



SUSTAINING CLUBS AND BUILDING CAPACITY

AG COThÚ CLUBANNA AGUS AG FORBAIRT ACMHAINNE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2023



ULSTER GAA IN NUMBERS

1800 POST PRIMARY GAMES
IN 66 COMPETITIONS

598 PRIMARY
SCHOOLS

35 HANDBALL
CLUBS

150,000 PLAYING
MEMBERS

111 CAMOGIE
CLUBS

372 CLUBS

23,000 LADIES FOOTBALL
MEMBERS

123 POST
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

253 LADIES
CLUBS

16 FURTHER & HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

250,000 GAA
VOLUNTEERS

9 COUNTIES

150,000 SPECTATORS AT THE
ULSTER CHAMPIONSHIPS

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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

Agus an cúigiú plean straitéiseach seolta againn, is cinnte go mbíonn an CLG de shíor ag tacú leis an phobal, ní amháin tríd na cluichí, ach trínár ról i ngach gné de shaol an phobail. Agus mé i mbun scríbhneoireachta, táimid go fóill i lár na paindéime, ach go fóill féin, is soiléir dom go bhfuil tábhacht nach beag leis an bhaint atá againn leis an phobal i láthair na huaire, agus é sin léirithe tríd an obair a dhéanann ár mbaill agus ár n-oibrithe deonacha ina gceantair féin.

As we launch our fifth Strategic Plan, the GAA continues to make significant contributions to our communities through our games and our involvement in all aspects of community life. As I write, we are still living through the Covid-19 pandemic, yet it is evident to me that our involvement in the community has never been more necessary than it is now, evidenced by the work that our volunteers and club members continue to perform in their local areas.

This strategic plan focuses on sustaining clubs and building capacity right across our Province and I would like to thank the Strategic Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor David Hassan, for their detailed work in this regard. Arguably it has never been more important than it is now, to safeguard and support our clubs, because as they prosper and grow so too does the Association at large and we should never lose sight of the critical function they perform.

In an ever-changing society the GAA, like all other organisations, must evolve with the times and this will become even more evident, I suspect, in the coming years. Thus, it is clear, to sustain our clubs, we must continue to support our volunteers, who are the cornerstones of our Association. The current environment that we live in has created a new normal. This will continue to present many challenges to the already very high standards we have set ourselves and for which we have secured an enviable reputation. It is therefore important to maintain these high standards by continually building and enhancing our base.

Thus, our new strategy places the clubs and our volunteers firmly at the centre of our plan for the next three years, as we strive to move forward and regain ground that we have unquestionably lost due to the impact of Covid-19. As we realign our Association's values around volunteerism, amateurism, respect, community, player welfare, and inclusion, we still strive for excellence in everything that we do. To achieve this, we continue to work in partnership with internal and external bodies, to ensure the welfare of our players, coaches, administrators, and members.

Living through Covid-19 has offered a stark reminder of the difficulty of planning ahead, especially when circumstances beyond our direct control exercise such a profound impact on our very existence. But without a plan we would have no direction and thus the strategy outlined in the pages that follow is designed to sustain what we have achieved to date and support our clubs in this most challenging time, to further build capacity and work towards even more exciting and successful times ahead.



OLIVER GALLIGAN
UACHTARÁN, COMHAIRLE ULADH



MESSAGE FROM ULSTER GAA PROVINCIAL SECRETARY/CEO

Dhá bhliain i ndiaidh chomóradh an chéid de bhunú Chomhairle Uladh, d'fhoilsigh CLG Uladh an chéad phlean a chruthaíodh do nua-aoisiú. Is iomaí atá athraithe ó shin, agus tá bród an domhain orm an cúigiú Plean Straitéiseach a chur os bhur gcomhair amach.

Díolaimíodh an plean seo ó chomhairliúchán leathan lenár bpáirtithe leasmhara agus feidhmeoidh sé mar threoir do CLG Uladh agus muid ar ár dturas i dtreo thodhchaí éiginnte.

It is with both pleasure and pride that I make this introductory contribution to Ulster GAA's fifth Strategic Plan, entitled 'Sustaining Clubs and Building Capacity.'

Every organisation undergoes periods of self-reflection, self-analysis, and critical engagement. This is important if it is to remain relevant and to ensure that it can adapt to changing situations.

This document charts a strategic direction for Ulster GAA over the next three years. The planning process commenced in late 2018 and while some of the detail and ideas of those early conversations have made it through to our planned work programme for the period ahead, it's fair to say the final document looks a lot different to what may have been envisaged at those early meetings and stakeholder engagement forums.

The Covid-19 pandemic stopped us in our tracks! It has made us look at things differently and has created a heightened sense of awareness amongst us all.

Ulster GAA is unique in that its affiliated units cross two political jurisdictions. There is now a much deeper complication in that one third of our counties are in the European Union but two-thirds of our counties are not. This Strategic Plan incorporates the 'early years' of this new dynamic. How much this will impact us remains to be seen – but one thing is certain; things have just got a little more complex!

The GAA enjoys a popularity amongst our communities that few, if indeed any, other sporting organisation in the world can replicate. If anything, Covid -19 has taught us that we took much of what we do and have achieved for granted – it was only when we couldn't play our games that we appreciated how valuable they were and, indeed, how much we missed them.

However, our resilience has shone through during the pandemic, but we are now in a different space. We are adapting to a 'new normal' and, yes, while we want to expand and flourish, remaining as ambitious as we ever have been, we have to be mindful that we must, first and foremost, protect what we have and ensure the very fundamentals of our wonderful Association. 'Sustainability' is therefore the over-riding thread that runs through this plan.

Of course, this should not be construed or mis-interpreted as though we are lacking the determination required for future success – rather it should be seen as a stable and confident organisation



consolidating its position in the vanguard of community life across the Province by protecting what it holds dear and targeting measured growth in challenging economic times.

Four high-level strategic themes, each with underlying objectives, have been identified and these will form the genesis of our operational activity areas for the next three years. During the life cycle of this Strategic Plan we will also examine more long-term issues, such as demographics, which are likely to have a fundamental impact on our community-based structures.

This Strategic Plan builds on Ulster GAA's previous plan 'Leading, Supporting and Enriching Communities' and is aligned with the current national GAA Strategic Plan 'Fís Shoiléir.'

Supporting our players and volunteers is fundamental to our future success and through the enablers detailed in this document we can deliver on what are a challenging, but achievable, suite of objectives. In essence it is about 'developing our people' as we seek, ever more, to strive for greater reach and impact.

I will want to see significant progress on the delivery of Casement Park and the delivery of a modern headquarters for Ulster GAA during the lifespan of this Plan. The recent announcement of proposed planning permission for the former is a welcome development, while the lessons of Covid-19 has made us reflect on the type and scale of modern headquarters that we will need going forward.

I thank all those who have played a part in developing 'Sustaining Clubs and Building Capacity'. It has been a real team effort, reflecting input from across our nine counties. I also thank the staff of Ulster GAA who will continue to play a key role in ensuring that we will deliver against the objectives that has been set for the organisation, working in collaboration with our counties and their clubs. To borrow the motto of my own club, "Ar aghaidh le chéile (Forward together)."



BRIAN McAVOY
RÚNAÍ, COMHAIRLE ULADH



MESSAGE FROM ARD STIÚRTHÓIR

It is my great pleasure to contribute to Ulster GAA's latest Strategic Plan, 'Sustaining Clubs and Building Capacity'.

The world changed drastically in 2020 due to Covid-19, but neither the world nor strategic planning are static, so it is always incumbent on us as an Association to think about the fundamental questions that keep us relevant and fulfil our promise to those we serve, especially people in our clubs and communities. These questions include: Who are we? Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we get there?

I am delighted to see Ulster GAA's strong evidence-based approach to addressing these questions through extensive stakeholder consultation - including the recent Club Audit research - and analysis of issues and opportunities to grow Gaelic games across Ulster.

The level of alignment with the current Association-wide Strategic Plan is especially pleasing because it will ensure that the sum of our efforts is greater than those of the individual Club and County Units of our Association in Ulster. I am thrilled to see our joined-up approach across coaching and games, officer education, governance, and communication to name but a few pillars of our operations.

While turning the plan into reality will require significant effort, I am convinced that the volunteers and staff within the Ulster GAA family will pursue the strategies set out with unwavering determination.

I wish all involved every success and my backing to making the planned changes happen.



TOMÁS Ó RIAIN

ARD STIÚRTHÓIR, CUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL

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NOT BECAUSE OF WHO WE ARE OR WHERE WE COME FROM
HERE MEANS BELONGING
MEANS KNOWING YOU'RE PART OF A COMMUNITY
COMMUNITY THAT HAS A PLACE FOR ALL
E POTENTIAL IS NURTURED
INDIVIDUALS BECOME TEAMS
FOR THE LEGACY OF THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE
WE TO BUILD A LEGACY OF THEIR OWN

ALL OF US PLAY

SOME USED TO PLAY. SOME OF US NEVER PLAYED

ALL BELONG.

BEING MEANS HAVING A VOICE

BEING ABLE TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT

BEING LISTENED TO

BEING MEANS RESPECTING EACH OTHER

BEING THERE FOR EACH OTHER

ON THE PITCH. OFF THE PITCH

ROLLING OUR SLEEVES UP AND DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

WHETHER IT'S OUR FIRST DAY OR OUR HUNDREDTH YEAR

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE THIS PLACE BELONGS TO US ALL

OUR GAA

BECAUSE WE ALL BELONG

ABOUT ULSTER GAA

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is a national organisation, founded in 1884, which has as its basic aim the strengthening of the National identity in a 32 County Ireland through the preservation and promotion of Gaelic games and pastimes. It promotes and manages the games of Gaelic Football, Hurling, Handball and Rounders and supports the promotion of Camogie and Ladies Football through its sister organisations, the Camogie Association and the Ladies Gaelic Football Association.

Ulster GAA is one of five provincial bodies of the GAA and it supports the efforts of its nine constituent County Committees, 300+ clubs and 250,000 volunteer members and players. It also has close links with the respective provincial bodies of its sister organisations - namely Ulster Camogie and Ulster Ladies Gaelic Football. the headquarters of Ulster GAA is in Armagh City.

Ulster GAA works with a range of public bodies to deliver on its key strategic objectives. Core to this work is providing support and services to both Clubs and Counties which strengthens the ongoing grassroots development of the Association.



