

# JANUARY 2021 NUACHTLITIR Eanáir 2021



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By Cian Murphy

## GAA CLUB SEASON WILL NOT BE COMPROMISED



**FEARGAL MCGILL HAS SAID THAT THE GAA IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT ANY DELAY ON THE INTER-COUNTY SEASON WILL NOT HAVE A NEGATIVE KNOCK-ON EFFECT ON CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES.**

With Level 5 restrictions still in place and with the official resumption of inter-county training already postponed from its proposed January 15 date, there is speculation around the proposed July finish for the All-Ireland senior finals.

However, McGill, the GAA Director of Club, Player and Games Administration, has sent a message to club players to reassure them that their window of championship activity will not be forgotten about.

He said: "There will be a club season. Regardless of whether the inter-county season is delayed or not, our intention is not to compromise on the time available to clubs.

"If the inter-county season were to get delayed, we would look at pushing the concluding stages of the AIB Provincial and All-Ireland Championships into January of 2022. This would ensure the overall period of time available in the calendar for counties to stage their internal club championships would not be negatively affected by any delay in getting the inter county season up and running."

The success of the split season model last summer has led to a split season being put in place for this year, due to start with Allianz League competition in February and leading into a Provincial and All-Ireland Championship that would have finals finished by July 18.

Counties will still be free to organise and play club games without their county players in cup or league competitions during this time, and with a definite post July calendar in place for when AIB Club Championships would be taking place.

Now that Level 5 restrictions are extended into February and possibly even March, Croke Park will have contingency plans for how inter-county competition formats may need to be reconstituted to finish on time.

McGill's message is that the inter-county programme will be rejigged rather than be allowed to run on indefinitely at the expense of the time available for club championships, and that any calendar overruns will be kept to the bare minimum.

He also stated that it was important to remember that a number of 2020 Club Competitions and county finals at Senior, Intermediate and Junior levels remain uncompleted, and these will have to be factored into the overall fixture plans in each county in 2021.

Elsewhere, McGill has said GAA members need to appreciate that if it does become the new norm that it will take time for the split season model to settle in.

He added: "One thing I would ask of club players is to be patient. In introducing a split season we are talking about changing a culture and a way of doing things and it will take time for county boards to adjust competition structures and timings. They will not all get it right on the first go; but over a period of two or three years, if the split season is persisted with, I am hugely confident

that Counties will be able to put in place an improved club programme and greater certainty for our club players."

Club matches are not permitted during heightened Covid-19 restrictions with only elite level sport including senior inter-county Gaelic games being permitted once there is an easing of the current lockdown.

If the inter-county programme was to be delayed significantly, fixture makers are looking at the concluding stages of the AIB All-Ireland club championships moving into January 2022.

But like everything else in the Pandemic, a rapidly changing situation being dictated to by the level of virus in the community means that all dates will be reviewed as the need arises.



By Cian Murphy

## UACHTARÁN: GAA FACILITIES MAY BE NEEDED TO HELP WITH VACCINATION



**JOHN HORAN HAS CALLED ON GAA CLUBS TO BE PREPARED TO OFFER THEIR FACILITIES AND MAKE THEM AVAILABLE TO THEIR LOCAL DOCTORS AND PHARMACISTS TO HELP IN THE DELIVERY OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

In a farewell address to be included in the next club newsletter, and focused on the GAA's club membership ahead of him handing over the baton of Uachtarán CLG to Larry McCarthy at congress next month, John Horan has said that GAA clubs can once again answer the call in the fight against the Pandemic – just as they have done throughout the 10-month virus ordeal.

He said: "Seeing how GAA clubs and club volunteers stepped up and responded in such huge numbers and worked so hard in their communities was one of the silver linings to the cloud that has been Covid-19.

"It really underlined what we have known all along about the club being at the heart of the communities they represent.

"I have had conversations with GPs who have concerns about their practices being set up to adequately cater for the numbers that will be involved in administering the vaccine because in many cases they are just not suitable for the turnover in people that will be involved.

"It is with this in mind that I would make a plea to our membership that they would engage with the GPs and Pharmacies in their area to make their club facilities available where needed to make the roll

out of the vaccine operate as efficiently as possible.

"Clubs would need to ensure that they follow all of the appropriate guidance and that their offer of assistance will be subject to submission and approval of proof of valid insurance and risk management controls from the operator to GAA insurance department or Marsh Ireland.

"Our clubs and club members were at the forefront of the community response to this crisis when it hit last March. "I think there will be an opportunity to again offer assistance in our local areas in this manner as the country hopefully starts to move towards mass vaccination in the weeks and months ahead."

