



An Chomhdhail Bhliantúil 2012

Tuarascáil Bhliantúil An Runaí

A Chairde,

Sometimes it is better to have a vision for the future than to rely on our current or historic past. While all are important and we cannot choose to operate with indifference to who we are, where we came from or where we want to go and to this end we need to be confident of what we have achieved and more importantly be confident of our future, of our communities and above all the inherent ability of our people to build a future worthy of the land of Saints and Scholars. We are living in continuing challenging times but rather than looking back to what might have been let us look forward to establishing community and personal confidence that we can do better, be stronger and above all fairer to the society in which we abide. We need to sustain our industry and try to retain the generation of skilled young men and women who are emigrating in substantial numbers to the detriment of the Country and its' ability to generate employment and wealth. The future is in our hands and we must encourage our society, our community and membership that we can rebuild the confidence of our people in their own ability to establish a new society based on trust, respect and responsibility. We need to encourage our best people to become leaders in society by ensuring that they are valued and supported. We have many challenges ahead but provided we apply a proper attitude to all based on respect, rights and responsibilities in equal measure then we will ensure a society that we need and deserve and committed to the idealism that has been the driving force to the GAA since our foundation.

The past season has witnessed the Counties failure to win frontline championships but Donegal did win the Allianz Football League Division 2 title as well as reaching the All-Ireland semi final where they could have succeeded against the eventual winners Dublin. Crossmaglen Rangers returned to All-Ireland Championship success and Lisnakea Emmetts also emulated their success by winning the All-Ireland Intermediate title. The ladies of Lisnakea won the female equivalent while Sperrin Óg won the All-Ireland Junior title. In camogie, Eoghan Rua Coleraine collected the All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship. St. Colman's College retained the Hogan Cup and the performance of our schools and colleges have been encouraging for the future. Furthermore, Donegal collected the All-Ireland Vocational Schools title. In hurling, there were successes for Donegal in the Lory Meagher Cup, Tyrone in the Allianz Hurling League Division 4 and St Patricks Maghera collected the O'Keefe Cup.

Finance

The economic climate in 2011 has continued to have an affect on the council in its progress at delivering programmes and offering support to its constituent units. There remains to be a vast amount of investment in club and coaching development but this is restricted due to a decrease in our championship gates. The council endeavour to find a suitable pricing structure, through various initiatives, to encourage supporters out to our games. This has been evident in an increase other competition revenue. Ulster GAA received a rigorous governance and controls audit from consultants employed by Sport NI and a satisfactory assurance level was achieved which has

helped to maintain government support for staffing costs for 2011 and 2012.

The stewards, team officials and members of Comhairle Uladh give an enormous amount of time to act in many capacities such as stiles men, stewards, counters and supervisors throughout the year. We could not do without this outstanding input by a great team. We are also indebted to our staff, who have given generously of their time in working and in a voluntary capacity within the management and control of games and are actively involved in the delivery of key elements of the championship programme. We are also indebted to An Cisteoir, Micheal Ó hOsain, who gives generously of his time to the wider benefit of Comhairle Uladh and provides the necessary support and leadership in managing all aspects of our financial matters and for which we are deeply grateful to him including his work as Chairman of Coiste Airgeadas. We also acknowledge the input of Proinsias MacGabhan as Runai of the Committee and the members of the Committee for their help and active support for the work of the Council. I would also want to place on record our appreciation of Michelle McAleer who has ensured our financial governance is excellent and for her dedication and commitment far beyond the call of duty.

Comhairle Uladh finances are still dependant on the 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 €4,936,972 inclusive of all grants. Our gate income €1,193,905 represented 24% of this compared to 27% of the total income in 2010. In 2011 our grant income, €1,160,534 represents 24% of our total in comparison to 22%



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in 2010. The expenditure amounted to €4,821,924. In addition, the investment in Grounds and Infrastructure amounted €100,000. There was an operating surplus on the years working equating to €14,648. The monies from Ard Comhairle have also assisted in achieving our objectives but we need to be mindful that we are working to the interests of our Association in difficult economic times.

Games Activity

In 2011, the Anglo Celt Cup returned to Dún na nGall after a nineteen year absence, breaking the recent dominance of Ard Mhacha and Tír Eoghain in the Senior Football Championship. Aontroim again retained the Liam Harvey Cup, albeit the re-emergence of Ard Mhacha to the Ulster Senior Hurling Final was a welcome addition. The Ulster Club Championships returned to two familiar homes. Crossmaglen Rangers and Loughgiel Shamrocks both completed back to back successes in their respective codes. The attendances at our Ulster Club Championships continued to rise and we experienced the largest attendance at an Ulster Senior Football Club Final in quite some time when Crossmaglen defeated Burren at the recently refurbished Morgan Athletic Grounds.

At club level, there were again five divisions in the Ulster Senior Hurling Club League in 2011 with 61 teams competing. In 2012, this competition will include club teams from outside the province and will become known as the Táin Club Hurling League. With regard to the Ulster Football Club League, 2011 saw an increase in the number of teams participating, with a total of 59 clubs involved. This 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 2011, this amounted to 16,919 games in both codes at youth and adult level, with significantly 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 in their roles on the Competitions Control Committee in their respective counties.

Dún na nGall were our only representatives in the National Football League Finals, as they successfully defeated Laois in the Division 2 decider. With regard to hurling, I must commend Tír Eoghain for their success in the National Hurling League Division 4, while Doire were again unfortunately defeated in the Division 3A Final, this time by Cill Mhaintáin. Pride of place on the National stage in hurling must go to Dún na nGall who collected the Lory Meagher Cup by defeating Tír Eoghain in a highly entertaining final. Such a success highlights the dedication of this group as they had failed at the final stage in both 2009 to Tír Eoghain and 2010 to Longfort. Congratulations to all involved.

In our first competition of the year, the Dr McKenna Cup, Doire collected the title by defeating Tír Eoghain by 2-12 to 2-11 in a highly entertaining final at the Morgan Athletic Grounds. I also extend my gratitude to Barrett Sports Lighting for their sponsorship of this important competition in the Ulster GAA calendar.

Senior Football Championship

The 2011 Ulster Senior Football Championship commenced at Pairc MacCumhaill on Sunday 15th May, where Dún na nGall, fresh from their National League success, took on Aontroim. A late goal from Mark McHugh ensured that Dún na nGall progressed to the quarter finals on a scoreline of 1-10 to 0-07. One

week later, a first half onslaught by the Doire attack led by Eoin Bradley, laid the foundations for a comprehensive 1-18 to 1-10 victory over Fear Manach at Celtic Park. The following Saturday night, at the Morgan Athletic Grounds, Ard Mhacha defeated neighbours An Dún on a 1-15 to 1-10 scoreline. A first half goal from Brian McGuigan was effectively the difference in Healy Park eight days later, as Tír Eoghain withstood a late fightback from Muineachán to record a 1-13 to 1-11 victory. In the last quarter final, goals from Patrick McBrearty and Rory Kavanagh helped Dún na nGall defeat An Cabhán by 2-14 to 1-08 at Kingspan Breffni Park. Both semi finals were both staged at St Tiernach's Park, Clones and on Sunday 19th June, Doire blitzed Ard Mhacha in a resounding 3-14 to 1-11 success with Conleith Gilligan and Eoin Bradley in sparkling form. The following week, Dún na nGall defeated Tír Eoghain in a tighter affair with a last minute goal from Dermot Molloy proving to be the difference in a 2-06 to 0-09 victory.

The Ulster Final took place three weeks later where Dún na nGall and Doire met at St Tiernach's Park, Clones on Sunday 17th July. Over 27,000 spectators attended the Final on a day when the Ulster Senior Football Champions from 25 years previous, Tír Eoghain were honoured. It was also fitting that Uachtarán na hEireann, Mary McAleese was present in her last year in office in what was a memorable day for Ulster GAA. With the inclusion of honouring the successful teams from the past, Cumann na mBunscol exhibition games, Scór representation, 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 and an early second half penalty goal from Michael Murphy set the Tír Chonail



men on their way to a 1-11 to 0-08 victory. The scenes of jubilation at the final whistle epitomised the importance that counties place on an Ulster title. Congratulations go to Dún na nGall for a well deserved success.

All-Ireland Football Championship

The All-Ireland Football Championship for Ulster representatives began with five of our counties involved on Saturday 25th June. There were victories for Aontroim over Iar Mhí and for An Dún over An Clár. The other three Ulster counties were disappointingly defeated. An Cabhán were beaten by Longfort by 2-16 to 0-11 at Kingspan Breffni Park, Muineachán lost out to Uibh Fháili by 1-18 to 1-10 in Tullamore while Fear Manach were disappointingly beaten by Londáin in Ruislip by 0-16 to 0-09.

In the next round two weeks later, all Ulster teams remained in the race for Sam Maguire. Aontroim defeated Ceathearlach at Casement Park, An Dún defeated Liatroim at Pairc Esler while Tír Eoghain won away to Longfort. Ard Mhacha drew with Cill Mhantáin after extra time in a thrilling encounter at the Morgan Athletic Grounds. The following weekend, the Orchard County made no mistake in Aughrim as they collected a 2-09 to 0-10 victory. On the same day, An Dún finished with a late goal surge to defeat Aontroim by 3-13 to 0-10 at Casement Park.

The following weekend, beaten Ulster finalists Doire were defeated by Cill Dara by 0-19 to 0-13 at Croke Park. On the same billing, the All-Ireland finalists from the previous year faced up to one another, with a similar result, albeit by a considerably different margin. Corcaigh

defeated An Dún by 2-20 to 0-14 on an extremely disappointing day for the Mournemen. Tír Eoghain and Ard Mhacha squared up to one another in a great game. Goals from Joe McMahon and Tommy McGuigan were crucial as they ran out 2-13 to 0-13 winners in front of a large crowd at Healy Park.

The following weekend Tír Eoghain and Dún na nGall were both part of a triple header at Croke Park. Tír Eoghain showed positive signs that they could progress further as they defeated Ros Comáin by 3-19 to 1-14 while in the Quarter Final, Ulster champions Dún na nGall edged out beaten Leinster finalists, Cill Dara by 1-12 to 0-14 after extra time. A week later, Tír Eoghain faced Baile Átha Cliath in the Quarter Final and despite scoring fifteen points, they were well beaten on a 0-22 to 0-15 scoreline. Dún



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na nGall would meet this challenge three weeks later. In a tense affair, Baile Átha Cliath finished strongly to eventually see off the Ulster champions, by 0-08 to 0-06 and thus, end Ulster's involvement in the All-Ireland series. Baile Átha Cliath went on to claim the Sam Maguire after a sixteen year wait.