"My engagement on a range of matters with Ulster GAA has been invariably characterised by creativity and mutual respect. This is such a talented team who listen carefully and act with integrity. It has at all times been a pleasure to work with the organisation."

FIONNUALA JAY-O'BOYLE CBE

LORD LIEUTENANT, CO BOROUGH OF BELFAST



ULSTER
GAA

ULSTER
GAA



2020 AUDIT OF THE GAA CLUBS OF ULSTER



**342 OF 372
MADE A
FULL SUBMISSION**



**65%
OFFER
FOOTBALL
ONLY**



**32%
OFFER
HURLING
OR CAMOGIE**



**5%
OFFER
HANDBALL**

MEMBER 



**378
AVERAGE NO.
OF MEMBERS
PER CLUB**



**59
AVERAGE
NO. OF
VOLUNTEERS
PER CLUB**

81%

**SAY THEY DO NOT HAVE
ENOUGH VOLUNTEERS**



91%

**ARE AWARE
OF HEALTHY CLUB
PROGRAMME**



**80%
WOULD LIKE
MORE HELP
WITH MENTAL
HEALTH**



**24%
HAVE 300+
PARTICIPANTS**

OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

To grow our sporting and cultural heritage, embedding good governance, facilities, coaching and administration in our clubs, county and education units, to ensure inclusion, lifelong participation, and development pathways for our members.

OUR MISSION

Ulster GAA is an inclusive, club and community focused organisation that is modern, innovative, and driven by volunteers promoting our unique amateur ethos. Ulster GAA will continue to enable engagement in sport, culture, language, and health through a range of organised activities that support our clubs and units, embedding principles of good governance to ensure they remain vibrant and sustainable.



OUR VALUES

We promote the values of our Association, working to embed these in our clubs and communities, and through our games and activities, continually challenge our volunteers, coaches, players, referees and administrators to remain true to these ideals.

01**COMMUNITY IDENTITY****02****AMATEUR STATUS****03****INCLUSIVENESS****04****RESPECT****05****PLAYER WELFARE****06****TEAMWORK & VOLUNTEERISM**

PLANNING AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

This Strategic Plan is designed to establish objectives and related actions for the development of the GAA in Ulster between 2021 and 2023 (inclusive). It aims to ensure sustainability amongst all our units, including clubs, and provide targeted growth in those priority areas identified in the plan. Further, it will permit the allocation of increasingly scarce resources to support the GAA's primary mission as a community-based and volunteer-led organisation existing to promote Gaelic games, culture and lifelong participation.

The emphasis on creating sustainable units and offering focused support for key initiatives over the lifetime of this plan emerged from a detailed engagement and consultation process, led by Ulster GAA's Strategic Planning Committee. Over a two-year period, the Committee, comprised of 19 members representing all nine counties and with colleagues from the GAA's sister organisations, met on ten occasions. It was clear that a common theme of the Committee's deliberations cohered around the demands on volunteers in sustaining the expectations associated with modern club activities, including administration, coaching and games development and, increasingly, statutory obligations. Overlaying these concerns were others regarding the disproportionate demands placed on units with comparatively few members and a sense that any strategic plan first needed to provide the prospect of a sustainable basis for all units to move forward from and, where the opportunity existed, to then offer targeted interventions to begin to address often chronic concerns for the GAA across the Province.

Of course, these were very real concerns for many members prior to the events of early 2020, which had profound resonance beyond the GAA. Both the acute impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its legacy will shape the activities of the Association in Ulster for some time to come and certainly for the lifetime of this plan. On the one hand it offered a reminder of the remarkable community-based organisation the GAA has become, providing support to its members and others during an unprecedented period in our history, and on the other offering an insight into the importance the mere presence of GAA units, primarily local clubs, play in all our lives. These events, and their consequences, confirmed the importance of offering a sustainable platform for the Association in Ulster in the medium-term, to the Committee.

Finally, the ultimate measure of any Strategic Plan is to assess what work took place as a result of it, who benefitted from the focus it provides, and how do 'we' know it is having the effect for which it was intended. As many organisations, albeit for now largely in the public sector, transition towards an 'Outcome Based Accountability' model from their planning processes it is likely, in the future, that the GAA will do so, too. In the meantime, though, an increased awareness of an outcome based 'approach' is promoted within this document, one in which our planned actions are shaped by our intention to create meaningful change for the positive benefit of target groups and for the wellbeing of the Association, and the community in which it resides, as a whole.

FORMAL STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ulster GAA is the principal 'owner' of this Strategic Plan and, as such, will oversee courses of action and, again importantly, the allocation of resources to contribute to and further enhance the role of the GAA in the province. Ulster GAA will also perform a range of functions from enabling others to achieve these objectives, to collaborating with them to do so or, as appropriate, shaping and leading their implementation. This is its mission and its purpose as the pre-eminent GAA body in Ulster.

Within the province, strategic planning takes place at several levels. These include Ulster GAA's strategic planning activities (in the form of its outgoing Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020); Strategic Plans devised by counties and clubs (amongst others), which should reflect the view adopted by the Province and indeed the GAA as a whole, yet be tailored to meet individual needs and address local issues; and, operational plans and programmes of work undertaken by the Provincial body's core committees and their counterparts within each of the nine counties.



DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The development of this Strategic Plan 2021- 2023 (inclusive) commenced in late 2018 with a review of the then current Ulster GAA Strategic Plan 2016-2020. This was a largely successful plan with 85% of the objectives delivered. As the Association moves more in the direction of shorter, focused timescales for its planning activities, there was a sense that whilst the outgoing plan, with its strapline of 'Leading Supporting and Enriching Communities' had much to commend it, some of its key objectives remained to be fully addressed, often through no fault of the Association in the Province or its lead decision making body, the Ulster Council. Instead, mindful of a need to offer greater coherency between strategy emerging from the Association at a national level, aligned with the clear commonalities arising from the early meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee, consideration was given to the publication of an 'Ulster' strategy that drew influence from the Association's national plan, Fís Shoiléir 2018 -2021.

An Coiste Bainistíochta (Ulster GAA Management Committee) approved a project plan and its emerging themes at its meeting in July 2019, and a Planning Committee, chaired by David Hassan, Professor of Sport Policy and Management at Ulster University, and coordinated by Dr. Eugene Young, Director of Coaching and Games Development for Ulster GAA, met regularly throughout the timeframe of this planning lifecycle.

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed several macro-themes to guide the development of this new plan during its formative months. These included: (1) Participation and Performance; (2) Supporting and Developing our Volunteers and Administrators; (3) Governance and Operational Excellence; and (4) Communication and Wider Civic Engagement. The Committee was satisfied these addressed the primary mission of the GAA in Ulster but remained equally mindful both of several bespoke issues to Ulster, which it referred to as 'cross-cutting' and were foremost in its mind when formulating its thinking, alongside other dominant matters impacting on the GAA in Ulster in its widest sense. The 'cross-cutting' themes included: Stakeholder Engagement; Self Sufficiency and Sustainability; Urban - Rural challenges; Efficiency and a joined-up approach; Integration; Education / Training Development; Future proofing and innovation; and People and their legacy.

PLANNING AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

CONSULTATION WITH COUNTIES

Central to the objectives, actions and metrics emerging from this Strategic Plan was consultation with all key stakeholders. A strategy workshop held in late October 2019 in Armagh City Hotel took the form of a focus group discussion on each of the key themes detailed in the previous page. The evening drew over 60 attendees from across the Province, representing all nine counties, and provided confirmation of the macro themes the Strategic Planning Committee had been developing. Importantly each of the thematic sub-groups established to detail the objectives arising from each theme included industry / sector specialists selected to assist this planning process and the Committee is appreciative of their professional expertise in this regard.

Later in the process, during October 2020, a draft document outlining the proposed key objectives of the new plan, the specific actions emerging from these and a series of related 'progress indicators' was presented to a full meeting of the Ulster Council, with representatives from all nine counties present, with time allotted for feedback on the emerging document. Their comments and input were extremely valuable and helped to ensure this final document is the product of collaboration across all units of the Association in Ulster, just as its successful implementation will be as well.

CLUB AUDIT

To support its primary theme of providing sustainable structures and support for clubs / units, Ulster GAA commissioned a team of academics from Sheffield Hallam University's Sport Industry Research Centre to undertake a detailed audit of clubs across all nine counties. 345 of the 372 clubs in Ulster made a full response to the detailed survey, with 10 others making a partial response and thus Ulster GAA were presented with the most comprehensive survey of our clubs ever undertaken. The Principal Investigator for the research, David Barrett, made a presentation to the Strategic Planning Committee in May 2020 and to the Provincial, County and Club officers and volunteers in September. The findings of the audit were central to the final stages of the planning process.

Following a request from Sport NI, Ulster GAA in 2019-20 subjected ourselves to an external audit of our Elite Development System under the model known as SPLISS (Sport Policy Factors Leading to International Sporting Success). Given that it doesn't compete on the international stage some of the assessment pillars were not completely relevant to it as an organisation, hence it referenced our assessment as 'SPLISS Light.' However, while still being judged across international standards there were many positives emanating from the exercise, particularly in relation to participation, governance, talent identification and player support. The information gleaned and the learning points arising from 'SPLISS Light' will prove hugely beneficial in the delivery of our strategic goals over the next three years.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Finally, it is worth noting, the Strategic Plan is not a prescriptive document in that it does not seek to lay out in detail precise actions to be undertaken in every situation. Rather it sets the 'direction of travel' and establishes a broad position on several key priorities. The implementation of the strategy, that is the allocation of work plans to the relevant personnel and committees, should be undertaken by an implementation committee, which also has an important function in monitoring the rolling out of the strategy and offering its assessment of it at the mid-point in its lifespan, which will be June 2022.



"Working in partnership with Ulster GAA provides the perfect synergy for us as a Fire & Rescue Service to help target young drivers and passengers aged 16 – 24 with our virtual reality road safety education programme- 'Your Choice!'"

PADDY GALLAGHER

ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE & RESCUE OFFICER,
NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

CASE STUDY



CASEMENT PARK

Ulster GAA has, for over a decade now, been striving to develop a Provincial Stadium for the Association in Ulster, which will be recognised as a symbol of the GAA's contribution to our community and provide a catalyst for the further promotion of Gaelic Games in Belfast.

Casement Park, which first opened in 1953, is the home of Antrim GAA and Ulster GAA is determined to see the venue transformed to become the iconic stadium for the GAA in Ulster for future generations.