Horan's three years at the helm of the GAA have certainly been eventful. Reflecting on the milestones of his time, he praised the energy and enthusiasm he encountered during the course of his visits to hundreds of clubs across the four provinces.

He added: "You always left a club energised on the back of the positivity of the people you met in the club and saw their passion and enthusiasm for the GAA and for their communities. You might have arrived to a club after travelling for two or three hours and felt tired initially, but that wasn't long going once you were swept up by the energy in the club and the drive of the people you met.

"From the smallest clubs to the biggest, and regardless of whether the occasion was a big championship win or not, it was always the same energy from people

looking to make a positive contribution. "Seeing what the GAA meant to them and how much their work in their area meant to them was always inspirational.

"They were the people you always had in mind when there were decisions to be taken or addresses made on national tv and radio.

"You were always mindful that talking in public it wasn't for the benefit of people who like to be critical and have a pop on social media or wherever, but it was about the membership and the people you know and meet volunteering selflessly that are relevant.

"I said when I took office that I believed that the GAA was about evolution and not revolution and I think that came to pass. The great strength of our membership was shown during Covid.

"Clubs really proved they are at the core of the communities they work in. We got the games back and when people thought that we'd lose players by trying to play games in a Pandemic, I think the opposite happened, and there were lots of people who came back to the club and came back playing and came back to being involved."

The split season model which was the response to the fixture crisis of last summer now has the potential to be a roadmap for future fixture calendars. Horan believes being open to embracing this level of unprecedented change proves the GAA's ability to adapt.

The Presidency of the GAA is one of the most public profiles in Ireland. It comes with a busy agenda and can draw its own level of criticism given the importance of the GAA in Irish society and the depth of its 700,000 membership.

"You never mind constructive criticism or as reasoned debate even when you

*YOU ALWAYS DRAW STRENGTH AND INSPIRATION FROM THE ENERGY OF CLUBS, JUST LIKE THOSE IN ST COLMCILLES IN MEATH WHERE WE LAUNCHED OUR WHERE WE ALL BELONG MANIFESTO.*



don't agree. Some of the criticism can be unwarranted and unreasonable and social media can be a breeding ground for commentary designed to grab attention rather than be based in accuracy.

"I'd worry for the future of society if negativity driven on social media goes unchecked it could potentially prove a barrier to people opting to make public contributions.

"For my part, it wasn't something that deflected me from our work. I believed in what the GAA was doing and negativity

needs the oxygen of attention and reaction to survive and if you don't provide it, then it struggles."

He will end his term at GAA Congress, which will be held remotely due to Covid1-19, at the end of February. "On a personal level this has been a huge honour and a very humbling experience. I was delighted to get the opportunity and I hope I did not let down the mandate that I got when I was elected. The GAA is a great organisation with great people at the heart of it and I was privileged to meet with and work with so many of them."

Having worked on the GAA's Management Committee with Uachtarán Tofa Larry McCarthy, John Horan believes the incoming President will rise to the challenge of the role.

"Larry has been brought up in the GAA and has been involved in it his whole life, wherever he has been. I believe the Association will be in good hands," said the Na Fianna club man who can reflect on a busy but successful stewardship.

By John Harrington

## ST. JOHN'S HIT THE GROUND RUNNING IN 2021

### ST JOHN'S GAA CLUB IN SLIGO ARE DETERMINED TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING IN 2021.

Starting on January 6 they'll embark on 'St John's GAA OT21', an eight week Operation Transformation that will engage around 180 members of their club and local community.

The programme will include nutritional workshops, a couch to 5k, yoga, sports psychology, a weight-loss workshop, mapped walking/running routes, and Q&A's with fitness experts.

Most of this will take place virtually through Microsoft teams, and all physical exercise will be socially distant and within a 5km radius of each person's home.

That might sound like an ambitious programme of events, but it's nothing the vibrant Carraroe club haven't already done before, and in the very recent past too.

OT21 is building on the very solid foundations already in place after the hugely successful Lockdown Challenge the club ran before Christmas.

"That's right, it's a follow-on from the lockdown challenge which really engaged the whole community," says club Chairman Seamus Casey.

"We had over 150 people participate in that over the six weeks and it was well received, it was a massive success.

"What we did was we got 18 mapped routes all within the 5k and there were

varying distances from 1k up to a half marathon.

"We set up a group and we loaded all the maps on to that. And then people had to do 12 of the 18 routes or as many as they wanted, really, it was just about getting them out and getting them being positive.

"The group took on a life of its own with recipes going up on it every day and various different things. There was great banter within it and it got people motivated.

"When you did your walk you'd put up your route on the group for the others to see. So over the whole day you'd have people putting up their routes and that just kept everyone motivated.