As regards the 2011 All Stars, I extend my congratulations to the three Dún na nGall players who received awards. Well done to Neil McGee, Kevin Cassidy and Karl Lacey. Special mention also to Liam Watson (Aontroim) who was called up as a late replacement for the hurling All Star Trip to San Francisco at the end of 2011.

Minor Football Championship

The competitiveness of the Ulster Minor Football Championship was illustrated in the Preliminary Round when Aontroim travelled to Pairc Mac Cumhaill and defeated Dún na nGall on a 2-09 to 1-07 scoreline. The following week, the surprises continued as Fear Manach defeated a highly fancied Doire side in Celtic Park on a 1-09 to 0-07 scoreline. The following Saturday night, we were treated to the game of the Minor Football Championship. Despite conceding five goals and trailing by eleven points at one stage, Ard Mhacha somehow recovered to emerge 3-11 to 5-04 winners over An Dún at the Morgan Athletic Grounds. The following day, An Cabhán defeated Aontroim at Pairc Esler by 2-11 to 2-02 while Tír Eoghain beat Muineachán by 0-15 to 1-05 at Brewster Park to complete the semi final line up.

In the first semi final, Ard Mhacha produced a great team performance to comfortably defeat Fear Manach by 2-18 to 0-07 at St Tiernach's Park, Clones. A fortnight later, two second half goals proved to be the difference as An Cabhán saw off the challenge from Tír Eoghain on a 2-13 to 2-10 at Brewster Park,

Enniskillen. The final meeting between An Cabhán and Ard Mhacha was eagerly awaited and it was certainly a game of two halves. After dominating the first half, Ard Mhacha were in pole position at half time but a resurgent An Cabhán side were not to be denied as they emerged victorious on a 0-12 to 1-06 scoreline. Congratulations to An Cabhán for a well deserved success. As Ulster champions, An Cabhán took on Gaillimh at Longford in an All-Ireland Quarter Final. The concession of a goal was the difference in a tight contest as they were defeated by 1-09 to 0-09. On the same day, beaten Ulster finalists Ard Mhacha lost out in a thrilling encounter at Croke Park. They lost out by the narrowest margin to Ros Comáin on a 3-10 to 0-18 scoreline after extra time.

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 9th March, Doire defeated Ard Mhacha by 2-10 to 3-03 in terrible weather conditions at Celtic Park. On Wednesday 16th March, the four quarter finals took place. There were wins for An Cabhán, Dún na nGall and Muineachán while An Dún and Tír Eoghain played out a draw after extra time in Pairc Esler. The following week at Healy Park, the sides still could not be separated as they drew 1-11 to 0-14 after extra time. At the third time of asking, this time at the Morgan Athletic Grounds, Tír Eoghain emerged victorious on a 1-15 to 1-10 scoreline, bringing an end a trilogy of brilliant football that was a real tribute to both counties. In the semi finals, An Cabhán defeated the reigning

champions, Dún na nGall in Brewster Park while Tír Eoghain beat Muineachán at the same venue. The following week, An Cabhán and Tír Eoghain played out a highly entertaining encounter in front of a large crowd at Brewster Park. An early goal from half forward Niall Murray proved to be vital as the Breffni men collected the title on a 1-10 to 0-10 scoreline. The scenes of joy from their supporters at the final whistle illustrated the importance of this success, and the county would gain further success later in the year with their minor team. This was a tremendous success for An Cabhán and augurs well for the future.

In the All-Ireland semi final played at Parnell Park three days later, An Cabhán defeated Loch Garman by 1-10 to 0-8 to complete a remarkable week. The final was fixed for Croke Park and they came up against a strong Gaillimh side. The Tribesmen proved to be too strong as they ran out deserving winners on a 2-16 to 1-09 scoreline. They may have fell at the final hurdle but the big challenge for An Cabhán is for this team to progress through to the senior ranks in years to come.

Club Football Championship

The Ulster Club Championship evidently has that lure for our supporters and the local aspect means that all clubs can aspire to the greatest stage throughout the province and indeed, Croke Park. In the Preliminary Round, first time winners of Dún na nGall, Glenswilly surprisingly defeated Cavan Gaels by 1-08 to 0-10 at Kingspan Breffni Park. In the first of the Quarter Finals, the 2010 All-Ireland champions, Crossmaglen Rangers at Casement Park. The Armagh side displayed ruthless efficiency as they carved out a 3-09 to 2-06 success with relative ease. In the other Quarter Finals, there were wins for Burren over Roslea, Latton over Glenswilly and Ballinderry against

Dromore in a great game of football. At the Semi Final stage, Crossmaglen held off a strong second half comeback from Ballinderry as they ran out 0-16 to 1-10 winners at Casement Park. In the other game, Burren had to do likewise as Latton finished strongly, but it wasn't enough as the Down champions edged it by 1-10 to 0-11 at the Morgan Athletic Grounds. After both clubs agreed to toss for the venue for the decider, the Morgan Athletic Grounds was the choice. Crossmaglen again illustrated all their guile and craft as they kept Burren at a safe distance in a 2-11 to 0-10 success and a subsequent ninth Seamus McFerran cup.

In the Intermediate Football Club Championship, the standard of this year's championship was of a very high standard. In the Preliminary Round, All Saints Ballymena travelled to Kingspan Breffni Park and easily defeated Drumgoon by 2-12 to 0-07. In the Quarter Finals, there were victories for Culloville, Carrickmacross, Craigbane and All Saints. In the Semi Finals, Culloville needed extra time to overcome All Saints by 2-11 to 0-12 while Culloville easily defeated Carrickmacross by 1-14 to 0-09. In the Final, played on a terrible night in Healy Park, Craigbane edged out the Armagh champions on a 0-06 to 0-05 scoreline to collect the Patrick McCully Cup.

In the Junior Football Championship, there was no representation from Fear Manach so there was no requirement for a Preliminary Round. In the Quarter Finals, there were wins for Eire Og, Burt and Derrytresk while Cremartin and Shercock played out a 2-11 to 1-14 draw at Kingspan Breffni Park. In the replay at Clones the following weekend, Cremartin emerged victorious by 1-07 to 1-03. In the Semi Finals, there were relatively easy victories for both Derrytresk and Cremartin over Eire Og and Burt

respectively. The Junior Final was played as the curtain raiser to the senior decider at the Morgan Athletic Grounds, and it was Derrytresk who held on to record a 2-05 to 0-10 victory, and thus, collect the Paul Kerr Cup.

All-Ireland Club Football Championship

Crossmaglen Rangers defeated Kilmacud Crokes at Navan on a 2-11 to 1-12 scoreline to reach another All-Ireland decider on St Patricks Day. They produced another strong team performance in the final against Connacht champions, St Brigids. Well taken goals from Aaron Cunningham and Jamie Clarke ensured that the Andy Merrigan cup would return to Crossmaglen for another year. Congratulations to all involved in another tremendous success for Crossmaglen.

In the All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship, Lisnaskea Emmetts made it a double for Ulster as they defeated St James' from Galway in the All-Ireland Final on a scoreline of 1-16 to 0-15 after extra time at Croke Park. I must congratulate Lisnaskea on becoming the first club from the county to win an All-Ireland club title.

In the junior grade, Swanlinbar fell at the final hurdle to a very strong St Mary's Cahirciveen side also played at Croke Park.

Senior Hurling Championship

The 2011 Championship commenced on 14th May with First Round games involving Dún na nGall and An Dún, Tír Eoghain and Doire and Fear Manach and Ard Mhacha. In the first game at Letterkenny, An Dún defeated the home side by 3-16 to 1-13. In Healy Park, Tír Eoghain were defeated by Doire by 2-13 to 0-06 and in Brewster Park, Ard Mhacha had a comfortable 5-19 to 5-06 victory over Fear Manach.

The Quarter Final stage saw comprehensive victories for Ard Mhacha over Muineachán (2-18 to 2-06) at Pairc Esler and An Dún over Doire (3-19 to 1-09), at Casement Park. The Semi Final saw a massive shock with Ard Mhacha defeating neighbours An Dún by 0-14 to 1-10 at Casement Park. This result saw Ard Mhacha qualifying for their first Ulster Senior Hurling Championship Final since 1946. This was a remarkable achievement by the Orchard County and is a testament for all the good developmental work being done within the county. Three weeks later, Aontroim defeated Ard Mhacha by 2-20 to 2-12 at Casement Park, to collect another Liam Harvey Cup. Congratulations to Aontroim on securing another Ulster title.

All-Ireland Hurling Championship

Aontroim were involved in the McCarthy Cup where they were drawn against Iar Mhí in the First Round. In a thoroughly entertaining game that was played at Casement Park, Aontroim progressed to the next stage by 2-25 to 1-19. The following weekend, Aontroim again had home advantage as they defeated Ceatharlach by 0-23 to 1-12. However, a fortnight later, the Saffron County were well beaten by Luimneach at Parnell Park, going down on a 3-22 to 0-12 scoreline.

In the Christy Ring Cup, An Dún, Doire and Ard Mhacha were Ulster's representatives. Ironically, Ard Mhacha were eliminated courtesy of a defeat to An Dún at Ballycran on a scoreline of 1-19 to 0-06. An Mhí defeated Doire at Banagher on a 4-18 to 1-13 scoreline while a fortnight later, Ciarraí defeated An Dún by 1-18 to 1-17 at Pairc Esler to end the interest of all Ulster counties in this competition.

The Nicky Rackard Cup saw Muineachán as the only competitors from the province. After a good victory over



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Fingal, they were defeated by 2-17 to 1-13 by An Lú at Clones to bring their ambitions to a conclusion.

In the Lory Meagher Cup, Ulster had four representatives –Dún na nGall, Fear Manach, Tír Eoghain and An Dún Theas. An Dún Theas were eliminated by Dún na nGall on a scoreline of 1-15 to 1-12 at Pairc Esler, while Fear Manach were defeated by Warwickshire in the Quarter Final by 4-08 to 1-10 at Brewster Park. In an all Ulster final at Croke Park, Dún na nGall finished strongly to emerge 2-12 to 0-17 winners over Tír Eoghain in a fantastic game of hurling. Congratulations to Dún na nGall.

Minor Hurling Championship

All nine counties competed in the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship in 2011. As in the Senior Championship, Aontroim got a bye into the Ulster Minor Hurling Championship Final. In the First Round, there was a notable victory for An Cabhán over Muineachan at Kingspan Breffni Park (3-06 to 1-07). Elsewhere, there were facile victories for Dóire, An Dún and Ard Mhacha which did nothing for the victors or their defeated opponents. In the quarter finals, Ard Mhacha easily defeated An Cabhán, while Dóire saw off An Dún by 2-19 to 2-09 at Casement Park. In the semi final, Dóire defeated Ard Mhacha by 1-14 to 1-08 to reach the final. Aontroim displayed

all their skill to run out comprehensive victors in the final on a scoreline of 4-17 to 1-08. Congratulations to Aontroim. In the All-Ireland Quarter Final, Aontroim were obliterated by Gaillimh by 8-26 to 0-12 at Parnell Park, illustrating the gap that currently exists at this level.