Following the collapse of the proposals to build a shared multi-purpose stadia at the Maze/Long Kesh site in 2009, Ulster GAA, along with our sporting partners in association football and rugby union, submitted separate proposals detailing our strategic stadia needs to the NI Executive.

In 2014, just days before the planned commencement of a 38,000 capacity stadia at the site, a judicial review brought by a local residents' group, which resulted in a quashing of the associated planning permission, prevented works from beginning and the venue has been left in a state of disrepair ever since. During this time both Windsor Park (IFA) and Kingspan Ravenhill (UBIRFU) have been transformed and have been operating successfully for both bodies since 2016.

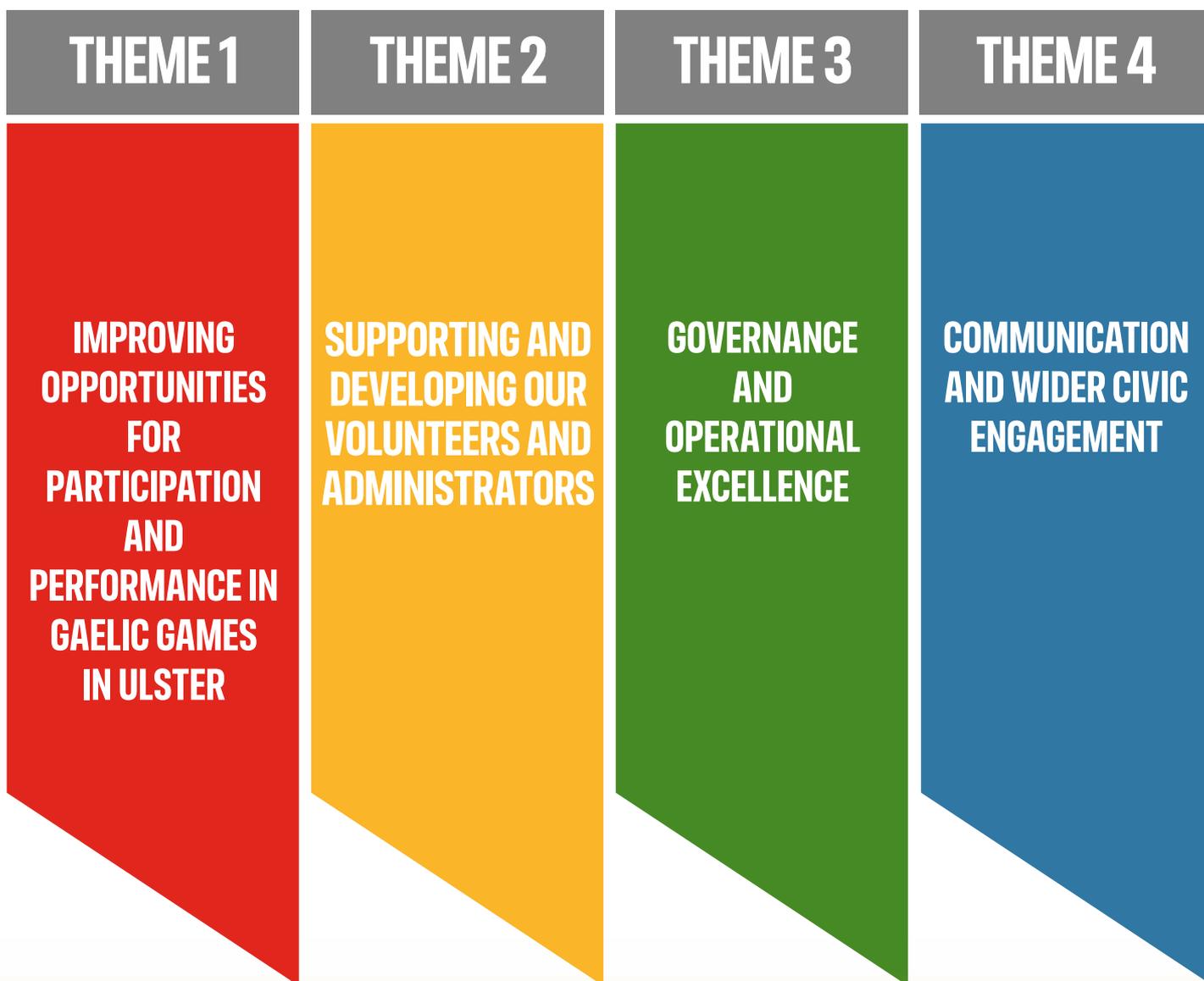
Ulster GAA, with the support of all nine counties, subsequently submitted a second planning application for the project in early 2017. The submission of the fresh planning application for a reduced 34,000 capacity stadium at the site unfortunately coincided with the collapse of the NI Assembly and Executive Institutions and the application process remained unresolved for over three and a half years. However, the Executive's Infrastructure Minister Nichola Mallon announced on 13 October 2020 that she was recommending the planning application for approval and there is renewed optimism that work could finally start on the new stadium during 2021.

STEPHEN MCGEEHAN

CASEMENT PARK, PROJECT SPONSOR

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

From the research conducted, the consultation engagement that took place and from the recently published Club Audit report, valuable feedback was generated that helped formulate four key themes. These four themes (below) have emerged and, in turn, provide the framework for the strategy:





STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 1

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN GAELIC GAMES IN ULSTER

Player development is primarily about the environment that is created within the GAA at different levels. To explore this the GAA undertook extensive research and consultation in this field, which culminated in the publication of the Talent Academy and Player Development Review Committee Report (2019). It's key recommendations have since been adopted by the GAA at a national level, by Ulster GAA and other provincial bodies, who have all been tasked with building understanding and capacity in order to implement and embed the recommendations contained within that report. To do this Ulster GAA charged the Participation and Performance sub-committee with carefully considering the recommendations from the report and how those might best be translated to the context that exists within Ulster GAA.

Players in Ulster counties expect an environment in which they can derive all the benefits of a positive GAA developmental experience. Parents deserve guidance, support, and leadership when it comes to making sure their child thrives through their involvement within the Association. Coaches should both deliver and receive the most life-enriching interactions as possible whilst our clubs should be promoted as the connection and foundation point for Gaelic Games participation and player development within their communities.

This section sets out the objectives and some of the high-level actions that have been developed. These have been part of the wider consultation and engagement, internally and with external stakeholders, during the formulation of this strategy.



"Sustaining the vision of the GAA's founders to grow our national games from the club first, we want to develop not just the player but people who will be active for life through their own positive experience of Gaelic Games. It's these people who sustain and build our communities through our games. The strategies set out by Ulster GAA will be instrumental to the success of our games development vision nationally."

SHANE FLANAGAN

DIRECTOR OF COACHING & RESEARCH, GAA

OBJECTIVES

1.1

To lead and support Ulster counties to develop and implement a comprehensive and co-ordinated games development programme covering all grades and all codes from both urban and rural perspectives within the context of wider social and demographic trends.

1.2

To guide, lead and support Ulster counties to create and implement a coherent and integrated player pathway model which is inclusive of participation, talent development and high performance.

1.3

To embed a fit for purpose model of coaching practice and implement National GAA coaching structures that reflect the FTEM framework (Foundation, Talent, Elite, Mastery).

1.4

To provide clubs with support, guidance, and resources to enhance participation and improve performance levels.

1.5

To develop and implement a robust research, policy and insights framework in order to establish a strong evidence base for both planning and decision making at club, county and provincial levels.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 1

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN GAELIC GAMES IN ULSTER

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
GAMES		
<p>1.1 To lead and support Ulster counties to develop and implement a comprehensive and co-ordinated games development programme covering all grades and all codes from both urban and rural perspectives, within the context of wider social and demographic trends.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Appoint a fixtures co-ordinator(s) at Provincial and County level to improve liaison and logistical arrangements between key stakeholders (i.e. schools, colleges, club, and counties).</p>	<p>1.1.1 Number of fixtures co-ordinators appointed.</p>
	<p>1.1.2 Undertake a referee recruitment drive to support an increased games programme.</p>	<p>1.1.2 Number of referees recruited to support games programmes.</p>
	<p>1.1.3 Ensure counties are supported to put in place a consistent and well-balanced programme of club games throughout the year with an emphasis on more playing opportunities for all [I]. Particular attention needs to be afforded juveniles arising, in particular, from life demands (i.e. training, education & employment).</p>	<p>1.1.3 Number of counties engaged and supported to deliver a consistent programme of games for adults and juvenile players.</p>
	<p>1.1.4 Support counties to introduce the following age grades - U13, U15, U17 - at club level.</p>	<p>1.1.4 Number of counties that have introduced U13, U15 and U17 age grades.</p>
	<p>1.1.5 Fully participate in, support, and enable a review of higher education and post primary activity competitions in order to maximise opportunities for players to participate and perform at a level of their choosing.</p>	<p>1.1.5 Active participation in and co-operation with the review and full compliance with the findings and recommendations arising from this work.</p>
	<p>1.1.6 Educate and support counties to better understand the role, remit and ethos underpinning the FTEM framework and development squads and ensure that development squad training and competitions dates are included in both school and county calendars.</p>	<p>1.1.6 Number of counties that have included development squad training and competition dates in their County Calendars No of counties with an improved understanding of the role, remit, and ethos of Development Squads.</p>
	<p>1.1.7 Develop inclusive games opportunities for marginalised populations, people with disabilities and ethnic minority communities.</p>	<p>1.1.7 Number of games opportunities organised within each county for the designated groups, which measurably improve inclusion.</p>
	<p>1.1.8 Provide support and best practice guidelines to counties that are interested in delivering informal recreational games programmes.</p>	<p>1.1.8 Number of counties providing informal recreational games programmes.</p>