"The mapped routes were really successful. The whole aim of it was to get out walking in places they normally wouldn't walk, different estates and various other areas in the town. It was really good. Most people got a half marathon done in the last week of it which was a great success in itself.

"EOT21 is now kicking off this Wednesday evening and that will run until March 3rd. So far we have about 140 people signed up for that and in the next couple of days I'd say we'll hit 160, 180 people on this I would imagine.

"It's all positive and obviously it will all be done socially distant. A lot of it will be virtual as well on Microsoft teams and mentoring on the web, that type of thing."

St John's have been very proactive



MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN'S GAA CLUB IN SLIGO PICTURED TAKING PART IN THE CLUB'S LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

members of the GAA's Healthy Club Project since 2018 and Casey himself won a 'Hero Award' the same year for implementing a very successful Operation Transformation programme and making the club the first non-smoking one in Sligo.

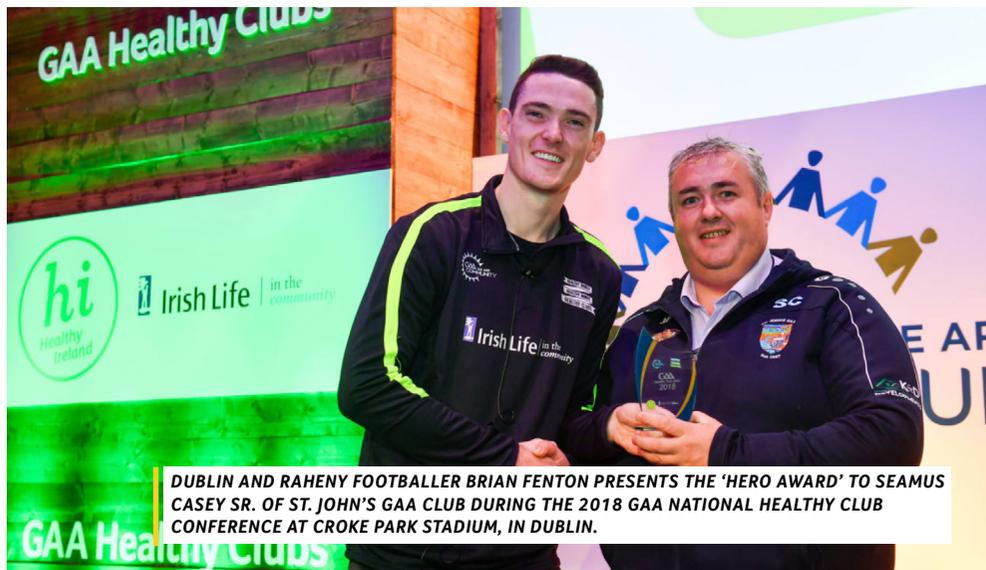
He's long been an enthusiastic advocate of the Healthy Club Project, but now more than ever after personally benefitting so much from St. John's Lockdown Challenge.

"My target when I became chairperson was to get involved in the Healthy Clubs and, to be honest, I was the last person

you would expect to push something like that because I was seriously overweight myself," admits Casey.

"I was conscious that I was portraying as well and people just rowed in behind the thing because they saw that everyone was trying.

"Thank God this year it worked and I lost seven and a half stone myself this year. I suppose I'm leading from the front at last having talked a good game up to that. I'm actually doing it now myself too.



**DUBLIN AND RAHENY FOOTBALLER BRIAN FENTON PRESENTS THE 'HERO AWARD' TO SEAMUS CASEY SR. OF ST. JOHN'S GAA CLUB DURING THE 2018 GAA NATIONAL HEALTHY CLUB CONFERENCE AT CROKE PARK STADIUM, IN DUBLIN.**



**ST. JOHN'S GAA CLUB CHAIRMAN, SEAMUS CASEY, LOST OVER SEVEN STONE TAKING PART IN THE CLUB'S LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE BEFORE CHRISTMAS.**

"It's win-win all round. There's a great vibe around the club and I'm not blowing our own trumpet but I genuinely think we've set the bar high here in Sligo for what we're doing in the locality."

The common experience of GAA clubs that have taken part in the Healthy Clubs Project is that it puts their club at the heart of the community in a more real way than it had been hitherto.

By engaging with members of the community who may not have been previously club-members and getting them involved in various initiatives, the club quickly becomes a hub for more than just those of a playing age and draws in new people who can make it stronger in all sorts of ways.

"When I started the Operation Transformation with the club back in 2018 we had yoga in the clubhouse on a Saturday morning," says Casey.

"A woman came to me one day and said she had paid ten pound a month for the building of the clubhouse twenty odd years previously and didn't think she'd ever get to use it or even step foot inside it because she had no children. But now that she was doing the yoga there, she said it made her contribution all the more worthwhile now that she was getting something from it.