Under 21 Hurling Championship

Four Ulster counties competed in the Under 21 Championship, which was played on a knock out basis again. The First Round brought Ard Mhacha and Under 21 Shield winners Dún na nGall together, with Ard Mhacha progressing on a scoreline of 2-21 to 1-06 at Healy Park. At a late stage, Doire notified Comhairle Uladh that they were unable to field which was extremely disappointing and surely alarming for the future of hurling development within the Oak Leak County. In the semi final, Ard Mhacha had a fine win over An Dún by 1-11 to 0-10 at Casement Park to set up a final meeting with Aontroim. The Ulster Final produced a great game and a late rally from Aontroim ensured that it was them who took the title courtesy of a 0-15 to 2-07 victory. In the All-Ireland Semi Final, Aontroim came up against Baile Átha Cliath as they suffered a devastating 3-23 to 0-06 defeat at Pairc Esler.

Under 21 Hurling Shield

In the Ulster Under 21 Hurling Shield Semi Finals, Dún na nGall defeated

Muineachán by 2-13 to 1-11 at St Tiernachs Park and Tír Eoghain beat Fear Manach by 6-14 to 2-06 at Killyclogher. The Shield Final between Dún na nGall and Tír Eoghain was played as a curtain raiser to the Ulster Senior Football Championship Semi Final between the same two counties at St Tiernachs Park and it was a superb contest. In a game that ebbed and flowed from start to finish, Dún na nGall edged out their neighbours by 4-16 to 3-18 after extra time. They went on to compete in the All-Ireland Under 21 'B' Championship, where they were defeated in the Semi Final by Iar Mhí by 4-24 to 3-15 at Ballinamore.

Club Hurling Championship

In the Ulster Senior Club Championship, Antrim Champions, Loughgiel Shamrocks, emerged as victors after defeating Kevin Lynch's in the Semi Final followed by a victory over Ballycran, to collect back to back titles. In the Intermediate Club Hurling Championship, Armagh champions Middletown emerged as champions by defeating Castleblayney in the final. In the Ulster Club Junior Hurling Championship, Burt won their first ever Provincial title after defeating Kickhams Creggan after a replay by 2-10 to 0-13 in the final at the Morgan Athletic Grounds. The presence of club teams from Ard Mhacha, Dún na nGall and Muineachán in the respective finals is extremely

encouraging for the future of club hurling in the province.

All-Ireland Club Hurling Championship

Loughgiel Shamrocks were Ulster's representatives in the All-Ireland Club Championship, having won the 2010 Ulster Club Championship. In the All-Ireland Semi Final on 19th February, they came up against a strong O'Loughlin Gaels side and were defeated by 3-10 to 0-09 at Parnell Park. In the All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship Ulster Champions Naomh Eoin lost out to Kilkenny champions, Dicksboro in the Semi Final at Mullingar on a 0-16 to 1-09 scoreline. On the same day at the same venue, Inniskeen were defeated by John Lockes on a 3-12 to 1-08 scoreline in the All-Ireland Junior Club Hurling Championship Semi Final.

Inter Provincial Championships

The Inter Provincial Championships in both football and hurling did again not take place in 2011. As the current holders of the Football competition, we have always been committed to both these championships and we are delighted that they are in the 2012 fixture calendar and hopefully, this is a permanent measure to ensure that this important competition with a rich history continues.

Referees

The past year has been a tense one for referees with a number of cases where the referees authority has been challenged and in some cases physically challenged. This is not acceptable in our Association and outlines the need to work on building respect through recognition of rights and responsibilities of all involved. It is the referees responsibility to ensure that our games are played in accordance with the rules and to achieve this position requires the

respect and support of players, mentors and administrators alike towards the referee, the games and the concept of fair play. We are extremely fortunate in Ulster to have a panel of referees who are willing and able to officiate at the vast amount of games under our control in both codes. Special mention must go to Joe McQuillan (An Cabhán) and Padraig Hughes (Ard Mhacha) who took charge of the All-Ireland Senior and Minor Football Finals respectively.

Our Referees Committee do a fine job in the recruitment, training and assessment of our referees and we are indebted to those that work to support the referee. Paul Doris, Michael Hughes and Frank McDonald have worked diligently to support the referee in every way throughout the year and I would like to record our gratitude to them for their work. The Chairman of our Referees Committee, Joe Jordan and has been totally committed to all aspects of refereeing. He has been fully supported throughout by our Referees Administrator and Secretary, Tiernach Mahon. We are grateful to them both and to their Committee for all their work in this vital area of activity, especially for their efforts in the recruitment process. We thank our referees for their time, commitment and involvement in the delivery of our games programme and also acknowledge the continued 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.

Education

Education remains an important sector encompassing a number of critical areas of operation of Council Business. The Second Level Schools Committee Chaired by Sean Ó Duibhánigh is operational and works in conjunction with the two schools bodies in the delivery of

games activity. The Vocational Schools Committee and the Ulster Colleges Council are still active and administer a great amount of competitive activity to meet the demands within their respective education environments. We recognise the input from teachers and support staff in this regard.

The work of Cumann na mBunscol in overseeing the work in the Primary Schools continues to develop and ensures the vital promotion and development of our games. We are deeply grateful for the remarkable work of our Primary Schools and thank the teachers, support staff and local club school links for the excellent work that they do.

We work with the Third Level Colleges and Universities to ensure that all standards are developed as this group plays a central part in the future interests of our Clubs. Again we have operated the Scholarship programme Bursary Scheme an indication of our commitment. Our Drink, Drugs and Sausage rolls campaign was again rolled out in 2011 to raise awareness of lifestyle management among young people. We thank our Comhairle Ard Oidheachas Uladh for their immense amount of work in this sector.

Hurling Development

Ulster GAA continues to invest significant resources into the development of Hurling. Five newly designed coaching courses specific to Hurling were developed and well attended. Two new Hurling road shows were also organised in addition to an excellent Hurling Development day for Development squads in Armagh organised by Ronan McWilliams.

The Ulster Minor Hurling League was played during March. Division One involved Armagh, Down and eventual



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winner Antrim. Division Two was won by Tyrone. The Ulster Senior Club Hurling League continues to provide much needed hurling games for our club teams, with a total of 61 teams participating in five Divisions. During June, all Ulster Hurling staff organised an Under 16 (9-a-side) blitz competition with each of the county champions qualifying for the Ulster Finals day on 18th June. County Development Squad blitz competitions were held at U-14, U-15, U-16 & U-17 levels. Our counties continue to put a lot of effort into this area of development, however in some cases the number of players is low and there is a struggle to maintain teams in certain age groups, this is being reviewed for 2012. The annual Under 16 residential 'Elite Camp' was once again held at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, 42 young hurlers from across Ulster attended the camp. Following on from the elite camp for Under-16 hurlers, at the beginning of July, two teams were selected to play Connacht teams in two challenge games to promote hurling for the province's talented young players

The Poc Fada was played in perfect conditions over Divis Mountain, just outside Belfast, Derry's Ruairi Convery had to fight off stiff competition as he claimed his third Ulster Poc Fada title in a row.

After undergoing a successful re-vamp in 2010, Féile Uladh 2011 took place on Saturday 30th April in venues throughout Ulster.

Féile Uladh has been a regular feature on the Ulster Hurling Calendar since the late 90's when the competition was organised as a prelude to Ulster hosting the National Féile competition. However after much debate the competition was modernised last year and is now held over two weekends, with group stages being played to decide the finalists.

The third Ulster Provincial U-10 Indoor Hurling Blitz took place on Saturday 12th March, in the Meadowbank Sports Arena, Magherafelt. This year we had 756 players playing on 90 teams from 43 Clubs from across the Province which participated in a 'FUN' Centred Blitz. There was a total of 220 games played over the 3hrs with all teams showing great skill and commitment

Through work with Ulster Colleges, Regional Hurling staff have assisted with the amalgamation of a number of colleges. Down Colleges played in the Mageean Cup, and Tyrone Colleges played in the Casement Cup. This has proved to be a very worthwhile exercise as the players involved would never have had the opportunity to compete at these levels and both Down and Tyrone will use the players to form U-17 Development Squads. Donegal have formed an amalgamation college's team in Inis Eoghan at both Under 13 and Under 15 levels.

The ongoing significant work of the Hurling Development Committee Chaired by Martin McAviney and the Hurling Development Staff led by Jimmy Darragh underlines Ulster GAA's continued commitment to our National Game.

Community Development

Community Outreach and Engagement: 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 based on mutual respect and tolerance for everyone in the community. To this end we continue to work strongly at promoting engagement and involvement of non traditional GAA individuals and groups through a number of programmes.

Ulster GAA also continued to support various organisations ranging from local

government, the Rural Development Network, Church of Ireland and the Community Relations Council in organising good relations events and seminars aimed at educating and engaging with new people. I would like to put on record our gratitude to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade who fund part of these projects through the Reconciliation Fund and I would also thank Central Council and in particular, Director General Paraic Duffy for its continued support in all of this work.

Cuchulainn Cup:

The Foyle Cuchulainns were this year's winners of the Cross Community Hurling and Gaelic Football tournament which was held in the Mid Ulster Sports Arena in Cookstown. We had a significant increase in our participants this year with over 240 children from both the maintained and controlled education sectors attending the competition. I would thank all the teachers, partners and governors from across the education sector who continue to support this important project

Roe Valley Cuchulainn Tour:

Now in its fourth year, the Cuchulainn Tour aims to promote Gaelic Games to those from a non-traditional GAA background while promoting good relations within the GAA. This year five schools participated in the project: Limavady Grammar School, Limavady High School, Rossmar Special School, St. Mary's Limavady and St. Patrick's College Dungiven. The team which comprised of boys from each school and 1 teacher travelled to Boston in August representing Ulster in the 2012 Continental Youth Championships. The results on the field of play did not reflect the friendships developed and the hard work undertaken in the roll out of this project. Our relationship with Boston College allowed the group to use the College facilities

and get a tour of Fenway Park as part of the tour programme. I am grateful to the School Principals and teachers who engaged with us for this project and to Maura McMenamin and Stephen Donnelly who acted as Tour Managers for the trip along with Paul Callaghan who trained and managed the team. We have now completed the four year cycle for this programme and are reviewing the future of the project, it is however my view that it will continue in a different format for the foreseeable future.