THEME 1

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN GAELIC GAMES IN ULSTER

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT		
<p>1.2 To guide, lead and support Ulster counties to create and implement a coherent and integrated player pathway model, which is inclusive of participation, talent development and high performance.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Educate and support club and county officers, administrators, coaching staff and teachers to understand and reflect on their role in adapting the FTEM framework [III] (Foundations, Talent, Elite, Mastery) to suit their own context.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Number of officers, administrators, coaching staff, and teachers with an improved understanding of the FTEM framework as established by baseline data.</p>
	<p>1.2.2 Review county specific approaches to both Team and Player Development considering the FTEM framework (endorsed by GAA Central Council) and develop opportunities for coaches and players to progress within the framework.</p>	<p>1.2.2 Number of counties with a coherent and integrated player development policy/plan in place. Review completed and priorities for action identified and published.</p>
	<p>1.2.3 Develop, consult on and resource plans to ensure that both Hurling, and Gaelic Football are prospering across Ulster counties. As Hurling presents the greatest opportunity for growth, particular emphasis should be afforded to it.</p>	<p>1.2.3 Action Plan for the development of Hurling and Gaelic Football in Ulster formulated and resourced.</p>
	<p>1.2.4 Provide support and guidance to Ulster Camogie, Ulster Ladies Gaelic Football and Ulster Handball to promote collaborations designed to develop and implement initiatives aimed at growing these codes across Ulster counties.</p>	<p>1.2.4 Collaborative Action Plan to support the development of Ulster Camogie, Ulster Ladies Gaelic Football and Ulster Handball formulated and resourced.</p>
COACH AND COACH DEVELOPMENT		
<p>1.3 To embed a fit for purpose model of coaching practice and implement national GAA coaching structures that reflect the FTEM framework.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Explore and, where appropriate, implement flexible methods of delivery, which may include the use of IT and are compatible with blended learning, that can be used at provincial and county levels to enhance coach education.</p>	<p>1.3.1 New learning resources, methods, and techniques within an overall rejuvenated curriculum for coach development in the Province.</p>
	<p>1.3.2 Provide formal and informal coach development opportunities at participation, performance and high-performance levels for teachers, coaches [club and academy] and service providers.</p>	<p>1.3.2 Delivery of a multi-tiered programme of coach development with evidence of enjoyment and learning by participants.</p>

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 1

IMPROVING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE IN GAELIC GAMES IN ULSTER

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
CLUB DEVELOPMENT		
1.4 To provide clubs with support, guidance, and resources to enhance participation and improve performance levels.	1.4.1 Develop, consult on and resource a club coaching and games development planning resource designed to increase and sustain levels of engagement and involvement in Gaelic games at club level [III].	1.4.1 Production of a club coaching and games development planning resource to support progress across a spectrum of options which may include amalgamations of teams and/or clubs.
RESEARCH INSIGHTS		
1.5 To develop and implement a robust research, policy, and insights framework to establish a strong evidence base for both planning and decision making at a club county and provincial level.	1.5.1 Develop a Research and Insights Framework for Ulster Council GAA.	1.5.1 Research Framework agreed and resourced.
	1.5.2 Undertake baseline research projects in specified areas to support decision making and policy development.	1.5.2 Baseline Research Projects completed.



"This strategy is the highly ambitious one I would expect from the Ulster Council GAA. Celebrating success forged from deep-rooted community foundations, the strategy also looks to further development from a "better never stops" perspective."

ANTOINETTE McKEOWN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SPORT NI

[I] The TAPD Review recommends a consistent programme of club's games from March to Mid-October; but attention needs to be given to the differential demands on underage players.

[II] FTEM is a user-friendly framework of sporting development that is representative of the 'whole of sport' pathway continuum. It integrates 3 key outcomes of sport participation: active lifestyle, sport participation and sport excellence.

[III] This may include the development of a club amalgamation toolkit.



CASE STUDY

DONEGAL GAA: CLG BHEART - BURT GAA

CLG Bheart / Burt GAA is a rural Donegal club situated close to the border with Derry, which was affiliated to the GAA in 1887. Under-age football and hurling was established in the 1970s. From the 1980s, we have fielded adult teams in football and hurling, and in 2010 we included Camogie and Ladies Football. With 400 members we will be fielding four codes at senior level in 2021.

We have challenges around player numbers, player retention, volunteers, coaches for underage teams and competition with other sports in a small parish. Many players commute long distances to work or to study at third level education institutes, so player retention is vital to maintain our dual status. We need to retain adult players once they have finished playing and it is our mission to keep CLG Bheart central to local community life.

Ulster GAA's Club Maith initiative has provided us with the perfect opportunity to take a holistic view of our systems and procedures. After reviewing policies and procedures, we have now introduced short and long-term plans to address key areas. We have maximised the advice around planning, safeguarding, gold mark and coach education through the opportunities provided.

We hope to develop a full size second pitch, a clubhouse extension, a hurling wall and, increase our representation on Inishowen development and county teams. Culturally we have achieved the Fondúireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha award for Irish Language promotion, and we were selected to be part of the GAA Healthy Clubs programme. We hope that these initiatives can encourage a more diverse range of people to get involved in club life.

We value our community links and engagement with Donegal Sports Partnership, and we hope to avail of support from other partners to benefit the club.

"We're really pleased to see within the plan an emphasis on development of resources designed to increase and sustain levels of engagement and involvement in Gaelic games at club level and see the many potential benefits it offers our club as a result."

DONAL WALKER

CHAIRPERSON, CLG BHEART



CASE STUDY

ULSTER HURLING DEVELOPMENT

Hurling development is focused on improving the delivery of programmes across club, county, and schools' levels. The last number of years has seen the development of new clubs, particularly in our developing counties, and this work will be sustained and embedded over the lifetime of this strategic plan. Along with the development of new clubs, the games programme has been expanded with the Táin Óg hurling competition, which continues to grow, with competitions now played at U13 and U15 age grades and a new strand to be introduced at U17 level. Additional competition at a regional level helps give a comprehensive games programme across all the province.

The reconstruction of County Hurling Academy Squads to provide more meaningful games will continue to be developed to ensure that all Ulster counties are getting appropriate competition at a level commensurate with their ability. The Hibernia Cup at U15 level was introduced in 2019 and will be further developed along the lines of the Celtic Challenge. The Celtic Challenge provides competition for U17 squads and a new adult club competition, The Cuchulainn League, spanning Ulster, Connacht and North Leinster, which was due to commence in 2020, will now commence in the 2021 season. Coach education will be embedded in workshops, at the Provincial coaching conference and the delivery of national coaching awards. Ulster GAA will continue to work closely with Ulster Schools to increase the number of Hurling games played across all grades throughout the province.

The development of competitive county championships through the Joe McDonagh, Christy Ring, Nicky Rackard and the Lory Meagher Cups have been welcomed at senior level; however, these competitions have also eroded the opportunity to play senior championships at a provincial level and this is something we need to give more thought to in the time ahead.

"The commitment within this plan to hurling is further evidence that, through active collaboration and resourcing, the game in Ulster offers tremendous opportunities for growth. It's clear the future is bright for Ulster hurling."

JIMMY DARRAGH

PROVINCIAL GAMES MANAGER, ULSTER GAA

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 2

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The enhanced levels of scrutiny to which public organisations are exposed has led to a seemingly unrelenting pressure on them to meet higher standards of competence, governance, ethics, and good practice. Growing external pressures add weight to the considerable existing demands on volunteers inherent in the day-to-day task of running a GAA club. Thankfully, there is a great vibrancy and enthusiasm among our members, the fruit of tremendous and heartening dedication by people committed to the ideals of the Association. Nothing will contribute more to the success of the GAA over the period ahead than the quality of contribution made by our volunteers and administrators. The growing emphasis on training and development over the past forty years at every level of the Association has yielded positive results and underlines the importance of continued ongoing support in this specific area.

Limitations on the available time that volunteers have to invest in our Association must be recognised and respected. As such, there is a real need for cohesion around

initiatives at national and provincial level to ensure that the valuable resource of volunteer time is not diminished by, for example, duplication of training or unnecessary diversions. Continuous support for club officers must be a priority, recognising that the needs of our clubs are different. The recent Ulster GAA Club Audit demonstrates this diversity and confirms that the support required by clubs will differ significantly based on scale. New technologies and the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic present new challenges and opportunities around how training and support is provided, and our strategy and its delivery must achieve a fulfilling outcome for all participants.

Support for full time administrators within the GAA has not always been a priority and it is important that this strategy, quite rightly, marks a change of approach in this regard. Encouraging, therefore, the personal development of full-time staff within our counties and Province is an essential goal, as is highlighting the need for an understanding of mental health and its importance for our volunteers and administrators.



"Sport and community are interlinked within Ulster GAA. It is evident through their commitment to developing and investing in their volunteers, and their commitment to good practice, that Ulster GAA places a high value on the volunteers that are at the heart of its success."

DENISE HAYWARD
CEO, VOLUNTEER NOW

OBJECTIVES

- 2.1** Agree a clear division of training responsibilities with the GAA National Officer Development Committee (NODC).
- 2.2** Determine training priorities for administrators and volunteers in Ulster.
- 2.3** Identify technologies and learning approaches that will enhance volunteer development.
- 2.4** Embed training facilities for volunteers and administrators at the new Ulster GAA headquarters.
- 2.5** Investigate accreditation of programmes through external recognition/approval.
- 2.6** Develop communities of practice for officers within counties and province.
- 2.7** Facilitate administrator development within the higher education environment.
- 2.8** Hold a bi-annual conference on volunteering and administration, offering bespoke workshops.
- 2.9** Develop a comprehensive policy and plan on funding personal development for staff.
- 2.10** Work with other National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on training on training programmes for employees.
- 2.11** Consider the appointment of a dedicated HR Manager for Ulster GAA.
- 2.12** Develop an online mental health training course for our volunteers.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 2

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
COLLABORATION WITH NODC		
<p>2.1 Agree a clear division of training responsibilities with the National Officer Development Committee (NODC).</p>	<p>2.1.1 Meet with National Officer Development Committee (NODC) to discuss duplication in delivery of training and establish collaborative plans that complement each other.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Meeting takes place in Q1 of 2021 and ensure no duplication between National and provincial delivery.</p>
TRAINING PRIORITIES		
<p>2.2 Determine training priorities for administrators and volunteers in Ulster.</p>	<p>2.2.1 Establish training priorities through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examination of findings of Ulster GAA Club Audit. ▪ Completion of questionnaire by club officers in Province. 	<p>2.2 Statement of training priorities for the term of the new strategy.</p>
	<p>2.2.2 Identify training priorities specific to the needs of smaller clubs and pool volunteers from these clubs to enhance delivery of appropriate training.</p>	
TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE VOLUNTEER LEARNING		
<p>2.3 Identify technologies and learning approaches that will enhance volunteer training and development.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Work with third level institutions in the Province and other stakeholders to identify most appropriate technologies and learning approaches to enhance training and development opportunities for our volunteers.</p>	<p>2.3.1 Agreed statement of technologies and learning approaches to be used in first two years of new strategy.</p>
EMBED TRAINING FACILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS AT THE NEW ULSTER GAA HEADQUARTERS		
<p>2.4 Embed training facilities for volunteers and administrators at the new Ulster GAA headquarters.</p>	<p>2.4.1 Incorporate within the design of the new Ulster GAA Headquarters (proposed) accommodation for officer training and volunteer development opportunities that can facilitate small (30-50 persons) and large (150 - 250 persons) groups and permit the effective use of the most modern technologies and training approaches currently available. e.g. webinars etc. (draw on experience of use of Microsoft Teams and webinars in creating resilience during Covid-19 lockdown).</p>	<p>2.4.1 Development of plans for new headquarters that incorporates appropriate training facilities.</p>

