who won five consecutive Ulster championships (1908-13) and reached two All-Ireland finals in 1912, which was held at the Titanic building, Belfast, in November. A large crowd, including many descendants of the players of a century ago, relived the exploits of their fathers, grandfathers, uncles and great-grandfathers. Several of them were visibly emotional when presented with medals by Uachtarán Aogán Ó Fearghail. Comhairle Uladh was pleased to present these medals, as these players had only received one set for all their achievements during their playing days. The 'Cathair Chultúir 2013' celebration in Doire Choilm Cille affords an opportunity to stage some worthy and timely commemorations of the long and fascinating history of Gaelic games and culture in the north-western citadel.

Is mór ár meas ar an obair atá déanta ag Coiste Gaeilge agus Oidhreacht Chomhairle Uladh, faoi cheannasaíocht an chathaoirligh, Seán Ó Duibheannaigh. Gabhaim buíochas leis na baill choiste as ucht a gcuid oibre i rith an tréimhse trí bliana seo caite.

Culture and Scór

The Scór competitions remain an essential part of the calendar for many of our clubs. Indeed it is said that participation rates in Ulster, which was already a leading province in Scór, have multiplied over the course of the last five years. The Scór na nÓg and Scór Sinsir Ulster finals, held at Gallbhaile (Tír Eoghain) and Doire Choilm Cille respectively, were tremendous occasions, showcasing the best of Irish culture before packed audiences; likewise the provincial semi-finals were most entertaining. We are grateful to *Gaelic Life* for coming on board to provide the first sponsorship package for Scór at Ulster level. This newspaper's coverage afforded to Scór the sort of publicity that it has long warranted, but seldom received.

While no All-Ireland medals went to Ulster from the national Scór na nÓg final, the Ulster representatives gave many admirable performances and were unlucky not to be further rewarded. In Scór Sinsir, the Ulster champions fared somewhat better, with both Béal Eachaidh and Aireagal Chiaráin collecting the top honours in Ceol Uirlise and Nuachleas respectively.

Tá ardmholadh tuillte ag iar-chathaoirleach an Choiste Scór, Miceál Ó Grianáin, ucht a chuid oibre dhícheallach thar na blianta beaga anuas; agus tá gaisce déanta ag an rúnaí, Fearghas Mac Aoidh, le linn an ama sin. Gabhaim fíorbhuíochas leo agus leis an cathaoirleach nua-cheaptha, Éamonn Mac Mathúna.

Education

The Ministers Coaching in Schools Programme continued throughout the year and the input has had significant impact on the target area of Key Stage 1. We operate this with thirty one Coaches working in three hundred and twenty schools as well as a substantial contribution to the Summer Camps in the Counties concerned. This is managed by our staff to maximise the input to the schools. We have developed physical literacy as developing each individual person to a point where they have the necessary skill to play our games based on agility, balance and coordination. This work is at the forefront of games development and the Key Stage Pupils are reaping the benefits now of a programme that introduces all the important requirements to this age group that will ensure that they are active, motivated, healthy and from our games perspective capable of playing Gaelic games to whatever level they wish to be involved.

Dr Eugene Young provides exemplary leadership to the DENI Programme and the interaction with the Department of Education is also a key element of his work. He is supported by Terence McWilliams, Diarmuid Marsden, Ryan Mellon and Bernie Fox in providing the substantial management of this programme. Michelle McAleer deals with the complexity of financial drawdown from the Department and compliance with the established procedures supported by Brian Mallon and Paul Sanders. We have a good

relationship and are indebted to all the Schools involved with the programme for their assistance in delivering the Coaching in Schools Initiative. We are grateful for the support of the Department of Education and thank their staff for all their assistance to us. The Minister of Education, John O Dowd, is fully supportive of what we do and we thank him for his ongoing support.