Sport 4 Change, the Game of 3 Halves:

We have established a working group with both the Community Relations departments in Ulster Rugby and the IFA called Sport 4 Change, which has been put in place to oversee the operations of the Game of 3 Halves project. Chaired by Trevor Ringland the group comprises of representatives from Ulster GAA, Ulster Rugby, IFA and Peaceplayers International. We hope to further formalise this arrangement in the coming years. We organised several events over the past year that involved a cross community and good relations focus and tremendous work has been invested by the three governing bodies to ensure we are promoting a shared future and educating our young people in the areas of tolerance and respect.

Strategic Development:

Over the last year there has been significant progress on the implementation of the Ulster GAA Provincial Strategy "Teaghlai agus Pobail An Fabraic de CLG" so much so that it is now my view that we need to start developing a new strategic plan for the Ulster Council by the end of 2012 with a view to launching the plan in mid 2013. I commend the Officers, Members and Staff of Ulster GAA for their significant work in implementing the recommendations of our strategy.

Ulster GAA has now met all the Strategic targets set out in the National Strategic Action Plan and Vision and we continue to be a model for best practice and innovation. 2012 sees the conclusions of three five year strategies in Derry, Cavan and Antrim and all three Counties are in the process of developing new plans that will direct the work of their County Committees until 2017. The Derry plan has been completed and it is ambitious and forward looking vision for the Oak Leaf County and I wish them every success in their endeavours. I would like to recognise and thank the Honorary Strategic Advisor of Ulster GAA Mark Conway for his continued input into this process in a voluntary capacity.

Public Affairs:

Ulster GAA continues to engage with the Public sector to heighten awareness of our Association and its positive contribution to our society. Over the last year an Ulster GAA delegation engaged with the following Committees:

- Presentation on GAA Community Engagement to the Oireachtas Committee on the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement
- Presentation to the Assembly Committee for Social Development on Licensing Law for Social Clubs
- Presentation to the Assembly Committee on Culture, Arts and Leisure on the Casement Park Stadium Development

An Ulster GAA delegation gave a presentation to Secretary of State, Owen Patterson and his officials on the GAA's voluntary and community model. Ulster GAA also continues to have ongoing engagement with the following government agencies:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- North South Ministerial Council
- Department of Cultural, Arts and Leisure
- Department of Education
- Department of Social Development
- Sport NI
- Office the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- Department of Finance and Personnel
- Department of Environment, Community and Local Government
- Department of the Environment

Ongoing engagement takes place on a weekly basis with local government in both jurisdictions throughout the Province. The Public Affairs work of Ulster GAA is core business and vitally important to ensure that the GAA remains relevant and important within the public sector.

Urban Development

Belfast:

We have made steady progress in relation to the improved promotion of the GAA in Ireland's second City. The commitment by Belfast City Council to invest significant funding into the development of facilities for Gaelic Games is a welcome development, our plans to develop the Woodlands site into an Urban GAA Participation Centre will have significant benefits for the homeless schools and Clubs in Belfast and we also hope to develop a strategic alliance with St. Mary's University College to ensure that the students who value Gaelic Games in this important institution are catered for.

The plans to develop the pitches on the Cherryvale site are also a welcome development and we are working with both Bredagh GAA and St. Malachy's GAA to ensure that needs of both Clubs are catered for and achieved on the site.

The plans to develop the Cliftonville site is also a positive development and will



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allow both Ardoyne Kickhams GAA and Pearse's GAA use of the site and access to a floodlit GAA facility. St. Brigids GAA Club is one of the largest in Ulster with nearly 1000 members, the plans to extend their current provision at Musgrave Park will hopefully see the development of a second pitch and a Club House.

The commitment by Central Council for €1 million from the GAA to contribute to this development is a very positive development and I am grateful to the Director General Paraic Duffy for his ongoing support to the Belfast GAA urban project. These developments in addition to new pitches in Falls Park and the Ozone site are a good start by Belfast City Council to address its historical under provision for Gaelic Games. A good and constructive relationship currently exists with the Council and its Officials and I would recognise all the Counsellors who have supported our lobbying efforts, I would also thank Peter McNaney and Andrew Hazard for their continued efforts.

Derry City:

We continue to invest in and support the development of Clubs in Derry City. The recent strategic review of pitch provision by the City Council is a very welcome development and we have

been engaging with both the Clubs in the City and the Derry GAA County Committee to ensure that Gaelic Games are appropriately catered for in any new development plans. I would like to record my thanks to Barry O'Hagan, Head of Sports Development at Derry City Council for his continued support.

I remain concerned at the lack of investment and indeed support from Derry City Council for Celtic Park. Significant GAA and Public investment has resulted in Derry GAA developing a state of the art stadium, to date Derry City Council have invested nothing in Derry's County Ground. We have proposals in place to complete the redeveloped stadium, the plans are focused on player provision and administration. I hope that Derry City Council will look favourably on investing in this project to ensure that all sports in Derry City receive equity when it comes to local government investment.

The fire at Sean Dolan's GAA was a significant set back for Gaelic Games in the Creggan area. We have been meeting officials from the Club over the last few weeks and I hope that Sean Dolan's will shortly be in a position to rise from the ashes and come back bigger and stronger.

Live to Play:

There was a continued reduction of the numbers killed on our roads during 2011, and Ulster GAA remained a key player in supporting this reduction through it's Live to Play campaign. Launched in 2010, the Campaign has proven a huge success, gaining recognition from those involved in Road Safety including Government Departments in both jurisdictions and the Emergency services.

A successful funding application to DOE enabled each of our County grounds to be furnished with Live to Play pitch-side signage, reinforcing the messages delivered on Club Education nights. It also afforded the opportunity to run a Poster Competition for Primary and National schools in Ulster. Over 20,000 children took part in the competition with 18 schools, 2 in each County, emerging as winners. Prizes for winners were 'reflective' Live to Play backpacks and the 540 recipients are now safer on our Roads during the winter months. Such was the success of this competition that Ulster GAA will run a similar one in 2012.

The Live to Play Club Education events have now taken place in 7 of our 9 Counties and are making a significant impact among our young drivers in

particular. These events, delivered by an Garda Síochána, PSNI and NI Fire & Rescue Service, take place on a regional basis and to date over 30 have taken place across the Province. We are indebted to the emergency services for their involvement in this programme, which has undoubtedly saved lives. Significant praise must also go to our Live to Play County co-ordinators for their enormous efforts in organising events in conjunction with Ulster GAA. My thanks go to Brian Armitage (Fermanagh), Paul Gaile (Derry), Tony McCollum (Antrim), Cuthbert Donnelly (Tyrone), Anthony Crozier (Down), Mick McGrath (Donegal) and Liam McCabe (Cavan). Sincere thanks also to Kieran Kennedy and O'Neill's for their continued support and sponsorship of the Live to Play initiative. I hope that with our continued efforts 2012 will see a further reduction in traffic collisions, resulting in loss of life and serious injury, so that no more families suffer the devastation which has been seen in the past.

Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Courses:

Ulster GAA welcomed an approach from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to undertake a pilot programme on Defibrillator and CPR training. This programme has been sometime in planning but we are now delighted to be in the position to have 12 tutors trained to deliver AED training to Clubs.

The GAA community in Ulster witnessed a number of occasions in the past year where a defibrillator was called upon to assist a member in cardiac arrest. Tragically it did not save lives in each case but thankfully there are members alive today as a result of a defibrillator being present and trained users there to administer help. These incidents show

the value of having this important piece of equipment on site at GAA events, and the training now offered by Ulster GAA will ensure that members are trained and confident to use it. The programme is currently in pilot phase but by the end of February 240 Club officers will have availed of training and close to 50 Clubs better placed to deal with an emergency situation. Following a review with the Department it is hoped that this programme will be expanded to more Clubs in Ulster. Ulster GAA is also seeking similar opportunities for Clubs in the Southern jurisdiction.

Drink, Drugs, Sausage Rolls:

Squareball.com continued it's support of Ulster GAA's Student Health Programme; Drink, Drugs and Sausage Rolls. Now in it's fifth year the programme continues to capture the imagination of new and returning students alike. The programme aims to encourage students to enjoy their time in College, while at the same time living a healthy life. This is undoubtedly a challenge as student life is traditionally associated with unhealthy behaviours. However, such is the design and language of Drink, Drugs and Sausage Rolls that it appears this programme is making an impact.

2011 was the most successful year of the programme to date, with over 2000 materials distributed and over 1890 students entering the competition across each of the 6 university campuses. Further information was distributed to students online after the events to reinforce the messages delivered on Fresher Fayre days.

Social Initiative:

The GAA's Social Initiative has entered it's 3rd year and 35 Ulster Clubs are now involved in the programme. The Social Initiative came about following an approach from Iar-Uachtarain Mary

McAleese and her husband Martin for the GAA to seek opportunities for older people to be integrated back into Club and community life. As always the GAA answered the call and numerous events have taken place across the country under the Social Initiative umbrella. Many Clubs have taken older members to Croke Park for a match or stadium tour, others have held music sessions, historical walks or bingo! There is no limit to the types of things clubs are doing and all are to be commended for encouraging older people back to the centre of Club life.

The President welcomed all Social Initiative GAA Clubs to Aras an Uachtarain in July for what was a most memorable day for all involved. The annual seminar took place in October and was well supported by Clubs and organisations with an interest in the Initiative. The GAA is an Association which prides itself in being 'Lifelong' and it is therefore fitting that we now have a structured programme to encourage participation for older people. I am grateful to Cuthbert Donnelly for taking up the role of Ulster Social Initiative Representative, alongside Aileen Cummins, and both work hard to assist Sean Kilbride at National Level to implement this initiative. The structure however still requires the involvement of County officers and I urge each Ulster County to appoint an officer to support Clubs in facilitating this very important programme.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) Programme:

The ASAP programme has been in existence but is at the very heart of the GAA's community based Health agenda. Trends across the Country still reflect Ireland as one of the highest binge drinking nations in the world, whilst drug taking continues to rise. The ASAP programme was established to reduce





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the harm caused by the abuse of Alcohol and Drugs, and officers in Clubs and Counties across Ulster continue to strive to ensure this happens.

I am delighted to say that each Ulster County has an ASAP officer working diligently to ensure the implementation of the programme among Clubs. Many Clubs now have a Policy in place with an officer in charge of it's implementation. This is a significant step in preventing alcohol or drug related incidents occurring in the first instance, and protecting the club should they arise at any time.