"It definitely has engaged the community as opposed to just GAA members. An awful lot of people living in the locality that we would previously hardly have known, we now know very well, and they'll now continue to support different aspects of the club going forward.

"I'd say there were maybe 70 per cent of people who participated in our Lockdown Challenge before Christmas weren't club members. The whole thinking behind it

was to try to engage the whole community rather than just the GAA club itself.

"So, the more we got in that never kicked a football, the bigger the bonus. Lots more people now feel a real part of our club because they got something worthwhile out of it.

"They'll support the club now in other ways as the years go on now because they're getting something out of it. It's not just about the football team. The football team is just an aside to it, really."

Casey himself is proof of the physical benefits of taking part in Healthy Club initiatives like Operation Transformation, but he believes the mental boost it gives people is just as important.

At a time when the country is under another lockdown and we can't engage with friends and family like we normally would, he expects St. John's OT21 challenge will give people in the area a much needed social outlet, even if it is a virtual one, and distract them from the harsh reality of a Covid winter.

"Definitely, the mental aspect of it is nearly as important," he said. "The six-week lockdown programme we had before Christmas kept people massively positive and engaged in the whole thing.

"The lockdown nearly became a side issue with a lot of people. It was about getting out, getting that daily walk in and communicating about it with one another. The interaction was unreal.

"Most people engaged in the healthy recipes and some of the senior players who would be on the county panel, the likes of Paul McNamara, gave some tips in the nutrition videos we put out and that type of stuff. There were a lot of strands to it

and one would back up the next one.

“Everyone who took part got a medal of participation. We had a drive-through prize-giving ceremony and had absolutely class participation medals made up.

“They all had a picture of the club and the crest and different images that they would have seen over the six weeks, scenic areas they would have walked around, the likes of Ben Bulbin, printed on the ribbon. It was just a lovely keepsake for the year that was in it.”

St John's have also been canny enough to use their Operation Transformation programmes as a way of both raising much needed funds for their club as well as charitable causes.

It was €25 euros to take part in their Lockdown challenge before Christmas which raised €1,200 for the club and the same amount again for good causes in the community.

The latter was donated in the form of vouchers for local shops, which meant local businesses also benefited from the club's initiatives and further good-will was generated in the community.

“The voice that the club gives you in your locality is unreal,” says Casey.

“My whole thinking is that football is brilliant, but there's an awful lot more to a GAA club than just football. What it does is it gives you a platform in the community.

“That's what you have to build on. You can win silverware and medals, but there are a lot of other things you can win that might not be as tangible, but are arguably even more important.”



**EVERYONE WHO COMPLETED ST. JOHN'S LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE RECEIVED A SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED MEDAL FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT.**

## GAA NATIONAL CLUB DRAW POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE

**GET YOUR CLUB INVOLVED AND  
BE IN WITH THE CHANCE OF RAISING €25,000!**

**The Association's hugely successful National Club Draw has been postponed until June 4, 2021 in light of the ongoing Pandemic restrictions.**

*A club can get involved in the NCD by selling up to 2500 tickets. All money raised from selling the NCD tickets remains in the club.*

*The Draw has been delayed due to the requests from Clubs as the current public health restrictions have limited the sale of Draw tickets at this time.*

*Additional tickets can be requested by emailing [nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie)*

*Tickets (sold/unsold) must be entered onto the Online Ticketing System before they are returned to your County Liaison Officer by 14th May 2021.*

*The GAA National Club Draw will now take place on Friday, 4th June 2021.*

*If you have any further questions, please contact*

**[nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalclubdraw@gaa.ie)**

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CLUB**

Opportunity for your GAA Club to raise up to €25,000



By John Harrington

## HOW YOUR CLUB CAN SAVE THOUSANDS AND BE KINDER TO THE ENVIRONMENT

### WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR GAA CLUB TO SAVE THOUSANDS OF EUROS A YEAR WHILE ALSO BEING MUCH KINDER TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Of course you would, it's a no-brainer, and Louth club Clan na Gael have proven it is entirely possible to do.