Cumann na mBunscol are an important part of our Association and work to ensure that opportunity exists for the playing of football, hurling, handball and camogie by those young people who attend the Primary sector. We are very grateful for the tremendous work of our Primary Schools and thank the teachers, their helpers and Clubs for strengthening the Club Schools links and through this the community and the GAA. When you add this to the work undertaken through the DENI Programme the importance of this sector to our Association and indeed to wider society can be gauged.

The Second Level Schools Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sean O Duibhianaigh have continued to work for the development of the Colleges and Vocational sector. It is a matter of concern that changes emanating at National level could adversely affect the status and commitment to the competitions that have been the bedrock of the GAA and our schools to date. It needs to be stated that both the Vocational Schools Committee and the Ulster Colleges Council are still doing remarkable work on behalf of their schools and ultimately the GAA. We acknowledge all those teachers, coaches and Clubs that contribute to this outstanding area for our Association.

We as an Association have a very high regard and commitment to the Third Level. We have two people employed to work with this sector and are financially supporting the funding partnership with two Universities to employ Gaelic Games Development Officers with those establishments. The importance of this sector to the Association is immense and we hope to see this area expand and developed in unison with our Association's need to educate, adopt and improve as we build for the future. Many of our best and most talented players are attending University and we directly award bursaries to ensure that those recipients are continuing to be actively involved in our games, their University Club as well as their own Club and in many cases their County also. The role Comhairle Ard Oidheachas Uladh has been very good and we shall continue to address the various issues that arise including the recent adverse comment on the involvement of Third level teams in the Dr McKenna Cup and the ultimate withdrawal of one University.

Child Protection

This aspect of our work continues to be as demanding as ever for this Committee and for all those involved throughout our Association who work with Children or Vulnerable adults. The legal framework that we have to operate within across both jurisdictions continues to change and evolve, adding additional demands on the Council, our Counties and our Clubs.

The uptake in applications for vetting through AccessNI and the Garda Central vetting Unit continues to steadily increase. Currently over 11,500 vetting applications have been processed across Ulster. In 2012 our Association reached the 50,000 member or our Association to be vetted. It should be noted that the vetting process is only one part in the recruitment process for all those working with Children of Vulnerable Adults as such it remains Ulster GAA policy that anyone working with Children or Vulnerable adults must be vetted.

Training and Awareness education programmes continue to be rolled out throughout the Province. An increase in the uptake in the Club Officer training programme for the Children's Officer information seminar is worthy of a note, in 2012 this was highly attended by Club Children's Officers with an increase in attendance recorded in all counties, it remains a very popular information session delivered as part of the overall Club Officer Training Programme. The Safeguarding Awareness training programme also continues to be delivered across Ulster with over 27,500 members attending this workshop recorded.

Our Counties and Clubs should also take note of the change in our Provincial Children's Officer effective from January 2013 Bernie Fox has taken up the post of the Ulster Provincial Children's Officer taking over from Geraldine McKavanagh.

We acknowledge the work carried out by our Code of Ethics Committee lead by Pat Darcy, Chairman and Gerry Soden, Secretary. We express our gratitude to the County Children's Officers who continue to give great direction and support to our Clubs. The continued support from Gearoid Ó Maoilmhichíl throughout the year must also be noted and our thanks to him recorded.

Association Issues

The Association developed on an extended basis both in Ireland and abroad. The loss of so many young people through emigration is having an impact on our Clubs at home but the critical elements of the GAA travel well and we need to ensure that while they are lost to our Clubs at home, they can be utilized and a substantial benefit to the growth of the GAA throughout the world.

The Association has again examined the Playing Rules and a document has been published with recommendations attached. These may or may not be accepted by the GAA but it needs to be understood that the Rules by themselves will change nothing. We do need to look at a change of attitude to the playing of the games and are predicated on developing a respect culture for opponents, match official, spectators and the actual Association itself. We cannot continue to challenge authority, verbally sledge our opponents, treat supporters with disdain and expect to justify everything by the end

justifying the means. I would hope that we all stand back and rationalise our approach to our commitment to the games we hold so important.