I welcome to the Programme National Co-ordinator Colin Regan, who replaces Brendan Murphy in this role. Brendan has established a sound base for the programme and should enable Colin to fit comfortably into his role. Already the imaginative 'Off the Booze, On the Ball' initiative has resulted in thousands of GAA members going off alcohol for the month of January and this type of programme can only bring good news to ASAP and the GAA. The ASAP programme, set against the backdrop of a drinking culture in Ireland, is never going to be an overnight success, however significant strides have already been made and I am confident that in years to come we will see the fruits of our labours in this area.

Children's Health Booklet:

I am delighted to welcome on board Airtricity as sponsors of Ulster GAA's Children's Health Booklet. As a result of their investment, 10,000 copies of the resource will go into Primary, National and Bunscoileanna across Ulster. The resource is a fun and interactive learning tool for Children to encourage them to live a healthy life, eating a balanced diet. It has been produced in both English and as Gaeilge, ensuring that the all education sectors can benefit from it.

The resource also contains information for parents and we see this as a critical element in ensuring that the learning in school is continued at home. Crucially the messages are also reinforced by the GAA coaches in schools, creating a role modelling experience which we hope the young children will follow as they move through their GAA experience. This resource and the Council were highly commended by past Education Minister Caitriona Ruane as an example of best practice in the area.

Club Officer Training Programme:

Last year 969 club officers attended the annual Club Officer Training Programme which was delivered in all nine counties of Ulster. The Programme has been receiving very positive feedback from club officials and the 2012 Programme is already well underway.

The format for 2011 included training for club officers new to their role. This role specific training includes workshops for eight club roles including Chairpersons, Secretaries, PROs, Treasurers, Coaching Officers, Child Protection Officers, Culture and Community Officers, and Development Officers. In 2011 76 people from across 58 clubs attended training, in 2012 this number rose to 161 from across 72 clubs, demonstrating the need and desire for this important training.

The Club Officer Development Course held in each of the nine counties in 2011 were exceptionally well received by all counties. Run on Saturday mornings from January to April, 969 club officers attended to receive two plenary sessions on 'The self Sufficient and Stronger GAA Club' and 'Live to Play Campaign'. As part of this training four workshops were delivered on: Creating a Club Development Plan, Raising Funds in 2011, Applying for Club Maith and Child Protection.

In 2012, the Club Officer Development Course is already being rolled out across Ulster. The themes for this year's training include plenary sessions on: the One Club Model, Club Development Plans, Discipline and Respect in the GAA Club. There are five workshops as part of this training including: Apply for Club Maith, Club Finance, Club Health Matters, Club Insurance and Designated Officer Training in Child Protection.

New in 2012, was the addition of a County Officer Network which took place in St Patrick's Grammar School in Armagh. This network aimed to bring together county officers to discuss timely issues and to establish relationship and links with officers from other counties. 160 people attended this session with feedback extremely positive with many county officers recommending this as a vital annual event.

There is a lot of hard work put into organising the Officer Training Programme and I acknowledge the efforts of the organising team led by Sharon Haughey, Aileen Cummins, Maura McMenamin, and Ryan Feeney. Thanks also to all the facilitators who helped out with workshops during 2011 and 2012 including volunteer facilitators: Brendan Kirk, Mark Conway, Gerard Bradley, Clíodhna Kerr, Jarlath Burns, Gerard Bradley. Staff facilitators included: Ryan Feeney, Aileen Tohill, Sharon Haughey, Maura McMenamin, Gerry McClory, Paul Callaghan, Diarmaid Marsden, Shane McCann, Geraldine McKavanagh and Kathy Kelly.

Thanks to all those who helped out at the 2012 County Officer Network including volunteer facilitators Peter Quinn, Tom Daly, Joe Passmore, Eamon McMahan, Joe Jordan, Dan McCartan, Gerard Bradley, Fergus Magee, John Devaney, Miceál Greenan, Aogán Ó Fearghail, Michael

Hasson, Oliver Galligan, Martin McAviney and staff facilitators: Michelle McAleer, Stephen Donnelly, Ryan Feeney, Eugene Young, Aileen Cummins, Colin Regan and Kieran Leddy.

Club Planning, Development and Support

Club Maith:

16 Clubs achieved a level of Club Maith over the past year. I congratulate St. Peter's Warrenpoint GAA on achieving a Platinum standard award in November, the Club currently is only one in the GAA to hold the highest Standard. We have set a target for 30 more Clubs to reach a level of Club Maith during 2012 and we are already well on our way to meeting this target. We currently have 75 volunteer Club Maith assessors who work exceptionally hard to facilitate this vital process with our Clubs, I am grateful to them and our County Development Officers who coordinate this process alongside Maura McMenamin leads on the Club Maith project at Provincial level.

Irish News Club and Volunteer Conference 2012:

The fifth Irish News Club and Volunteer Conference took place in October in Armagh City. The Conference was again a success with over 450 delegates attending. Guest Speakers included Uachtaran Tofa Liam O'Neill and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland Rev. Dr. Norman Hamilton. The event was informative, engaging and challenging and I congratulate the Community Development Committee Chaired by Michael Hasson and the Staff led by Ryan Feeney and Aileen Cummins on organising another excellent event.

Club Planning and Support:

Ulster GAA assisted 192 Clubs with Club Development issues that ranged from funding applications support, Club planning and facilities development

advice and over the year we received close to 2000 direct queries from Club Officials. I am happy to report that our Community Development staff has supported 26 Clubs in securing approximately €4.2 million of public investment from various government sources. 57 Clubs new have new Club Development plans in place with assistance from Ulster GAA and we have set a target to increase this by another 60 in 2012.

A review of the Club Maith web-site took place over the year to ensure that all the support resources were up to date and of the best standard. We currently have over 8000 regular users of the Club Maith site which is an excellent resource bank for our Clubs and enhances the overall capacity of our Association at Club level.

Investing in Volunteers:

Ulster GAA has successfully achieved the 'Investing in Volunteers' standard which recognises and promotes best practice in volunteering. Being awarded this standard is a significant achievement for any volunteer-led organisation but is all the more significant for Ulster GAA as this is the first time any sporting governing body has been awarded the standard across Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.

This was a sizeable piece of work, which involved contributions of over 50 volunteer members of Ulster GAA Council. The process took 1.5 years and was led by a Steering Committee appointed by Uachtarán Chomhairle Uladh supported by Sharon Haughey: Brendan Kirk, Paddy Sheanon, Kathleen Woods, Cathy Gallagher, Edward Molloy, Brian Armitage, and Catherine O'Hara. Through this process Ulster GAA has now developed its policies and procedures for volunteering including designing a new volunteer policy and handbook.

Derry City of Culture 2013:

Ulster GAA has a representative on the Derry City of Culture 2012 Volunteering Committee. The Committee is tasked with developing a strategy for volunteers for 2013 to include volunteer team recruitment, training and promotion of opportunities. Ulster GAA is also working hard alongside Derry GAA to ensure that Gaelic Games and Culture are core to the City of Culture programme I commend the hard work of John Keenan and Patsy Mullan in securing the 2013 National Congress and National Scór Final for the City and I look forward to the Ulster GAA Historical Conference planned for early 2013. All of these events will once again highlight the GAA's commitment to promoting a positive future for all the people within our community.

Integration and Cooperation with other codes:

The relationship between all the Ulster Councils continues to be strong. Ulster GAA continues to progress the Integration agenda through the Provincial Integration Committee led by Martin McAviney. 2012 is going to be an important year for promoting and progressing the 'One Club' model developed by the three National Associations but strongly based on the Club integration model that Ulster GAA has had in place since 2006. Ulster GAA will inform clubs on new information and the way forward for integration through the Club Officer Development Courses held in all nine Ulster counties.

The appointment of Ciaran Kearney as Camogie Administration Officer is a welcome development. Ciaran will work with the Ulster Camogie Council to improve governance and administration structures and will also have a link into the overall Ulster GAA team. Ulster GAA continues to invest significantly in the promotion of both Camogie and



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Ladies Gaelic Football. Our continued commitment to the Active Communities Programme results in the employment of 11 Coaches across local government focused on promoting female Gaelic games, disability sport and recreational games. I commend Sheena Kelly, Ladies Gaelic Football Development Officer and Active Communities Co-ordinator for commitment to the ongoing development of this programme.

The Provincial Integration committee continues to lead on co-operation between the codes, with good work being completed on match fixture clashes. Through the committee double-header Championship games have been made possible and are very well received.

Grounds

Major Stadium:

Since the 2011 Convention this has been an area of significant activity for the Stadium Project Board, the Ulster Council, the Ulster Council Officers and also by our Senior Staff. By the time of the publication of this report we will have cleared a number of critical milestones in moving the project forward.

Our overall ambition which has now been approved at business plan stage is to provide a modern and fit for purpose GAA Stadium at Casement Park Belfast. The design will be developed by a procured Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) which will be procured by July 2012. Our Design Brief, at a very high level, seeks to provide a 40,000 all seated Stadium with a minimum of 80% cover, 2,000 premium seats, Corporate and Hospitality facilities, Community facilities, Commercial facilities and Car Parking. The new facilities for our supporters, players, management teams, match officials and administrators will be at a very high standard.

This is a challenging project and robust governance and project management structures have been put in place which includes:-

1. The Chairman of our Stadium Project Board, Tomás O Dalaigh is also designated as the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the Project.
2. Ulster GAA Secretary, Donal O Murchu is designated as the GAA Investment Decision Maker (IDM) for the Project.
3. Ulster GAA Head of Operations Stephen McGeehan is appointed as Project Sponsor (PS) for the Project and Chair of the Project Steering Group.
4. Ulster GAA Independent Technical Advisor (ITA) Tim Harkin, who as a Chartered Architect was appointed to the project specific role in January 2012 and will support the team for the next three years.

The above personnel are advised and supported through the structure and membership of the following groups established during the year:-

Stadium Project Board:

Tomás O Dalaigh (Chair), Aogan O Fearghail, Danny Murphy, Peter Quinn, John O Reilly, Paraic Duffy, Frankie Quinn, Michelle McAleer, Dr Eugene Young, Stephen McGeehan, Ryan Feeney and Geraldine McKavanagh.

Steering Group:

Stephen McGeehan (Chair), Oliver Galligan, Ryan Feeney, Michelle McAleer and Geraldine McKavanagh.

The groups above are populated with representatives of Sport NI (Programme Delivery function) for the project and by representatives from Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) who have been appointed by Government as the Centre of Procurement Excellence (COPE) for the project.

At a strategic level a Sponsor Board has very recently been established at Permanent Secretary level to advise the Department on the ongoing progress of the three sports projects as part of the overall Stadia Delivery Programme. Michael Hasson represents Ulster GAA at that level.