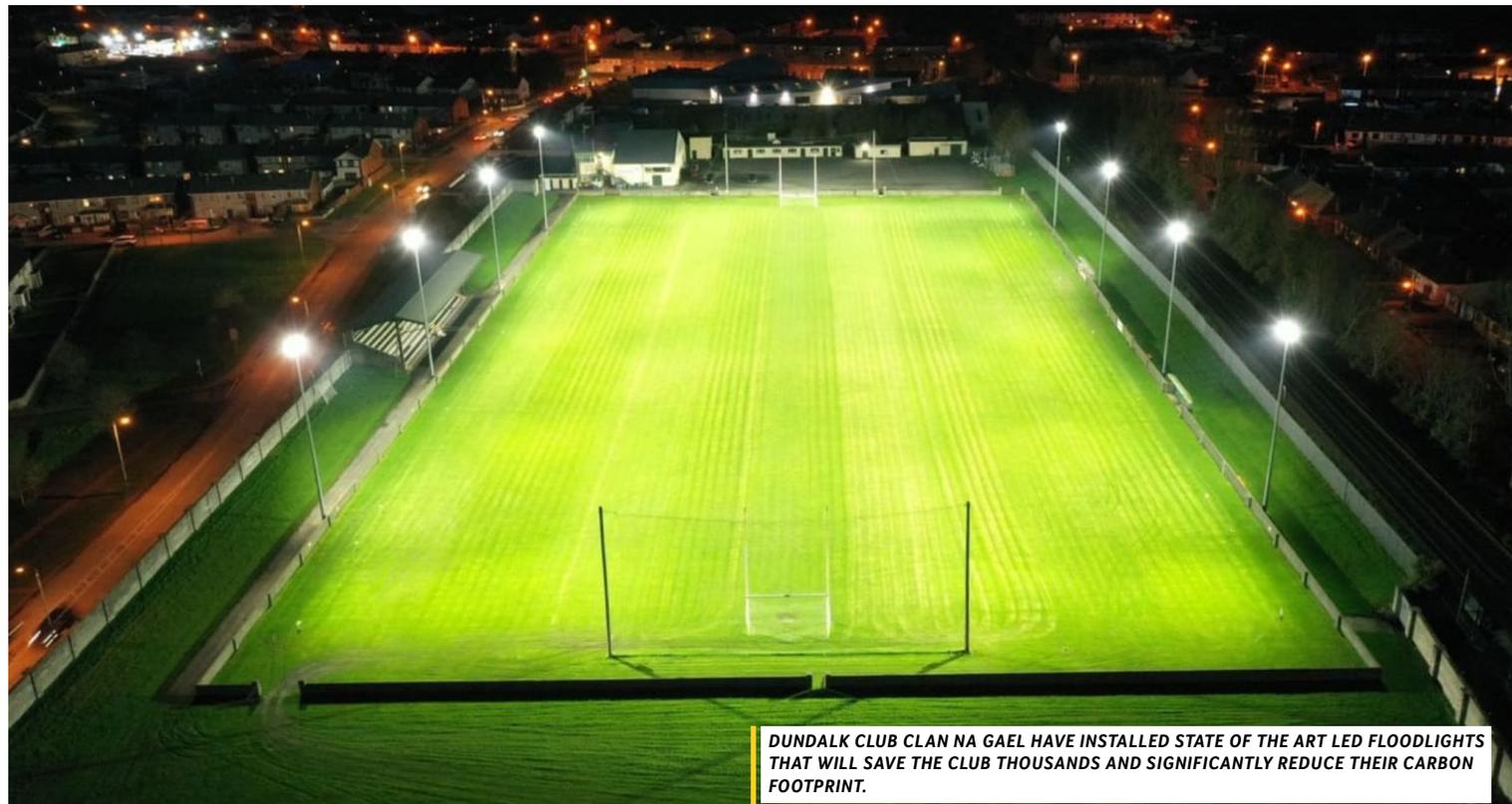
A mentor club with the GAA's new Green Club Programme, Clan na Gael recently completed an energy saving project that will result in annual energy and maintenance savings of €10,000 per annum and a massive reduction in CO2 emissions.

Padraig Fallon was a member of the committee that spearheaded the Dundalk club's ambitious sustainability drive and believes all GAA clubs can save money and be kinder to the environment by following in their footsteps.

"My own background is engineering and one of the big topics going on in the world at the moment is environmental sustainability and energy improvements and carbon footprints and that kind of stuff so that put me and a couple of the guys in the club thinking as to how we were doing things down in the Clans," Fallon told GAA. ie

"We have a fully functioning bar, and a lot of activity in our facilities, between offices and night classes, the blood transfusion service coming using our facilities, stuff like that.

"Our main pitch had got high energy halogen bulbs. I had an idea that probably



**DUNDALK CLUB CLAN NA GAEL HAVE INSTALLED STATE OF THE ART LED FLOODLIGHTS THAT WILL SAVE THE CLUB THOUSANDS AND SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT.**

we certainly were using a lot of energy so I got our electricity and oil bills for exactly three years and I analysed them and what I found then was quite startling.

"We were probably spending about €18,000 a year on electricity and oil, which when you did the math equated to 52 tonnes of carbon dioxide in the air every year being

emitted by the club. Straight away I knew that this was wrong, that there was no way the numbers should be anything like that.