The working arrangements between Comhairle Uladh and the Counties and Clubs have been very solid and this has been typified by the support, evident throughout Ulster on a wide range of matters. The meeting with County Chairmen, Secretaries, Treasurers and Games Development Managers plus the Sub Committees and their interaction with the current issues and the efficient flow of information can only be beneficial to the GAA in general and to the work of our Clubs and Counties in particular. We acknowledge the tremendous work and commitment of our County Chairmen, Secretaries, Treasurers and all the County Officers in delivering the key elements of our Association work within Ulster.

We acknowledge the excellent working arrangements between Comhairle Uladh and Ard Comhairle. There are proper engagements between key personnel at National level and the respective personnel at Provincial level have been mutually beneficial. This has ensured that there are clear avenues to allow for proper planning and delivery of programmes within the defined parameters. These arrangements are replicated at Ulster level with our Counties and constituent units. I would like to thank the staff at Central Level for their help and cooperation and would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance of Tom Ryan, Pat Daly, Peter McKenna, Lisa Clancy and Gearoid Ó Maolmhichíl for their work. We also thank Ronan Murphy, Kieran Leddy, Patrick Doherty and Fergal McGill for their assistance in specific fields of operation.

We acknowledge the huge amount of work, guidance and support delivered by our Ard Stiurthoir, Paraic O Dufaigh, who has been a tremendous source of encouragement while at the same time he has provided tremendous leadership to our Association that has ensured that the issues are properly discussed and that proper and effective decisions are made. We also record our thanks to Liam O Neill, as President of our Association has been clear and forthright at the helm of the GAA. We acknowledge the dedication and input he has brought to the post and we thank him for his work on behalf of the GAA.

Information and Marketing

This Committee provides a very important part of the imagery of our Association in Ulster. They are innovative, motivated and very focused on what it needs to be doing to meet the modern Marketing requirements. The use of modern technology including social media has expanded the impact of our Associations work and games to a wider audience. We have utilised these element as part of a planned approach to ensuring that our story is accessible, accurate and articulated. The work we do is of the highest quality and for this we have been recognised by the Chartered Institute of Marketing in Ireland. We were competing with companies represented by marketing companies but our work was done inside our Association and we are the better for the expertise

available. Ulster GAA continues to publish its monthly online newsletter which promotes the good work of the Council our staff team work together ensure a comprehensive newsletter is produced every month and distributed to over 8,000 people across the Association and beyond.

We once again thank the Committee and Workgroup for their work and ideas in creating a vibrant image for our Association. Oilibhear O Gealagain gives outstanding leadership to this work and we are indebted to him for all that he does on our behalf. We also acknowledge the work of Damian Kelly, our staff member responsible for ICT, Website and functionality of our systems and know that they will be diligently planning to enhance our systems as we advance in the interactive future.

Media

The relationship with the media and the GAA can be variable but in general the interaction between the various media and Ulster GAA are respectful and fair. We do need to understand that adverse comment or criticism are not done for that purpose but are for to accurately portray the matter in hand. Where we are subject to critical comment it is normally as a result of a failure of our systems or structures to properly represent what we are doing and how we are doing it. During any year there are matters of controversy and differing opinions are reported but the items that we are reported on are for the greater good of the Association and the right for the public to know that we are all held to account for what we do. We have close involvement with the media and we endeavour to deal with all matters as they arrive. We issue statements, give interviews and generally are responsive to the need of media to cover our affairs. We have a respectful engagement with the various facets of media including TV, Radio and the written and photographic coverage of our games and the related matters and we are grateful to the media for that.