Apart from the Stadium Board, three Workgroups are in place with a wide range of expertise available. The Workgroups are as follows:

- Community and Public Consultation – Chaired by Danny Murphy and supported by Ryan Feeney
- Finance and Governance – Chaired by Peter Quinn and supported by Michelle McAleer
- Planning and Design – Chaired by Tom Daly and supported by Stephen McGeehan

We are grateful for the input of Geraldine McKavanagh to the working of the Stadium Project Board, Project Steering Group and overall administration of the project in moving matters forward.

We acknowledge the inputs of Cristóir O’Cuana and Tom Ryan in deliberations at Central Council level as well as the wholehearted work of Paraic Duffy to the work of Project Board. We thank the Antrim County Committee and their Chairman Jim Murray for their engagement in important and ongoing consultations and of course Frankie Quinn for inputting to our Board and Planning Committee. We are grateful for the direction and advice from SportNI from CEO Eamonn McCartan, Programme Director, Nick Harkness, Programme Manager, Ciaran McGurk and the various support staff who have worked with us diligently on a daily basis. At Ministerial level we wish to convey our deepest appreciation to Caral Ni Chuilin,

MLA for her vision, determination and interest in our Stadium Project and to her advisors and to the DCAL departmental support team with whom we are keen to progress our plans for the delivery of the completed stadium.

While there is no doubt that very significant progress has been made, CLG Comhairle Uladh fully understand the scale, scope and complexity of the delivery of a capital project with a budget in the region of €76.4m. We are exceptionally mindful of the need to maintain the core business of this Council, developing and enhancing the areas where in recent years we have added value to Clubs, Counties, Communities, and contributed to a better society in Ulster and on the Island of Ireland.

Progress to date in the past year includes:

- July 2011: Stadia Development personnel in place
- August 2011: GAA Business Plan submission
- September 2011: GAA Partnership funding agreed in principle
- October 2011: GAA Interim Independent Technical Advisor (ITA) Appointed
- December 2011: GAA Business Plan approved by DCAL
- January 2012: GAA Full Time Independent Technical Advisor (ITA) Appointed
- January 2012: Legal Team appointed; some Stadia visits in Britain
- February 1st 2012: GAA draft Letter of Offer released
- February 8th 2012: Letter of Offer approved by Board of SNI and released to Ulster GAA
- February 9th 2012: Consideration by Coiste Bainistí Comhairle Uladh of Letter of Offer

We have put in place the strategy, structures, staff, systems and safeguards

to maximise this wonderful and once in a lifetime opportunity for the GAA in Ulster and also for the City of Belfast and we look forward to reporting on progress at critical stages in the year ahead.

Safety Certification:

During the past year the engagement with SportNI Overseeing Body, Local Authorities and Safety Advisory Groups continued at pace around our 14 designated grounds. After some difficulty in establishing working relationships in some areas much progress has been made and Stephen McGeehan and Liam Nelis continue to lead this work with energy and enthusiasm dealing with County officials as and when required. On the note of Liam Nelis, the Council wishes to convey our best wishes to Liam for a complete and speedy recovery from a fall prior to Christmas.

The NCFE Level 2 training for stewards continues in 2012 and will bring to over 500 the total number of stewards trained over the past number of years. We thank Paul Maxwell, South West College for his support in the delivery and his ongoing assessments and visits to our games to see theory converted to practice.

Infrastructure Projects:

County Committees made tremendous progress again in 2011 in the development of facilities with the undoubted highlight being the return of Armagh to the Morgan Athletic Grounds for their USFC Quarter Final clash with Down during the summer. This work was supported by the Council and financial assistance levered for various aspects via the Sport NI funding over the previous decade. The Gaels of Armagh and in particular their County Chairman should be very proud of their achievement in providing a high quality modern County facility which has been very well used since last January’s Power NI Dr Mc Kenna Cup Final.

Through our inputs during 2011 the Ulster GAA Counties have largely escaped the negative impact of recent Health and Safety Audits via the MSA reports commissioned by the National Infrastructure and Safety Council. These reports have identified significant and consistent failings in some grounds in terms of safety management arrangements and/or the physical conditions of deteriorating venues which were not invested in during the ‘boom’ years in the Country.

In Ulster due to our strategic approach to grounds development over the past ten years and our floodlighting initiative since 2006, coupled with some financial support along with our own funds we have been able to avoid the most serious situations which may now bedevil some of our Provincial colleagues. That said, Comhairle Uladh will work with our County Committees in Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan during early 2012 to ensure that plans are in place to remediate any difficulties arising from their MSA report recommendations and put in place corrective measures especially relating to applying safety management structures and arrangements to venue controls.

I would place on record that the GAA’s heretofore lack of strategy at County level which enabled numerous high capacity venues being built in neighbouring Counties has contributed to our own shortcomings in this area. In Ulster our County Grounds development projects were targeted at high quality 20,000 capacities (including one main covered stand with capacity circa 4,000) which seem to have captured the public imagination and ensured that for most games patrons have quality covered accommodation. In the event that Championship fixtures are played in those same venues the choice remains



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For price reasons for patrons to decide between seating and terracing. The GAA psyche for capacity needs to be replaced by a psyche for comfort and only in strategic grounds such as Croke Park, Provincial Venues including the new Casement Park should we be supporting major capacity venues and again only on the basis that those venues can provide a high quality spectator experience for all our patrons.

In terms of NISC investment projects in Regional Centres work continues at pace in Dunsilly, Antrim; Owenbeg, Derry; Convo, Donegal and in the innovative Garvaghey Centre, Tyrone. Whilst these projects are all unique in terms of specifications, funding models and ambitions the one common theme is the desire by voluntary officials supported by professionals to provide the best possible facilities for all of our players in all codes within the clubs and counties involved. We wish those Counties and others involved in such worthwhile capital developments and re-iterate our support in whatever practical way to ensuring projects can be concluded on time, within budget and to specifications set out by those involved. Should all go according to plan three of the aforementioned sites should be open to some degree later in 2012 and we share the excitement of each County in seeing the fruits of their labour.

The work of the Club Planning and Physical Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Dan McCartan must be acknowledged this committee is very active and provides our Clubs with support and advice on a wide range of matters. We thank the Cathaoirleach and members of the Committee along with the County Development Officers, Paul Sanders, Maura McMenamin and Ryan Feeney for their dedication and commitment in dealing with all of these

issues that have arisen and this includes a significant amount of legal advice and support to our Clubs.

Coaching and Games Development

Coaching and Games Development remains the core business of Ulster GAA with a large portion of the Ulster GAA budget being spent on this area of development over the last year. 2011 was another busy and challenging year for all those involved in the continued development of our coaching and games development programmes which has seen several new innovative developments tailored for amateur coaches and players and aimed at improving the overall standard of our coaching and our games.

Accredited Courses:

In 2011 Ulster GAA became an accredited centre with the Open College Network to deliver specific GAA education programmes. Currently 35 students are undertaking the Performance Coaching Programme which is pitched at Level 3 (A level / Leaving Certificate equivalent). The programme is designed to reward volunteer hours within the club. A management programme at the same level will be launched in 2012 following a successful pilot. The new Managers course will aim at enhancing the management skills of team Managers and Coaches. This offers significant challenges with an external agency quality assuring the delivery of programmes.

Coaching Workshops and Talent ID:

Coaching workshops continue to be popular and high performance workshops in association with the Sports Institute have targeted medical staff with County teams and delivered advice and guidance on groin injuries. These findings have been fed back to coaches at the Annual Conference and

highlighted the overuse and overtraining of young players. Talent Academies and Development Squads continue to operate at County level with lots of talent coming through from Clubs and Schools. The challenge remains on how this talent is managed and maximised. Programmes for coaches in both codes, have delivered what is regarded as best practice. The quality of the talent and the commitment is evident through Feile (Clubs) and the Buncrana Cup (Development squads) and subsequently County Minor and Schools teams. The challenge of managing this talent does remain high on the agenda. Research by Ulster GAA has also shown that the birth date of players selected onto development squads has a higher chance of being in the first half of the calendar year, which raises concerns in relation to our selection procedures.

Schools Programme:

Secondary Schools Programmes aim to develop coaching and games capacity in schools and in clubs; Ulster GAA piloted a programme within schools in 2011 to develop skills and knowledge around key areas that can compliment curriculum work but that have a practical application. Workshops in video analysis, conditioning, nutrition and fitness testing were delivered and subsequently these young people delivered sessions with their school teams and their clubs. A significant development in this sector has been the engagement with the Integrated schools, with a number of blitzes at various age groups being supported and delivered by Ulster GAA.

The presence of the Primary Schools Programme raises the profile of the GAA in this sector. The challenge always is the transfer of children from the school to the club. The KS1 programme delivering fundamental movement skills in schools and tying in with the Gaelic Start programme in the clubs continues to be

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supported by the Department of Education and is very highly thought of by teachers. County coaches continue to support the specific skills of our games at KS2. Local Councils (in some cases in association with the County Boards and Ulster GAA) are also present in this sector through the Active Communities programme.

The Programme of Games in each county for children and youth is essential; priority that these are regular with no long breaks and not just for a short period is vital. There is a need to look at indoor opportunities for football and hurling throughout the winter, if we stop developing over the winter months then the children lose out on important development work.

Quality Games are central to the GAA and it needs to be consolidated with volunteer coaches supported to help deliver a quality and fun experience for children, youth and adults. Coaches at senior level need to bring the fun back into the games and the training environment. We run a great risk of turning players off with the intensity of the preparation programmes and the demands being placed on players during the season. Coaches should remember that players are "volunteers" and the coaches need to set training loads and frequency of training in this respect.

County Staff:

The County Games Development Managers role is important and needs the support from the County Board representatives to do the job. There are a lot of stakeholders who contribute finance towards the employment of staff: Sport NI, Irish Sports Council, Central Council, Ulster GAA, Local Councils and Local Sports Partnerships. The role of the Games Development Managers is line manage and ensure maximum return from this significant investment. The

support of the Coaching Committee, the Coaching Officer and the County Secretary are central to this being a success.

Active Communities Network:

We are now in our second year of the Local Government Sport NI Active Communities Programme. This is a partnership between Ulster GAA, County Committees, Local Government Bodies and Sport NI that allows us to employ eleven GAA Development Officers across Ulster focused on three areas of development, namely, female participation, disability participation and recreational games. Ulster GAA has committed to invest in the programme up to 2014, so far we are exceeding our targets in all areas and the network of coaches have been an excellent addition to our coaching and games development programme. I am grateful to Sheena Kelly who coordinates the programme with the Regional Development Officers and County Games Development Managers.