"I started asking some of the older people about the club facilities, when they were built. They were built in the 60s and obviously there was no insulation put in cavities or attics or anything like that so to

have a comfort level inside everything was always on the max.

"The temperature was turned up high, the oil was always on because that was the only way you could make the place comfortable.

"Then the big one was our floodlights. We have quite a busy pitch and when I studied



DUNDALK CREDIT UNION LTD. ARE ONE OF A NUMBER OF LOCAL COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORTED CLAN NA GAEL IN THEIR ENERGY SAVING INITIATIVE.

the bulbs we had 24 two kilowatt halogen bulbs that required almost 50 units of electricity an hour just to put our pitch going and have a game on it.”

With Fallon’s report in hand, Clan na Gael went to Louth County Council who along with the Louth Energy Sustainable Energy Community helped them receive 50% of the funding they needed for the project with an SEAI grant.

“The whole body of work cost €84,000, inclusive of VAT,” says Fallon. “So we were on the hook for €42,000 of that. And we were actually registered for VAT so you take away five grand VAT it was costing us

€37,000.

“The big challenge was always going to be finding the lump of money to make the initial investment that would then pay for itself.

“Our banks were supporting us pre-Covid, but when Covid came they weren’t as keen to give us the money they had promised us. We had to move to plan B very quickly and we raised every penny from the local community and club members.

“Plan B was we needed to raise €25,000 overnight. So four or five people, some businessmen, gave loans overnight, that

allowed us to get our first 50% paid. And then we went to the community and local businesses, and we raised enough money to pay all the loans back, and pay for the project. And we still have some left over.

“It was the best example of what a GAA club should be all about. It was the best example of people coming together that I had ever seen.

“Just looking at the money that we spent, we’ll get a payback in less than three years because I’ll put my neck on the line and say that we’ll save €10,000 a year and only be spending around €7,000 or €8,000 now.

“The other area you’re saving big money in is maintenance.

“We were having to spend a lot of money on the maintenance of the floodlights because when a halogen bulb goes you can’t just go out with your stepladder and put it in, these things are 18 metres high so you have to get electricians and you have to get a hire out height for hire. To change a bulb could cost you between €700 and €800.

“And we were probably spending somewhere between €3,000 and €5,000 a year on just maintaining our floodlights which wasn’t sustainable. That now has totally disappeared.

“The lights we’ve put in have a warranty for five years so if we go down one day and a light isn’t working, I just call the guys up and tell them one of our lights aren’t working. And, even at that, the LED floodlights are expected to last 50,000 hours which I won’t see out, shall I say.”

Fallon believes that energy improvements can be made to any club building that was built more than 15 years ago, but if you’re looking to save significant money quickly, then he’ll point you in the direction of LED floodlights.

Not only are the ones Clan na Gael installed far better than their halogen predecessors, they’re much cheaper to run too.

“They was a big surge of floodlights installed in clubs this last 20 years, but the technology being used by 99.99% of them is halogen floodlights,” says Fallon.

“There’s a massive, massive energy, draw on those. Massive maintenance costs. We’re fortunate our electricity comes from the grid and we have three phase power coming into our building and that was the only way we could operate our floodlights.

“But I’d say many clubs around the country

use diesel generators to run halogen lights. If we were running our old Halogen lights off generators it would have been costing us about €50 to €60 an hour of diesel to run the generator and that leaves a mind-blowing carbon footprint too.

“Whereas, in comparison, to run our LED floodlights today for an hour costs us €4.50 and is much kinder to the environment.

“I actually believe we should be looking to outlaw the use of generators. Clubs should be looking to try to get proper electricity feeds into their complexes because driving floodlights off big generators is extremely expensive and detrimental to the environment.

“A big generator costs €25,000 and clubs do not appreciate then what they cost to run on top of that. The guys fill up the big diesel tank and, you know, it runs out in the middle of the game sometimes and they just fill it up again the next week, nobody is looking at the figures. I’ve done the figures and I was astonished.”

Clan na Gael’s expected savings of €10,000 per annum will make a huge difference to all sorts of projects the club embark on in the coming years, but Fallon derives just as much satisfaction from the positive impact on the environment.

“That was the one factor that struck me, that we were pumping out a tonne of carbon dioxide a week,” he says.

“It wasn’t the money, it wasn’t the 18 grand, it was the 52 tonne of carbon dioxide that we were responsible for.

“I was trying to, you know, visualize carbon dioxide for the guys because some people can’t get it. Basically, if you have a box that’s eight metres, by eight metres by eight metres and you fill it up with carbon dioxide, that’s a tonne of carbon dioxide.