Television is a vital element in the wider engagement with our games. The recent switchover to digital should resolve historical matters and make wider access to televised games achievable. In the new arrangements this should allow everyone to tune into RTE, TG4 and TV3 in addition to our ongoing channels of BBC and UTV. The two potential issues is that we lose impact by having more TV but less focus on the games and secondly, there is the possibility that due to the digital constraints and scheduling will work against our best interests. BBC covered our Championship and the arrangements for post Ulster games worked well. They also covered the final of the MacRory Cup. We need to continue engaging with television to ensure that we get our deserved coverage. The position of UTV is progressing and we look forward to a robust engagement with them as they rebuild their capacity to present our games to their audience.

The media in general have afforded us excellent coverage and we pay tribute to the journalists, photographers, radio and television personnel for bringing out the build up

to games, reporting on the events and occasions and recoding for posterity our greatest moments as they occur. We particularly acknowledge the work of The Irish News in their intensive coverage for all aspect of our Associations affairs. We thank Oilibhear for all his excellent work as our Public Relations Officer. He has worked very closely with me and has been most helpful in dealing with all of the media. I would also like to thank Stephen Donnelly, Ryan Feeney, Niall Laird and Damian Kelly for their work and support in this area of operation.

The work of this committee in utilising advertising concepts, technology to great effect and its utilisation for improving the communication with our units and members through social media and also with the general public are central to its work. The Committee are innovative, motivated and completely focused on what we need to be doing to meet the modern marketing requirements. Technology is now firmly established as the main communication facility in many aspects of our daily communications with the Association, the media and the general public.

Comhbhrón

This has been a traumatic year for our Association as we bade farewell to many people who contributed to the GAA in so many ways. We extend our sympathy to everyone who suffered bereavement and particular to the family and friends of those who died in 2012. There have been many occasions where we have felt the sense of loss most acutely as we attended funerals and wakes to show our solidarity with the family in their darkest hours. The untimely death of Brian Og Maguire brought home the sense of loss very acutely when such a role model at the height of his athletic prowess was taken from our midst. We also had the death of Seamus Bonner from the Four Masters Club in Donegal who although gone from our midst has left a huge legacy due to his success both as a player and selector with his County.

Two men who had given a lifetime to promoting the GAA were Matt Fitzpatrick and Gerry Quinn; both were recognised administrators in their own right within Down also did an enormous amount of work in covering our games both great and small with equal enthusiasm. We shall miss their reports in various newspapers and other media outlets. They contributed, like countless others, to the richness and ethos of our Association and we are the better for their input to the organisation they loved. We also said farewell to Tommy Hall, who was an inspirational figure within his beloved St John's Club and the Association in Antrim and Ulster are the poorer for his death. The death of Anthony McSwiggan took another dedicated man to his reward and attending games in Derry shall not be the same in future.

All of Ulster and indeed Ireland was shocked at the tragic death of Ulster player Nevin Spence, his father Noel and brother Graham. Nevin had represented Ulster Rugby at the Belfast Interface games alongside our staff during the summer and made a positive impression on everyone he met. Ryan Feeney and Mickey Harte represented the GAA at

his funeral and the later memorial service at Ravenhill. The devastating events of that fateful day in September again showed the entire Community what a powerful force of unity Sport can be. I send my continued prayers and support to Nevin's mother Essie, his family, his team mates in the Ulster Rugby squad and all our colleagues at Ulster Rugby.

The Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for all the deceased members of our Association in the Chapel of St. Michael's College, Enniskillen on the morning of Convention at 11.00 a.m. It is hoped that all delegates can attend as a mark of respect for all our deceased members.

Conclusion

It is great to be alive. The year past has been challenging in every sense of the word but we live at a time where we need to reflect the interdependence of our Country and our people and on each other. We have the opportunity to build our Association for the future based on fairness and respect. This can be achieved by making our role in society as relevant to our principles and community needs as possible. We need to reflect on our heritage, our input to Ireland and our Diaspora in ensuring that we strategically put our games, language, culture and ethos at the centre of everything we do. The challenges for the Association are there but with self belief, relevance and determination we can plan for a future that ensures that the GAA is at the centre of community affairs for many years to come.

Is mise, le meas,

Dónall Ó Murchú, Rúnaí