O'Neill's Coaching Conference 2012:

O'Neill's Ulster GAA annual Coaching and Games Conference 2012 now in its seventh year took place at the end of January, in the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown. The theme of this year's conference was 'Education and club links in Gaelic Games'. The conference was well attended with up to 350 delegates having attended; the conference highlighted the importance of embracing across all age groups. Guest Speakers included Minister for Education John O'Dowd, Sean McElhatton and Sean Dempsey. Ulster GAA recognises and values the huge contribution that education plays in the support and development of our games and it is aware of the changing environment within education, I thank the Coaching and Games Development Committee and staff for their contribution in organising

another successful conference. I also acknowledge and thank O'Neill's for their support.

Partnerships:

Ulster GAA are currently partnered with the University of Ulster, Queens University Belfast and St Mary's University College through the employment of GAA Development Officers. They are tasked with promoting all of our codes within the institutions. In addition Ulster GAA are partnered through their Development Officer's work with Cavan and Letterkenny Institutes of Technology. In these centres for higher education academic courses are supported and GAA Coaching Awards are delivered to all students free of charge. We welcome the substantial input from the Universities to our overall work on behalf of the Association.

Twinning:

The twinning work with Britain, Scotland and Canada has resulted in strategic planning days to focus on their needs with a view to running out a programme in 2012 and 2013. Programme delivery requires finance and support and as it is National Policy to support the overseas groups, the financial support for such overseas development is required through National budgets.

The Coaching and Games Development Committee continues to provide direction and foresight in this critical area of our Associations affairs. The committee is led by Chairman Gerard Bradley and Secretary Brendan McGeary, we are deeply indebted to them both for their enthusiasm and dedication in this field; and to the other members of the Committee who work diligently in support of the Committee and we thank them for their efforts. We are well served by our Coaching personnel and this is strategically deployed by Eugene Young



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to ensure that our games are at the forefront of everything we do. We also acknowledge the work undertaken by the County Games Development Managers and the governance role that is central to the delivery of the overall Games Development programme of the GAA.

Gaeilge agus Oidhreacht

Cúrsa Sheamas de Faoite marked it's 23rd year in existence in 2011 and once again was an excellent success. Taking place in Downings, Co. Donegal on the week following the Ulster Final, numbers attending were maintained and those who did attend benefited hugely from the course. As is tradition Uachtaran Chomhairle Uladh, Aogan Ó Fearghail, was present at the course and his attendance and support is reflective of the importance that the Council places on this Irish Language course. The Downings course is a truly wonderful week and does honour to the memory to Seamas de Faoite. Significant praise must go to Nollaig MacCumhaill and his steering committee for their work in the organisation of this course, not least to Tomas Ó Cuilinn whose tireless work ensures the continued success of the course to which he is a founding member. I wish the Course well in 2012 and look forward to marking it's 25th anniversary in 2013.

I commend Coiste Cathaoirleach Sean Ó Duibheannaigh for his work in overseeing the language and heritage work of Chomhairle Uladh and to all the committee members who serve the Council and their Counties so well in the promotion of these important aspects of Irish culture. 2012 will present many exciting opportunities to further this work and I wish the committee well in their work which is of critical importance to the Council and the GAA in general.

COFLA Partnership

We continue to enjoy a strong

relationship with the Cardinal Tomas O'Faich Memorial Library and Archive. The Archive holds all the minutes of the Ulster Council since its foundation in 1903. Thanks to public funding secured by Ulster GAA in cooperation with the Croke Park museum we have been able to digitise the entire collection, this is significant progress and a welcome development in our efforts to gather and secure all the historical documents relevant to the GAA in Ulster. Three digitised copies have been produced and one copy will each be held by COFLA, the GAA museum and in Ceannaráis Uladh. It is our hope to be in a position to put in place a phased process of digitising the Ulster County Minutes over the next number of years subject to funding. Our three year funding partnership with COFLA is now at end and something that is currently under review. An application has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to extend the enhance the project. I would like to record my thanks to both Roddy Hegarty (Director COFLA) and Dr. Donal McAnallen for their continued commitment to the project.

Scór agus Cultúr

Scór and Scór na nÓg competitions continue to promote the cultural aspect of our Association. Those involved with Scór and Scór na nÓg demonstrate a huge level of enthusiastic dedication and commitment. Levels of interest and participation continue to increase and we must acknowledge the work of the committee in this regard. We must maintain the promotion of this area of our work to raise the levels of involvement in this cultural and heritage side of our Association and build on its expansion of those who participate in it.

We are indebted to all involved in Scór to the Coiste for their work in the organising and running of Scór and Scór na nÓg events throughout the year.

We pay tribute to those who assist the Coiste in the running of the events, the competitors, adjudicators and host clubs guided diligently by Miceál Ó Grianain and Fearghas MacAoidh.

Code of Ethics and Good Practice

This facet of our work continues to place ongoing demands on this Committee and all those involved in working with Children and Vulnerable adults throughout the Association. Policies and procedures are continually being developed to meet with the requirements in order to comply with current legislations. Following the completion of the annual SportNI safeguarding in sport audit assessment process, Chomhairle Uladh received an overall assurance level for 2010 – 2011 of Satisfactory.

In 2011 GAA Annual Congress adopted a motion directing that each County Board and Club shall in future select a Children's Officer. Congress also decided to abolish the role of Youth Officer, thus allowing, where applicable, for both roles to be subsumed into one, that of the Children's Officer. The County Children's Officer shall be appointed (not elected) at the Annual County Convention on the recommendation of the outgoing County Committee. Similarly a Children's Officer shall be appointed at the Club Annual General Meeting on the recommendation of the outgoing Executive Committee. Each appointed Children's Officers shall hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual Convention/Annual General Meeting. At County level the Children's Officer shall be an Officer of the County Committee while the Club Children's Officer shall be a member of the Club Executive Committee.

As a registered body with AccessNI and the Garda Central Vetting Unit, Chomhairle Uladh continues to carry out

vetting checks on behalf of counties, clubs and associated bodies in Ulster; to date over 9,500 vetting applications across the nine counties have been processed. This process remains significant in the recruitment process for all those working/volunteering with Children and Vulnerable Adults in Ulster; this is a legal requirement and as such it is Comhairle Uladh policy that anyone working with children or vulnerable adults must be vetted.

Training and Awareness workshops continue to be delivered throughout the Province. At this time there are over 24,500 members who have availed of the awareness training in Ulster. Training and Awareness Workshops are essential for members who have access to children and vulnerable adults to ensure that our members are trained and meet the standards that are laid down.

We acknowledge the work carried out by our Code of Ethics Committee under the leadership of Pat Darcy, Chairman and Gerry Soden, Secretary who have shown great direction continually ensuring matters are addressed, dealt with and carried forward. The ongoing support and assistance from our National Children's Officer throughout the year Gearoid Ó Maoilmhichíl at National Level has been extremely helpful and we express our thanks to him. We also recognise the input of Access NI and Garda Vetting Unit for their assistance in this area of our work.

Marketing, Public Relations and Commercial Activities

2011 seen significant and positive developments on the Marketing and Public Relations front for Ulster GAA. Immense credit is due to the Council PRO Oliver Galligan and the PR, Marketing and IT Committee. The ongoing development of our web-site and social

media networks have served Ulster GAA well in promoting its message and activities and in 2012 we have plans to extend this provision even further. The monthly online newsletter which promotes the good work of Ulster Council through all Committees and departments now has a circulation of close to 8000.

The GAA e-mail system continues to improve and provide an essential tool in the ongoing development of an information network for the entire Association. The fixtures system is now in place in most counties and is again providing to be a positive. I recognise and thank Damian Kelly for this hard work and effort in all these areas.

Following an open tender competition Lairdesign have been reappointed as our Marketing and Design consultants for the next four years. Niall Laird has done excellent work for the Association in both a professional and volunteer capacity and has improved the overall brand and image of not just Ulster GAA but other units of the Association, I wish him and his team well and I look forward to continuing the good work. The Staff Communications and Marketing team led by Ryan Feeney has undertaken an overall review of marketing and commercial activities and put in place new marketing campaigns for the Ulster Club Championship and the Power NI McKenna Cup. Both these campaigns have been an outstanding success and we hope put the knowledge gained from both competitions to good effect for the 2012 Championship. I would like to thank Ryan Feeney, Damian Kelly, Sharon Haughey, Bernie Fox, Jimmy Darragh, Ciaran Kearney, Sheena Kelly and Stephen Donnelly who all play important roles in the Communication and Marketing team.

The production of a Sponsorship brochure and an improved engagement with the private sector has resulted in Ulster GAA developing new partnerships and sustaining current partnerships with sponsors. I am grateful to: Power NI, O'Neills, Glenavon Hotel, Squareball, BBC, Belfast Health Trust, Quinn's Corner, UTV, Irish News, Phoenix Gas and Gaelic Life for their continued support of Ulster GAA.

Media

We continue to work with all media to promote our Games and activities to the public, Ulster GAA has to balance the promotion of our Games alongside our considerable Community development role and public standing. While on occasions Ulster GAA would strongly disagree with some of the view points expressed by elements of the media we endeavour to treat them fairly and deal with problems or issues in a professional way.

In general Ulster GAA has a good relationship with the media and it remains strong and I recognise the ongoing support that we receive from Paraic Duffy, Lisa Clancy and Peter McKenna when dealing with these issues. I would also recognise the retirement of Dermot Power who dealt with many of these matters in the past and wish him well in the future.

The level of coverage of all our competitions has improved but there is still room for some improvement when it comes to both Ulster Under 21 Championship, the Ulster Club Championship and the McKenna Cup. I would recognise both UTV and BBC who continue to improve their coverage of Gaelic Games and I pay tribute to the journalists, photographers, production personnel for all their coverage, before, during and after our games. I would again recognise the Irish News and thank them



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For their excellent GAA coverage and their support for the Club and Volunteer Conference, Club and Volunteer Awards and Ulster All-Stars.

Provincial Council

During the past year there have been many challenges faced by the Council early in the year we became aware that a final decision on the Major Stadia was imminent. This in turn led to a substantial restructuring of the operation work of the Ulster Council. There was initial examinations of what was needed to include the additional work involved with the Casement Park Project in addition to the ongoing work being undertaken in connection with the our strategic development plan. The re-organisation was approved in May and was operational from the beginning of July. Suffice to record that since then we have maintained our core work while at the same time have met all the challenges placed before us in connection with the stadium. This has only been possible by the dedication of the Officers, Members, sub committees and staff working cohesively for the common good. It needs to be understood that the critical work is in support of our Clubs and Counties in the tremendous work that they do. We are more effective working for the greater good of our Association in a unified and structured manner.