THEME 2

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION FOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAMMES		
2.5 Investigate accreditation of programmes through external recognition/approval.	2.5.1 Identify suitable courses that would enhance volunteer engagement.	2.5.1 Formulation of a list of suitably accredited courses.
	2.5.2 Secure a formal system of accreditation (through credits offered by Awarding Bodies) that will generate greater uptake by volunteers.	2.5.2 Create new courses and link with external accreditors.
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE		
2.6 Develop communities of practice for officers within counties and province.	2.6.1 Development officer to initiate communities of practice within counties.	2.6 Rollout meetings to facilitate communities of practice for club secretaries, treasurers, PROs and others as required.
	2.6.2 Facilitate communities of practice for specific officers within the county and province.	
COLLABORATION WITH HIGHER EDUCATION		
2.7 Facilitate administrator development within the higher education environment.	2.7.1 Meet with third level institutions to engage the student population with programmes aimed at supporting and developing administrators and volunteers.	2.7.1 Programmes are developed and a pilot scheme of internships at county and provincial level is put in place.
VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE		
2.8 Hold a bi-annual conference on volunteering and administration offering bespoke workshops.	2.8.1 Organise first conference in 2021 and agree, through active engagement with clubs, specific areas of education and training that should be prioritised.	2.8.1 Conference takes place and proportionate representation from across all 9 counties is in attendance.
CPD FOR STAFF		
2.9 Develop a comprehensive policy and plan on funding personal development for staff.	2.9.1 Embed a culture of continuous professional development in Ulster GAA and counties.	2.9.1 Review annually the organisation training plan.
	2.9.2 Provide an annual budget within Ulster GAA and across the 9 counties to invest in staff training.	2.9.2 Report on how training made available is benefitting the individual and team.
	2.9.3 Identify training needs analysis as part of staff reviews and team meetings.	2.9.3 Training needs identification to be included within performance reviews and a quarterly needs analysis circular to all staff.
	2.9.4 Develop a training plan for individual staff, teams, and the organisation.	2.9.4 Plans to be submitted and approved annually.
	2.9.5 Provide safe and flexible staff work arrangements to enable the continuation of operations during unexpected environmental changes.	2.9.5 Appropriate policies to be issued to all staff and staff provided with necessary resources.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 2

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
COLLABORATION WITH OTHER NGBS		
2.10 Work with other National Governing Bodies (NGBs) on training programmes for employees.	2.10.1 Identify and collaborate with other Governing Bodies and stakeholders who share an interest in staff development.	2.10.1 Review the shared training plan annually.
	2.10.2 Establish current best practice and apply to emerging Ulster GAA staff training plan.	2.10.2 Report on training undertaken and how it benefits the individual and team.
	2.10.3 Develop a shared training plan across NGBs that will benefit Ulster GAA and its staff working with Sport Ireland and Sport NI.	2.10.3 Include within overall Governance Plan as approved annually by Sport NI.
APPOINTMENT OF HR MANAGER		
2.11 Consider the appointment of a dedicated HR Manager for Ulster GAA.	2.11.1 Seek part funding from GAA Central Council for an initial fixed term appointment (3 years).	2.11.1 Appointment of HR Manager.
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT		
2.12 Develop an online Mental Health training course for our volunteers.	2.12.1 Prepare a course that will increase the understanding of mental health and its importance for volunteers and how to promote positive mental health in young people.	2.12.1 Roll out of course.



"I have worked with Ulster GAA for a number of years and I have met with dedicated and professional representatives of an organisation which demonstrates the core values of respect, inclusion, volunteerism and community. At a time when society in Ireland is going through a pandemic, the values of the GAA within communities is recognised more than ever. The commitment and dedication shown by volunteers to support vulnerable members of our communities is what makes the GAA such a wonderful body, unmatched in organisation, governance and professionalism."

PAULA HILMAN

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA



ULSTER
GAA

**CLUB &
VOLUNTEER
CONFERENCE**

CASE STUDY



TYRONE GAA: DUNGANNON THOMAS CLARKES

Dungannon Thomas Clarke's GAA club is an urban club which was founded in 1917 and is located at O'Neill Park within the Ballysaggart Ward of Dungannon town, one of the Top 20 'Most Deprived' Super Output Areas in relation to income, health, education and training in the North.

The club is the heartbeat of the town with 450 members (170 youth and 280 adult). Players who have represented our club, have also done so for local schools and county teams, specifically at all levels for Tyrone. We are a thriving club and have had to adapt to the challenges of modern society to sustain our activity.

The demographics have changed in recent decades due to migration and a lack of local housing. There are now four primary schools in the catchment area and the growth of a diverse community in the local school population has, in turn, generated players from many backgrounds. We have identified areas where we can improve coaching provision, essential to encourage new players to participate in our club's activities and sustain existing ones.

Ulster GAA have helped the club through Club Officer Training programmes, providing us with the confidence to initiate development programmes; upgrade our club gym and undertake pitch drainage to improve our facilities. In recent years we achieved Club Maith accreditation, which we saw as an acknowledgement of the work we did to improve club governance and enhance the club. We want to further promote our identity and build the GAA community within Dungannon and the surrounding area and support local health and well-being through sport, culture and local events.

Redevelopment plans in the 'pipeline' include a changing pavilion that will create a community sporting and cultural hub for the area. We strongly endorse community and inclusion and a modern building that facilitates everyone and caters for Aodh Ruadh LGFC and the wider community is central to our plans.

"We're really pleased to see the emphasis placed on volunteer training and development within this strategic plan. To achieve our ambition of growing our presence in Dungannon, reaching out to members of the community from diverse backgrounds, encouraging them to become part of our club, and indeed building an exciting future for all our members, this type of continual development is vital."

JOHN McNULTY

CHAIRPERSON, DUNGANNON THOMAS CLARKE'S

CASE STUDY



ANTRIM GAA: GAELFAST PROJECT

Gaelic games in Belfast and Antrim could be said to be at a crossroads. Historically, Antrim GAA has always had a coaching and games branch. Financial support has always been made available from the GAA at a National level and the county has always been grateful for it. But as far back as 2016, leadership within the GAA in Antrim, Ulster and at a National level had accepted that a continuation of the status quo could no longer be an option. Their answer was Gaelfast: a pioneering approach to reignite enthusiasm and increase involvement in Gaelic games in Antrim and Belfast, Ireland's second city. Our mission is simply 'All County, All Codes and All Communities'. From its inception, it was clear that Gaelfast must help the county and city grow together. Our project management and reporting procedures could be referred to as being 'gold standard' and we have exciting plans.

This approach to promoting 'All Codes' is enshrined in the 2020 Games Development Plan (GDP) authorised by Antrim GAA. Funding from GAA HQ for delivering this plan constituted 56% of the budget for Gaelfast for 2020. Over time our goal is to reduce the funding reliance on GAA HQ somewhat to 50%, with a mixed funding package, which includes support from the Saffron Business Forum, Club Aontroma, businesses and public authorities.

During 2019, the first year of operation, Gaelfast met 86% of targets that had been set and agreed. One example was the pilot of the new primary-school focused GAA 5 Star Centre initiative involving 16 schools in Belfast and Antrim. Schools enrolment for September 2020 increased by more than 400%, to almost 80. Under our new WinGGs (Women in Gaelic games) initiative, Gaelfast is forging partnerships with Ladies Gaelic football and Camogie. During its first full year of operation, Gaelfast spearheaded unparalleled levels of engagement in pursuit of its goals. Stakeholder sessions across the county attracted nearly 120 representatives from local clubs. An online Club Membership survey received almost 2,300 responses. An online audit of needs and strengths of individual Clubs has been completed and proved very informative. All of this will inform a ten-year Gaelfast Plan to be launched at the start of 2021. By then a new regional stadium at Casement Park, long-promised and much-needed, should be assured to complement the new Gaelfast Plan.

DR. PAUL DONNELLY

REGENERATION DIRECTOR, GAELFAST, ANTRIM GAA

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 3

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Greater involvement and more active oversight may be evident in recent years in respect of GAA governance, but the area continues to be best understood as 'a work in progress', as reflected in Ulster GAA's experience and research. The trend toward increasing disclosure regarding governance and risk oversight implies a need for reliable methods of operationalising governance.

At a Provincial level, Ulster GAA is committed to the aim of good governance and led the way by appointing two independent board members to its Management Committee in 2017, the first Provincial Council to strengthen its governance approach in this way. Moreover, the Ulster GAA Management Committee undertook independent training on good governance in May 2019, following election of new members to the management team, under the leadership of its current President Oliver Galligan.

While Ulster GAA is accountable for oversight of the governance process, our counties and clubs are responsible for implementing the policies and procedures through which governance occurs at their level.

Ulster GAA is responsible for understanding—and indeed for advising the Association on—the processes through which governance occurs within the organisation and is accountable for the results of those processes.

The sheer complexity of governance and the huge number of related procedures and other mechanisms in a community, sporting and cultural organisation, which operates across two jurisdictions may indicate a need for a constant review of its governance operating model. This being recognised, good practice does exist within our clubs and counties; however, the ever changing and demanding environment in which they operate presents constant challenges. We now need this good practice to be connected, rationalised, and organised to provide the consistent guidance and protection that our units require.

The governance operating model developed through the priority areas listed overleaf, has the potential to address this need and thus protect the esteem within which the Association is held and operates.



"The Police Service of Northern Ireland has an extremely good relationship with Ulster GAA from our recent work together on initiatives including internet safety and online educational programmes, the launch of the successful *Live to Play* road safety programme and the *One Punch Can Kill* programme to raise awareness of the devastating effects these incidents can have the whole community."

JASON MURPHY

DETECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT, POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

OBJECTIVES

3.1

To ensure systems, processes and structures are in place to safeguard clubs, counties, and the Provincial Council.

3.2

The GAA within Ulster continues to be held in high esteem and people with the appropriate skills are welcomed for their contribution.