“We would have certainly knocked 30 tonnes from our 52 tonnes of carbon dioxide that we were producing and we still have ambitions to reduce that much further.

“We want to eliminate oil altogether, that would involve putting in heat pumps. Maybe just one pretty sizable heat pump which would eliminate the oil. And then we also have ample space to put in any amount of solar panels which will give us free electricity.

“So, the calculations I have done, definitely show that we can actually become carbon neutral and even produce surplus electricity that will then go back to the grid and be used by someone else.”

Clan na Gael’s energy saving project hasn’t just produced a financial and environmental dividend, it is having a social impact too.

Their state of the art LED floodlights have transformed their playing pitch, and their newly insulated facilities are a much more comfortable environment for club-members.

“We got the Louth hurlers down a week or two before the Lory Meagher Final which was the ultimate test for us, and they were blown away by the lights,” says Fallon.

“My own young lad plays with the Louth hurlers and he said you could see the sliotar coming from miles off even if it was 30 metres in the air which wouldn’t have been the case in any pitch they’d ever played in before with the exception of Croke Park. So that was the ultimate test.

“We have a floodlit pitch now which I can say for sure myself personally is definitely the best floodlit club pitch around. Our lux levels are over 250 Lux levels which is putting us up to championship hurling

level, and I believe the lights are even good enough to broadcast matches for TV cameras if you wanted to.

“None of our adult teams got to play underneath the lights yet because of Covid, but for a number of weeks when we were allowed we had underage groups of 15 down training.

“The managers were competing to get out onto the field because they just loved it. The kids weren’t cold, because the lights were that good.

“It wasn’t that the lights were emitting heat, it was the psychological effect because the lights were that good and that bright that the kids didn’t feel the cold. They were just so enthused to get out on the field that they ran out in the field and they didn’t stop running until the coaches blew the whistle.

“We got to use our facilities for a number of weeks in between lockdowns too, and I remember being down there one of the nights and the bar manager came over to me and he says, “Padraig, we have a

problem. I says, “What’s the problem, Kevin?” He says all the customers are complaining that it was too warm.

“Everybody had turned up the dials to the normal place where they had always been and because we now had such good insulation the temperatures were off the scale. So that was a good complaint!”

Clan na Gael have lit the way. When you consider the environmental, financial, and social benefits, expect other clubs to soon follow the same greener, cleaner path.

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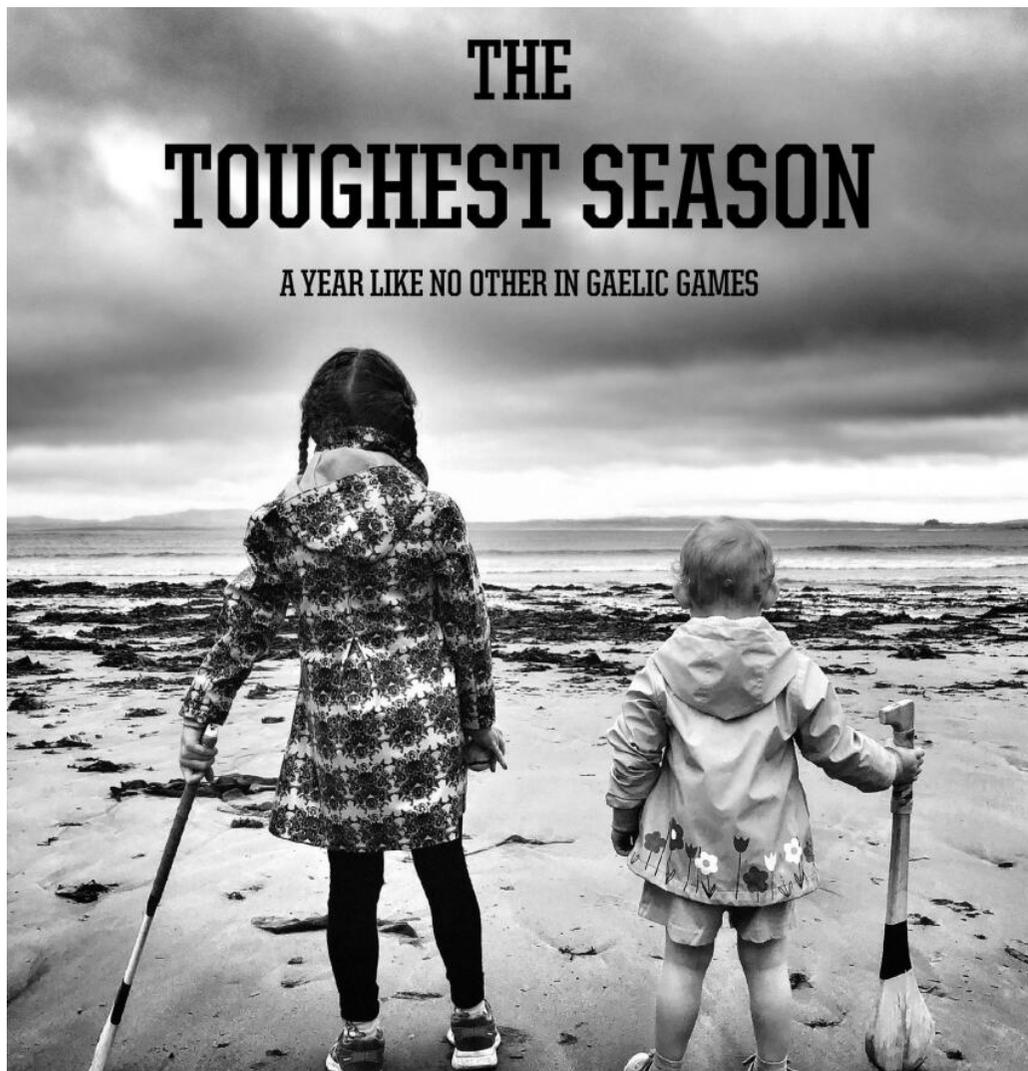
The following Clan na Gael club-members were involved in the energy saving project.