We have continued our engagement with external groups, bodies and agencies. We continue to advance the agenda that our Association is at the centre of community life. We have portrayed the scope of our Clubs and to this end we have been recognised for Valuing Volunteers Programme. It needs to be emphasised that we through our constituent units deliver the ingredients that build strong and sustainable society. The work of community

development has also been strongly advanced through our engagements with Churches, representative bodies and non Departmental Public Bodies. The continued work is ensuring that our Association is part of the future plans for the development of a shared future based on mutual understanding and respect. During the year the Association appointed three people to engage with aspects of future planning and this will be taken forward in the year ahead.

The work and support of Irish Sports Councils, Sport NI, the Departments of Education, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 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, who have been encouraging us in the work that we are doing is acknowledged and appreciated. The GAA continues to be relevant in its time. The role of SportNI in several areas of work including the Stadium Project and governance has led to a close working relationship in several key areas. We are grateful to all of the staff at SportNI with whom we work with particular reference to Nick Harkness, Carl Southern and Ciaran McGurk. We also acknowledge and thank Eamonn McCartan, Chief Executive of SportNI, for all his work and his consideration of the issues that arise from time to time. We are also grateful for the work of the Chairman of SportNI, Dominic Walsh and thank him for his support. 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 welcome one of our own, Charal Ni Chulin as the Minister of Culture, Arts

and Leisure and wish her the very best of achievement during her term in office.

We are indebted to Aogan Ó Fearghail, Uachtaran, for his leadership and he has been totally dedicated to the work of the Council. He has given generously of his time in the best traditions of the Association in Ulster. He has worked diligently at National level on several Committees and he has been a solid representative on Coiste Bainisti Naisunta and Ard Comhairle. He has represented the Council across a diverse list of functions and events and in all these he has exuded the leadership of a vibrant and confident organisation. We thank Aogan for his work on our behalf and for his support across the full spectre of our activity in Ulster.

Mairtin Mac Aibhne, Leas-Uachtaran, has also been an important part of the work of Comhairle Uladh. He has given generously of his time and has played a very important part of the administration of our affairs. He is the Chairman of Coiste Forbartha Iomana and has ensured that the interests of hurling are adequately provided for including the introduction of the Tain League. He has also continued as Cathaoirleach of the Integration Committee and has worked diligently to ensure that the continuing work of integration continues to be advanced. We acknowledge his work and we thank his input to the affairs of the GAA.

Micheal Ó hOsain has been a very active Officer and has given excellent support to the work of the Council and in particular to the financial aspects of our work. He has acted as Cathaoirleach of our Finance Committee and they have worked diligently to ensure that good governance is at the centre of the work of the Council and also our Counties. He also represents Comhairle Uladh on the

Stadium Sponsor Board. We are indebted to him for all his work on our behalf.

Our OCP, Oileabhar Ó Gealagain has continued to ensure that our work and affairs are adequately portrayed in the media. He has dealt very efficiently with the various issues and statements that have arisen in a most efficient and positive manner. He has also worked to market our games and activities in a very effective manner and has overseen the utilisation of modern media to ensure that our people are informed. We thank Oliver for his tremendous work on our behalf.

The members of the Ulster Council give generously of their time and provide a substantial service to the overall workings of the GAA in Ulster. They operate across the administration of our affairs to supporting the operational requirements on match days. We are indebted to the members for their dedication, work and support throughout the year. Micheal MacCraith leaves the Council at Convention and he has and continues, to serve the wider GAA to a high standard for which we thank him.

The Stadium Project Board has had a very busy year, the Committee is lead by Iar Uachtaran Tomas Ó Dalaigh with distinction. There were many hurdles to get over and deadlines to be met and we are still moving forward towards achieving our objective by 2015 and we are grateful to Tom and the Project Board for their ongoing exemplary work on this project.

Nollaig Mac Cumhaill and Eamonn Mac Mathuna who are Chairman and Secretary respectively of our Hearings Committee and have carried out a tremendous amount of work and who have dealt with the delivery of our appeals and disciplinary process in a most efficient and considered manner.

We are also grateful to the members of the Hearings Committee for their fortitude and availability in resolving these important matters on an ongoing basis for our membership and our constituent units. We are also grateful to Damian Kelly in servicing the work of the Committee and to Bernie Fox who had an involvement in the early part of the year.

Stephen Donnelly gives a tremendous service to our Coiste Cheannais na Chomortaisi, the Counties, Referees, the Clubs and to other fixture making bodies as required. His detailed report on our Fixtures is a very valuable resource in the overall assessment of the delivery of our Games programme and we are well served by his total commitment and dedication. Bernie Fox, who now acts a servicing Officer for our Coiste Bainistióchta has been a tremendous support in the outworking of this very vital Committee in the affairs of Chomhairle Uladh.

Kathy Kelly acts as servicing officer to the Senior Staff Team of Eugene Young (Coaching and Games) Michelle McAleer (Finance, HR and Business Development) Ryan Feeney (Community, Strategy and Public Affairs) and Stephen McGeehan (Stadium Development). The Senior Staff Team has ensured that the operational work is carried out as agreed by Coiste Bainistióchta. We are indebted to all of them for their outstanding efforts on behalf of the GAA in Ulster.

Geraldine McKavanagh has continued to service the work with our County Secretaries as well as her work as Child Officer. 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 while at the same time is a tremendous support to me in the work that I do and for which I am

deeply appreciative to Geraldine for her integrity, loyalty and professionalism, for which I am indebted.

All of the staff of Ulster GAA are enthusiastic, hard working and give generously of their time in the interests of the GAA in Ulster in both volunteer and professional capacities and for their efforts, dedication and loyalty, I record my sincere appreciation.

Association Issues

The Association continued to develop on many fronts and this is exemplified by the growth in communications to all of our constituent units and the direct engagement with our democratic structure. This is of itself a very welcome development in ascertaining the views of the Association on matters of policy and administration. It needs to be utilised by our membership to ensure that we maintain our cohesive approach to the constant development of the GAA. The recent leaking of a working document on team managers was an abuse of our democratic process as the issues were still under discussion and may or may not have emerged as policy document for a decision by our Association. The abuse of our structures weakens the whole organisation. There is a need to ensure that our membership operate within their Club and County Committee and help create a view that pressure groups and single issue agendas are not the way forward for the GAA.

The document on Team Managers is a discussion that now needs to be examined and the ultimate issue for the GAA is whether we remain amateur or not. It is time to decide if we want to operate within the established Central Council scales of expenses or not. There are many coaches and managers that operate within our guidelines and the question that must be addressed is will



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the Association be better in remaining amateur? I believe that the motivation and dedication of our voluntary workers is a testament to the fact that the local sense and pride of place is greater than any demand for diminution of our amateur ethos.

There has been issues of indiscipline emerging that involve supporters of our teams and there has even been calls for segregation of spectators attending our games. We already have in place the Safety at Sports Grounds and this was augmented by the Justice Bill 2011. We argued strongly for self regulation and the need to provide for a vast number of games while ensuring the overall safety of everyone attending. We do need to be clear that public safety is legally enforceable and we do need to take appropriate steps to have a proper and respectful environment for the playing our games. The GAA is opposed to the entrapment of GAA Clubs inside the scope of the Justice Bill as the significance of the Designated Stand is relevant to the capacity of it and has no other function other than to establish that such structures must be licensed by the relevant Local Authority and are fit for purpose. It should be understood that this applies to grounds that are not Designated under the Safety At Sports Grounds Legislation.

The Ulster Final was again attended by President Mary McAleese and Dr. Martin McAleese. They have attended many of our games and great occasions, and represented the office of President with distinction. They have always treated the GAA with great respect and have honoured the Ulster GAA to a very high degree. We thank Mary and Martin McAleese for their work, encouragement and support over the past fourteen years. We are proud of our President and also of Martin for their tremendous leadership of our Country and particularly of its people.

During the past year we interacted with many of the leaders of our society but the recent visit of the First Minister, Peter Robinson was an historic occasion. The attendance of the First and Deputy First Minister to the Power NI Dr. McKenna Cup Final at the Morgans Athletic Grounds was a firm indication that adversaries can countenance a shared future based on mutual understanding and respect. Indeed, if respect became the central plank of the future engagement then the future could be better, bright and above all beneficial for all of the people of Ireland.

The input by our constituent units continues to impress and the improved operational arrangements between the various levels has improved our cohesiveness, our ability to plan effectively and to deliver the necessary outcomes that are essential for future development of our Association. We could do even better if we dealt with some of the issues within the structures of the GAA rather than at times seemly attacking our own organisation. I know that we all are passionate about the GAA but we need to work together in building a stronger and vibrant Association.

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, Dermot Power, Pat Daly, Peter McKenna and Lisa Clancy for their work. We also thank Ronan Murphy, Kieran Leddy 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 Cisteoir O Cuana, who concludes his term as president of our Association. We acknowledge the dedication and input he has brought to the post and we thank him for his work on behalf of the GAA. We welcome Liam O Neill as the incoming President and look forward to working closely with him in the next three years.

Comhbhrón

The past year has again witnessed the death of our members and the tragic consequences that this has for all be they family, friends, club or the Association as a whole. There have been many occasions where we have felt the sense of loss most acutely. This year we wished farewell

to Jim McGuigan a member of Watty Grahams Maghera, his service to the GAA knew no bounds. He had been thirty two years as Treasurer in Doire and six years as Cisteoir of Comhairle Uladh, he was the embodiment of a true GAA volunteer.

The death of Leo Burns also took from our midst another person who had given tremendous service to his Club, and was a former Runai of Choiste Chontae Mhuineachan. We also saw the demise of Emmett Nugent who was from Keady and Fred Ruth from Kilannee. All four named gave a lifetime of service to the GAA and to their local community. They were also part of our team of stiles men for many years. They were all great men and we will miss them greatly. There were many other sad occasions for our Association including the death of Martin Mulholland who died while refereeing a game demonstrated

the unstinting loyalty and dedication he had to our Association. The loss of each person is worthy of our sympathy and respect. Our sympathy is extended to all the bereaved families, friends and to the extended GAA family who have lost loved ones, people who have been part of our Association as players, officials, referees and administrators. We are a better organisation for their involvement and their legacy is the Association we cherish today.

The Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for all the deceased members of our Association in St. Mary' University College Chapel 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

The motivation of our Association needs

to be recognised as a critical element of our future development. It is an organisation that is rooted in our sense and pride of place. The idealism that drove our Association from its inception is still relevant today. We should be a unitary organisation built on the whole family for the whole life. The threats to this are within our midst. Pressure groups and single agenda bodies are not compatible with the greater good for greatest number ethos that has taken us from ambitious beginnings to today where we are central part of our Irish way of life. In the future we can continue to develop and progress so long as we put the primary interests of the GAA at the centre of everything we do.

Is mise, le meas,
Dónall Ó Murchú,
Rúnaí, Chomhairle Uladh