3.3

To assist counties and clubs to do the right things in the right way and by the right time.

3.4

All counties within Ulster to identify areas for the development and promotion of the GAA.

3.5

Ensure Safeguarding is embedded throughout the organisation and compliance with GAA Policies and Procedures within all constituent units.

3.6

To deliver a new, fit for purpose Provincial Stadium for the GAA in Ulster at Casement Park, Belfast.

3.7

To provide a modern, fit for purpose headquarters for Ulster GAA.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 3

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
SUSTAINABILITY		
<p>3.1 To ensure robust systems, processes and structures are in place to safeguard clubs, counties and the Provincial Council.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Carry out a governance 'health check' across all 9 counties.</p>	<p>3.1.1 All 9 counties to be reviewed within 12 months (i.e. by January 2022). Volunteers will be appropriately supported to ensure they are aware of the standards expected of them and have well defined structures within which to perform their duties.</p>
	<p>3.1.2 Develop a sustainability model for the GAA within Ulster.</p>	<p>3.1.2 Ulster GAA to hold one-to-one meetings with counties every 6 months to review all aspects of corporate governance within the Counties and develop a mutually beneficial forum for the exchange of information.</p>
	<p>3.1.3 Fully utilise the new GAA ticketing system and make Ulster GAA a cashless body.</p>	<p>3.1.3 Continue working on ticketing via online and securing additional outlets/ other opportunities to reduce reliance on cash with the goal of becoming a cashless entity by 2022.</p>
	<p>3.1.4 Ensuring appropriate management information systems are in place.</p>	<p>3.1.4 Confirmation of the approved GAA management information system accompanied by appropriate training for key personnel.</p>
	<p>3.1.5 Recognise the two separate jurisdictions within which Ulster GAA operates, and the implications on the GAA in the Province as a result.</p>	<p>3.1.5 Ensure the governance requirements of Sport NI and Sport Ireland are met. Ulster GAA to take action to improve gender balance by March 2021 in line with Sport NI requirement for effective organisations. Establish a specific sub-committee of Ulster GAA tasked with supervision of the challenges associated with dual jurisdiction in Ireland and the political and cultural environments within which Ulster GAA operates. The immediate focus of this group should be to identify and respond to the challenges arising from the UK's decision to withdraw its membership of the European Union effective from January 2021.</p>

THEME 3

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
GROWTH		
<p>3.2 The GAA within Ulster continues to be held in high esteem and people with the appropriate skills are welcomed for their contribution.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Create conditions which continue to encourage competent and qualified people into the GAA and ensure their contribution is valued.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Review the existing committee structures and how people are appointed to these within 12 months of this plan being published.</p>
	<p>3.2.2 Develop a County Maith template.</p>	<p>3.2.2 Establish a working group to examine an appropriate model for counties.</p>
	<p>3.2.3 Review Club Maith to include a 'Good Governance Guide.'</p>	<p>3.2.3 Develop and deliver the template for implementation by the end of this strategy period. Club Maith to include 'Good Governance Guide' with the aim of ensuring implementation by the end of this strategy.</p>
GUIDANCE		
<p>3.3 To assist counties and clubs to do the right things in the right way and by the right time.</p>	<p>3.3.1 Develop a dedicated HR function within the GAA to manage staffing within all counties. Ideally this will be supported by a dedicated HR appointment (as per theme 2).</p>	<p>3.3.1 HR policy rolled out within each of the counties and overseen by the Provincial body.</p>
	<p>3.3.2 The GAA to investigate best practice in Governance and bring recommendations to Ulster Council Management.</p>	<p>3.3.2 Ulster GAA to review progress on a quarterly basis.</p>
	<p>3.3.3 Qualitative and quantitative review of the Ulster GAA 3-year Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023.</p>	<p>3.3.3 Ulster GAA to review progress against this strategy on a quarterly basis and introduce remedial actions, as necessary.</p>
RELATIONSHIPS		
<p>3.4 All counties within Ulster to identify areas for the further development and promotion of the GAA.</p>	<p>3.4.1 All counties to have strategic plans, which constitute a blueprint for all stakeholders to embrace and deliver.</p>	<p>3.4.1 Work with all counties to ensure they have meaningful strategies in place by the end of this strategy period. These strategic activities should have priorities, actions and budgets aligned to funding.</p>
	<p>3.4.2 Support the continued integration of all codes towards the realisation of the 'One Club Model'</p>	<p>3.4.2 Continue to develop the one club model across all 9 counties through education and engagement across all relevant governing bodies.</p>
	<p>3.4.3 Promote an outward looking GAA within Ulster by enhancing its Corporate Social Responsibility activities across the Province.</p>	<p>3.4.3 Maintain regular engagement with the media and key influencers as well as developing a lobbying component to its work.</p>

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 3

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
SAFEGUARDING		
3.5 Ensure Safeguarding is embedded throughout the organisation and compliance exists with GAA Policies and Procedures within all constituent units.	3.5.1 Designated Liaison Persons and Children's Officers appointed at County and Club level.	3.5.1 Safeguarding Officers and all those who work with children within the Association are trained and vetted as required and relevant to their role.
	3.5.2 Safeguarding risk assessments and safeguarding statements reviewed and implemented as required.	3.5.2 Risk Assessments are completed, and Safeguarding Statements displayed across all constituent units.
	3.5.3 Club Support Advisory service implemented to assist clubs with key governance areas where they have not yet engaged with the Club Maith process.	3.5.3 Advisory service set up to assist clubs on governance issues and encourage take up of Club Maith.
CASEMENT PARK		
3.6 To deliver a new fit for purpose Provincial Stadium for the GAA in Ulster at Casement Park, Belfast.	3.6.1 To secure the granting of formal planning permission from Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Minister for approval for the Casement Park project.	3.6.1 Formal grant of planning permission issued by DfI - anticipated Spring 2021.
	3.6.2 To secure funding, business case and all necessary approvals to facilitate the Casement Park project starting on site in 2021.	3.6.2 Following formal granting of planning permission and delivery of pre-construction services mobilise start on site for Q4 2021.
	3.6.3 To issue the construction notice for the works contract for Casement Park to achieve a 34,500 capacity stadium.	3.6.3 To achieve full operational readiness of the stadium and play first Gaelic games fixture in the West Belfast venue for the first time since 2013.
ULSTER GAA HEADQUARTERS		
3.7 To provide a modern, fit for purpose headquarters for Ulster GAA.	3.7.1 To consult with key stakeholders to identify accommodation requirements for Ulster GAA, taking into account the changed environment brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.	3.7.1 Develop the concept with a view to bringing a proposal to the Ulster GAA Management Committee for approval.



ULSTER
GAA

CASE STUDY

DERRY GAA: DERRY CITY GAA REGENERATION PROJECT

The GAA has made a significant contribution to the urban communities of Derry City. More recently, in 2013, the UK City of Culture initiative and the provision of coaching resources through Derry County Board provided a focus on urban games promotion. In 2017, Ulster GAA appointed a working group (chaired by John Keenan, a former Chairperson of Derry GAA) to strategically plan a way forward for Gaelic games in the city and to identify and prioritise requirements for their development and promotion, similar to the work that had already been completed in Belfast and Cork.

Recognised as the fourth largest city in Ireland, Derry City is defined by a young and growing population, in turn providing a significant opportunity for the Association, albeit, constrained by a legacy of underinvestment in coaching, games development and facilities. Whilst investment by the GAA has taken place and proven to be very successful, further development is required to ensure GAA games and culture sustain this level of growth into the future.

Whilst the findings of the aforementioned report (above) point to a growing vibrancy of the GAA in Derry city, it lacks a strategic blueprint for stakeholders to embrace. The high levels of deprivation across parts of the city present a unique set of challenges for schools and clubs particularly around participation, retention, and access to facilities.

The ensuing actions taken because of this research, will form part of a further £10 million capital investment by clubs, Derry and Strabane Local District Council and other third parties as well as inform other strategic partners, encouraging their involvement in this exciting period in the growth of the GAA in Derry city.

"The commitment within this document towards a strategic approach to planning across all counties, including Derry, and the focus on counties identifying further opportunities for growth within their jurisdictions, is to be welcomed. It will support the case for further targeted funding of the GAA in Derry city and act as a blueprint for what can be achieved in other urban areas across Ulster, including Strabane, Newry and Lisburn, in the time ahead."

BOBBY FARREN

COACHING OFFICER, DERRY GAA

CASE STUDY

POPULATION SHIFTS IN ULSTER

The GAA is primarily about community. Communities, however, are not static entities and Ireland today is very different to that of 1884 when the GAA was founded or indeed that of 1903 when the Ulster Council itself was formed.

The landmark GAA Strategic Review published of 2002 stated,

"The greatest implications and challenges for the GAA of the future are to be found in growing cities, larger settlements across the country, satellite towns serving major cities and the increasing number of towns with populations of more than 5,000 people. The net result is that the effects of urbanisation are being felt across the entire country, including by village and rural clubs."

Almost 20 years later those prophetic words certainly ring true. We now have a more pluralistic society with a much higher non-national population, for example. The demographics of increasing numbers, shifting from the west of the island to the east, has resulted in 71% of the population of Ireland now living in two provinces – 39% in Leinster and 32% in Ulster. The population of the island has also steadily grown over the past 70 years with Ulster's population growing accordingly – indeed of the nine counties in the province only Donegal has witnessed a population decrease since the 2011 census.

As predicted back in 2002, changing demographics will present great challenges to us as an organisation – and these challenges will only increase in the coming decade. That is why part of our strategic direction moving forward will look beyond the three- year cycle of this Strategic Plan. Large areas of population in our Province have little or no GAA concentration and there is a significant body of work to build capacity within these growing population areas. An absence of suitable facilities and personnel will undoubtedly mean that progress may be limited but the recent success stories of East Belfast GAA and developments across parts of Derry City show what is possible. The learning from the ongoing Gaelfast initiative, a major investment in Greater Belfast and beyond, should also present us with experience and learning as we seek to address deficit issues in urban areas.

However, despite the upward population trajectory, general migration has and will continue to result in a population decrease in certain locales – particularly in rural areas. This will require us to think differently about how we cater for clubs and teams in these areas and a relaxation of rules surrounding club 'catchment areas' is something that will undoubtedly need consideration. A pilot at national level has been undertaken with several counties – including one in Ulster - and the findings from Ulster GAA's recent Club Audit show that it is the smaller clubs that face the greatest capacity challenge.

Sustainability is the overarching theme of this Strategic Plan. In some instances, this will mean building upon what is already there; in other cases, it will mean development from a low or, perhaps, even non-existent base and in other cases it will require creativity to protect and keep what is already in place. Each of these challenges present their own difficulties and obstacles to overcome and there is certainly no 'one size fits all' approach which will work in all these circumstances. Every club has its own set of challenges and, therefore, we must be flexible in our approach to their ongoing sustainability!

BRIAN McAVOY

PROVINCIAL SECRETARY, ULSTER GAA

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 4

COMMUNICATION AND WIDER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Against the background of the key themes of this strategy – sustainability and building capacity – allied to the current challenging circumstances facing our stakeholders, it is vital that we develop structures and activities for the period ahead, including around how we communicate and play our part in wider society.

Our Association must seek enhanced appreciation, firstly, through the development of links with local and central government where we must formally present our vision as the foremost sporting and cultural body on the island.

We are charged, also, with communicating the tremendous work of the Association throughout Ulster to the other three provinces and all other parts of the GAA. The culture and language engagement available to all our potential members must be focused, particularly through the medium of Irish and the further development of Scór.

The face of the GAA should be invigorated with our values and our people cherished equally, with this message broadcast extensively. A dedicated Ulster GAA channel should be actively considered to effectively put forward our message in the face of an ever-congested media space. Our current cross-community work must be further critically reviewed and challenged with the intention of making this work impactful.

In the current economic climate, a forum should be created to harness the expertise and commercial skills of all our partners and sponsors for the promotion of our games/competitions and other associated activities. Clearly an investment in a club open day would be beneficial to all, whilst it remains vital that we assist the training and resourcing of clubs in the use of social media as it emerges as the foremost channel of communication with many members, including our younger ones.



“Tá lúcháir ar Fhoras na Gaeilge dul i bpáirt le CLG Uladh leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn trí na clubanna agus na contaethe i gCúige Uladh. Cuidíonn tionscadail mar Gaeilge sa Chlub, Coirnéal na Gaeilge agus Plean Teagaisc ar leith do chlubanna go mór an Ghaeilge a chur i láthair an phobail agus cuireann siad go mór lena húsáid ag leibhéal an phobail.”

SEÁN Ó COINN

PRÍOMHFHEIDHMEANNACH, FORAS NA GAEILGE

OBJECTIVES

4.1

Positioning of the GAA and its unique status within the wider community.

4.2

Improve communication of the GAA's role in Ulster to all stakeholders.

4.3

Strengthen Irish cultural expression through the further normalisation of the Irish Language and further enhancement of Scór.

4.4

Promote inclusivity and community outreach.

4.5

Strengthen our commercial base through partnerships and enhanced marketing of our activities.

4.6

Work with partners to embed health and well-being messages to GAA members and the wider community.

4.7

Develop a clear digital marketing strategy to maximise engagement with our range of stakeholders.

4.8

Promote UN Sustainable Development Goals and Green issues within the GAA in Ulster.

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 4

COMMUNICATION AND WIDER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
POSITIONING OF THE GAA		
4.1 Positioning of the GAA and its unique status within the wider community.	4.1.1 Establish key contacts in each Local District Council and County Council to improve knowledge and understanding of the reach and social significance of the Association in Ulster.	4.1.1 Engage and meet with the 14 local authorities in the Province.
	4.1.2 Engage with local political parties with a presence across the 9 counties to forge stronger partnerships and working alliances.	4.1.2 Meetings with all political parties within the strategic plan timeframe.
	4.1.3 Promote an awareness of local council community plans and county council development plans to ensure GAA units are aware of such plans.	4.1.3 Local authority community plans circulated to all counties and clubs within this strategic plan timeframe.
	4.1.4 Promote the work of Ulster GAA with relevant Government Departments, statutory bodies and external agencies.	4.1.4 Two significant Community engagement forum events to take place within this strategic plan timeframe.
	4.1.5 Enhance and develop performance management and overall support arrangements for overseas GAA 'twinning partners.'	4.1.5 At least two formal meetings with twinning partners annually to agree and review ongoing twinning support initiatives.
IMPROVE OVERALL COMMUNICATION		
4.2 Improve communication of the GAA's role in Ulster to all stakeholders.	4.2.1 Devise a central communications calendar that spans all key areas of Provincial GAA, including all relevant input from Counties and clubs (as appropriate).	4.2.1 Development and implementation of a new communications calendar with Ulster GAA Departmental/County updates issued monthly.
	4.2.2 Improve the level of communication with our clubs, members, and counties.	4.2.2 Increased number of club newsletters issued - quarterly, Increase and schedule the number of meetings/briefings with counties, with a specific focus on enhanced communication/PR dimension.
	4.2.3 Better recognise the contribution that volunteers make in supporting GAA activities.	4.2.3 Increased messaging to recognise volunteer contributions - monthly.
	4.2.4 Improve level of supporter engagement around our primary games.	4.2.4 Improved supporter engagement activities at Ulster Championship games.
	4.2.5 Expand engagement with media on GAA activities.	4.2.5 Increase the number of GAA media communications issued on an annual basis and actively engage with key media platforms for Ulster GAA.

THEME 4 COMMUNICATION AND WIDER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
STRENGTHEN IRISH CULTURAL EXPRESSION		
<p>4.3 Strengthen Irish cultural expression through the further normalisation of the Irish Language and further enhancement of Scór.</p>	<p>4.3.1 Promote and enhance Scór activities. Establishment of a Provincial forum. Production of an advice guide for new clubs. Increased visibility of Scór Sinsear and Scór na nÓg.</p>	<p>4.3.1 Provincial forum held annually involving Club cultural officers and youth representatives. Production of an Advice Guide for new clubs. Increase number of clubs participating in Scór Sinsear and Scór na nÓg to 260 by the end of this Strategic Plan (to 70% of all registered clubs).</p>
	<p>4.3.2 Improve structure for promoting Irish Language and Cultural expression across our units.</p>	<p>4.3.2 Ensure functioning Irish Language and Culture committees are in place in each of the 9 counties. Create new networks and forums to improve structure and communication within Ulster. Develop an appropriate directory of club Irish Language and Cultural contacts.</p>
	<p>4.3.3 Promote the role and benefits of Club Irish Language Officers.</p>	<p>4.3.3 Provincial, County and Club calendar of Irish Language engagements and events to be available quarterly.</p>
	<p>4.3.4 Develop and deliver Irish Language teaching resources to clubs.</p>	<p>4.3.4 Increase the number of clubs with Irish Language Officers to 280 (75% of clubs) by end of the strategy timeframe. A teaching plan for clubs, in partnership with Ulster University, to be developed in Year 1 and updated bi-annually. No. 50 clubs to register for this Irish language qualification in Year 1 with increases in 10 every year thereafter within the strategy timeframe.</p>
PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH		
<p>4.4 Promote inclusivity and community outreach.</p>	<p>4.4.1 Increase the promotion of community inclusion within our clubs.</p>	<p>4.4.1 Minimally 50% of clubs with Community and Inclusion Policies in place and/or adoption of Inclusivity Charter. Minimally 50% of clubs with an Equality Policy in place. Minimally 50% of all clubs with a Disability and Special Needs Policy in place.</p>
	<p>4.4.2 Increase opportunities to attract participation from minority groups – principally through the Respect Initiative, promotional campaigns, Club cross-community links, promoting the GAA in non-traditional GAA schools, Outreach work within funded programmes etc.</p>	<p>4.4.2 Provide new opportunities for minority groups (BAME community, Protestant community, non-religious community, and Disability groups, amongst others) to engage with Gaelic Games.</p>
	<p>4.4.3 Use of the “Lá na gClub” concept to strengthen the clubs’ identity and promote community outreach in their areas.</p>	<p>4.4.3 Increase in club participation from minority groups. 50% of all clubs rolling out annual Lá na gClub events.</p>

STRATEGIC THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

THEME 4

COMMUNICATION AND WIDER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
ENHANCE COMMERCIAL BASE		
4.5 Strengthen our commercial base through partnerships and marketing of our activities.	4.5.1 Invest in the development of the Ulster GAA 'brand' and activities to increase Ulster GAA's profile.	4.5.1 Greater investment in the Ulster GAA 'brand'. Development of new Brand Guidelines and 'About us' documentation to support this initiative.
	4.5.2 Develop an Ulster GAA TV strategy to focus on 'live' and recorded games and associated activities.	4.5.2 Development of a digital streaming policy and a designated 'channel' for Ulster GAA. Specific agreement to be reached concerning the status of 'live' streaming of GAA matches in Ulster and implemented.
	4.5.3 Undertake a review of the current sponsorship model and enhance the profile of existing partners.	4.5.3 Completion of an agreed sponsorship model review and the implementation of associated recommendations. Delivery of a minimum of one 'GAA partner forum' per financial year.
EMBED HEALTH AND WELLBEING MESSAGE		
4.6 Work with partners to embed health and well-being messages to GAA members and the wider community.	4.6.1 Improve structure for communicating Health and Well-Being messages across our units.	4.6.1 Ensure functioning Health and Wellbeing committees are in place in each of the 9 counties.
	4.6.2 Clubs are involved in the promotion and delivery of health programmes.	4.6.2 A target of 85% of all clubs involved in Healthy Club project and / or structured Health promotion activities.
	4.6.3 Delivery of campaigns that support our clubs and their communities – around the themes of Physical Activity, Mental Health, Physical Health and Keeping Safe.	4.6.3 Maintain existing and develop new partnerships with health promotion organisations. Development of new health and well-being activities that club members can engage in.
	4.6.4 Improve level of supporter engagement around our primary games.	4.6.4 Improved supporter engagement activities at Ulster Championship games.

THEME 4 COMMUNICATION AND WIDER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
DEVELOP CLEAR DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY		
4.7 Develop a clear digital marketing strategy to maximise engagement with our range of stakeholders.	4.7.1 Review current digital activities and devise a new social media policy.	4.7.1 Development and implementation of new social media strategy with expert agencies.
	4.7.2 Ensure ulstergaa.ie meets the needs of the full range of GAA users and enhance this website provision on an on-going basis in line with consumer needs.	4.7.2 Ulstergaa.ie to undertake a full content refresh. Thereafter content owners to conduct monthly reviews & revisions of the same.
	4.7.3 Enhance capabilities in audio/visual communication technologies.	4.7.3 Improved usage and output from audio/visual technologies e.g. podcasts, webinars, radio. Appropriate training in the main digital media to be provided to relevant personnel.
PROMOTE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GREEN ISSUES		
4.8 Promote UN Sustainable Development Goals and Green issues within the GAA in Ulster.	4.8.1 Contribute to the National GAA Green Club Programme by providing link between GAA and DAERA and the relevant agencies in the six counties, and where required, link with local authorities and relevant agencies in respect of the clubs in the other three Ulster counties.	4.8.1 Represent Ulster GAA on regional Green Club Steering Group.
	4.8.2 Support Ulster Clubs involved in the Green Club Pilot Programme.	4.8.2 Ulster Clubs successful completion of the Green Club Pilot.
	4.8.3 Promote the Green Club Programme across all counties and clubs following pilot.	4.8.3 Increase in the number of clubs from Ulster involved in the Green Club Programme.

CASE STUDY

ULSTER GAA HANDBALL

The game of handball in Ulster is doing very well in the Four-Wall and One-Wall Codes. Moreover, Ulster players continue to perform well on both stages. One of our most exciting young players at the moment is Eoghan McGinnity, Monaghan Harps Club. He was successful in all codes last year, except for a narrow defeat in the All Ireland Minor Softball Singles final.

Clubs and parishes throughout Ulster continue to develop their facilities and Breacach Club in County Tyrone is leading the way, having just completed a new Four-Wall Court and several One-Wall courts inside the Club Complex. Indeed, also in Tyrone, the Carrickmore Club is similarly planning to build a new Four-Wall Court soon. During the next few years, we would like to see more One-Wall Courts being built, throughout the Province. They are relatively cheap to construct, at about Euro 500, and provide the basis for embedding the game at club level. One-Wall is played in over thirty countries worldwide, and there are several European and National competitions. In fact, our own Conor McElduff from Tyrone is the current World and European One-Wall champion.

For many years now, there have been concerns regarding the lack of handball in Derry and Fermanagh. It is important that we aim to improve this situation. A few One-Wall Courts have been established in Derry, but we need more facilities and a County Handball Committee to steer the future development of the sport. There has been a lot of progress in the promotion of female participation in handball in Ulster and, in this respect, the 'She's Ace' programme has proved to be a success story.

Covid-19 regulations have had a dramatic effect on our game. As an indoor sport our return to play in 2020 was delayed with only singles matches permitted and no more than six persons present in a host complex at any one time. The World Handball Championships are due to be hosted in Ireland this year (2021), so a Covid-19 vaccine is important before we know if this will happen. Finally, it hardly needs to be said, but more features on handball on national television and other media platforms remains imperative to help advertise handball as our oldest GAA sport.

CONOR McDONNELL
CHAIRPERSON, ULSTER HANDBALL



CASE STUDY

ULSTER GAA CLUB AUDIT 2020

Ulster GAA's Club Audit, where some 345 of 372 clubs across the Province made a full response, presents the Association with an ideal opportunity to understand the current position facing such clubs across the 9 counties. As clubs begin to rejuvenate in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to take stock of their membership and to use that knowledge to set in place plans to support their needs in the time ahead. Establishing a baseline position is the first step in deciding how far and how fast clubs must go in becoming, for example, more inclusive of people from all backgrounds. Headline figures only tell part of the story however, and it is important to examine the detail more closely to understand the nuances of the data.

The gender balance among those who participate in Gaelic games currently favours male players, who make up 58% of footballers and 42% of those in the hurlers/camogs. This overall picture masks some important differences between age groups, which, in turn, highlights some of the issues facing clubs when seeking to retain participants. At juvenile level (under 18), 44% of football players are female but this proportion falls to 31% among senior participants. In camogie, the drop-out rate from 45% of juvenile players to 43% of seniors remains much less significant.

Data from the audit also shows that 2% of current players are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, while 7% emerge from non-traditional GAA communities. At first glance, these percentages may seem low, but once again a more detailed examination reveals that among nursery-aged participants (up to 6 years), the proportion of players from BAME groups is 5%, while those from non-traditional backgrounds make up 10% of participants. Similarly, 3% of all participants are believed to have a disability but among nursery-aged children, the figure rises to 5%.

These percentage point differences may seem marginal, but they are indicative of a broader trend in which GAA clubs are making inroads into the hinterland of traditional catchment areas. In reaching out across communities and appealing to participants (and volunteers) who may have had no prior engagement with Gaelic games, GAA clubs in Ulster are increasingly likely to generate their own Zak Moradi, and clubs such as East Belfast GAA may flourish in the long term.

DAVID BARRETT

RESEARCH FELLOW, SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Our fifth Strategic Plan sets out a number of key objectives and specific actions that will be undertaken to deliver our overall ambition of charting a sustainable and prosperous future for our units, foremost amongst these being our clubs, whilst providing targeted growth in key areas.

The successful implementation of this plan is contingent on there being an ongoing, thorough monitoring policy in place. This will facilitate the systematic tracking of progress towards achieving the targets embedded within this document, deemed necessary to achieve its overall purpose.

Ulster GAA's elected volunteer committees will be responsible for this monitoring process and overall delivery of large sections of this plan, working in collaboration with individual counties and, where appropriate, other agencies and units.

Two other aspects of the monitoring of this plan's implementation will ensure it remains a key priority during the next three years: Firstly, it will be subject to a twice annual review by Ulster GAA's Management Committee and be a standing item on wider meetings of the Council throughout its lifespan. Secondly, it will be subject to a formal, mid-term review in June 2022 when a detailed performance assessment will take place and ensure timely implementation of the plan.

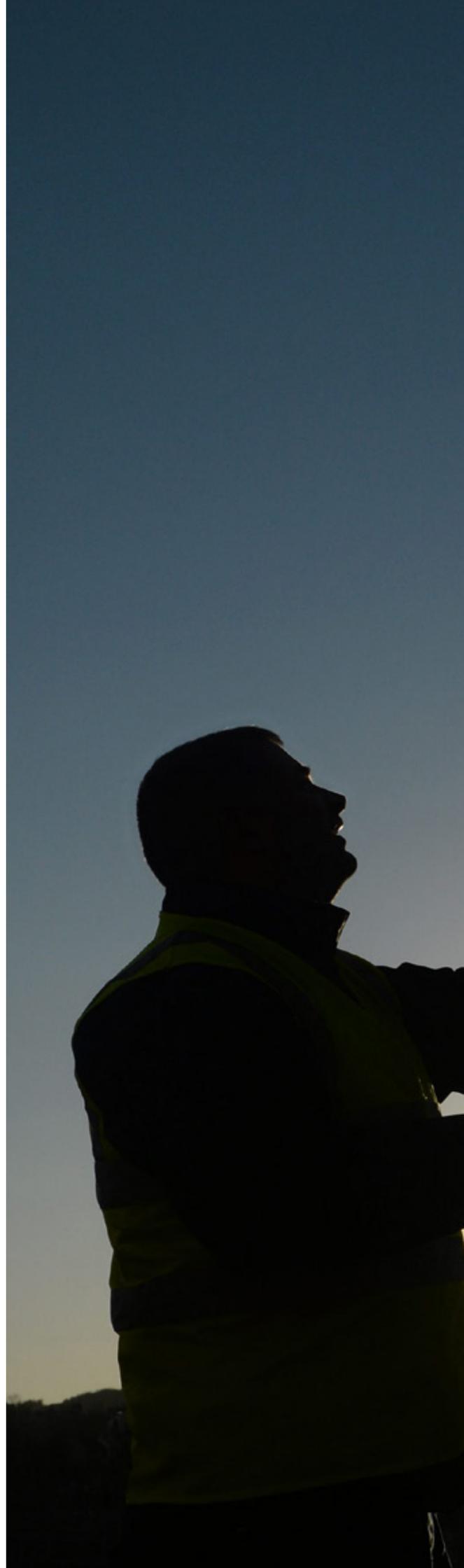
Finally, the Provincial Secretary (Rúnaí) will present strategy implementation updates to the GAA National Executive Committee and the President of Ulster GAA will, similarly, offer regular status reports to both the National Management Committee and Central Council, as required.



"In partnership with the Irish FA and Ulster Rugby, Ulster GAA has been a committed partner within the EU PEACE IV-funded 'Sport Uniting Communities' project. It is a truly inspiring initiative which uses sport as a vehicle to bring people from a wide-range of communities together, where they can learn from each other and help create a more peaceful and cohesive society."

GINA McINTYRE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following were members of the Strategic Planning Group:

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(PROFESSOR OF SPORT POLICY AND MANAGEMENT AT ULSTER UNIVERSITY)

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(FORMER ARD-STIÚRTHÓIR CLG)

BOBBY FARREN

(DERRY GAA)

PAUL DONNELLY

(GAELFAST AND ANTRIM GAA)

KIERAN CALLAGHAN

(CAVAN GAA)

DERMOT McCAUGHEY

(TYRONE AND ULSTER GAA)

GERRY DOHERTY

(ULSTER LGFA)

URSULA KEARNEY

(ULSTER CAMOGIE ASSOCIATION)

CONOR McDONNELL

(ULSTER HANDBALL)

ANNE GARVEY

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(ARMAGH AND ULSTER GAA)

PAUL MAXWELL

(TYRONE AND ULSTER GAA)

ALEC McQUILLAN

(ANTRIM AND ULSTER GAA)

DIARMAID MARSDEN

(ULSTER GAA)

BRIAN MALLON

(ULSTER GAA)

STEPHEN McGEEHAN

(ULSTER GAA)

EUGENE YOUNG

(ULSTER GAA)

BRIAN McAVOY

(RÚNAÍ AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE ULSTER GAA)

2020 AUDIT OF THE GAA CLUBS OF ULSTER



16 FOOTBALL
8 HURLING/CAMOGIE
AVERAGE NO OF COACHES



42%
ARE REGISTERED
WITH CLUB MAITH

€111,500

AVERAGE CLUB INCOME



€104,500

AVERAGE CLUB EXPENDITURE



2/3
TAKE PART
IN SCÓR
COMPETITIONS



1/3
MAKE USE OF
IRISH LANGUAGE
IN CLUB PROMOTIONS

90%



OWN THEIR OWN CLUB GROUNDS

73%



USE PUBLICLY OWNED SPORTS FACILITIES

46%
HAVE A CLUB
PLAN IN PLACE



62%
SATISFIED/
VERY SATISFIED
WITH THEIR COUNTY BOARD





ULSTER GAA



ulstergaa.ie