- Peter Dixon, Facilities Manager
- Cormac Woods, Treasurer
- Niall Weldon, Chairperson
- Kevin O’Connor, Bar Manager
- Paula Harrison, Secretary
- Padraig Fallon, Healthy Club Officer



A NEW GAA GREEN CLUB PROGRAMME WILL SEE 45 CLUBS AND TWO REGIONAL VENUES PARTICIPATE IN A 12-MONTH INITIATIVE TO ASSIST THE GAA, LGFA, AND CAMOGIE, DEVELOP A SUSTAINABILITY TOOLKIT FOR ALL THEIR UNITS. PICTURED AT CROKE PARK LAST YEAR WHEN THE GAA AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES PLEDGED TO WORK TOGETHER AS SDG CHAMPIONS OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT, ARE: LGFA CEO HELEN O’ROURKE, CHAIRMAN OF CCMA MICHAEL WALSH, UACHTARÁN CHUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL JOHN HORAN, CHAIRMAN OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CLIMATE CHANGE STEERING GROUP CIARÁN HAYES, CAMOGIE OPERATIONS MANAGER ALAN MALONE, DCCAE KATIE AHERNE, AND FORMER WEXFORD HURLER DIARMUID LYNG.

## AIB BOOK DEDICATED TO GAA CLUBS WILL RAISE FUNDS FOR CHARITIES



**LAST YEAR AIB & SPORTSFILE TEAMED UP WITH GAELIC GAMES COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO TELL THE STORY, IN PHOTOGRAPHS, OF A SEASON LIKE NO OTHER. THE TOUGHER THE YEAR WAS, THE STRONGER WE BECAME. NOWHERE WAS THIS MORE EVIDENT THAN IN GAELIC GAMES AS PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER TO LEND THEIR SUPPORT WHEN IT WAS NEEDED MOST. THE TOUGHEST SEASON TELLS THIS STORY, SERVING AS A TIME CAPSULE OF THE UNIQUE YEAR THAT WAS 2020.**

**ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THE BOOK WILL BE MATCHED BY THE AIB TOGETHER FUND AND WILL GO TO AIB'S PARTNER CHARITIES AGE NI, ALONE, FOODCLOUD, PIETA & SOAR. THIS WAS A VERY POPULAR CHRISTMAS GIFT SO THERE ARE LIMITED COPIES AVAILABLE. BE SURE TO MOVE QUICKLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT. THE TOUGHEST SEASON CAN BE PURCHASED ONLINE VIA THIS LINK:  
[HTTPS://WWW.SPORTSFILE.COM/ID/THE TOUGHEST SEASON/](https://www.sportsfile.com/id/thetoughestseason/)**

**A YEAR LIKE  
NO OTHER IN GAELIC GAMES**

## #GAAPRIMARY CHALLENGES RELAUNCHED FOR LOCKDOWN

**IN RESPONSE TO THE LATEST CLOSURE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS, THE GAA, SUPPORTED BY THE CUMANN NA MBUNSCOL, THE GPA, THE LGFA AND THE CAMOGIE ASSOCIATION, ARE RELAUNCHING #GAAPRIMARY CHALLENGES LEARNING RESOURCES ON [LEARNING.GAA.IE/PRIMARY-SCHOOL](https://learning.gaa.ie/primary-school)**

First published in April last, the #GAAPrimary Challenges are designed to help Primary Teachers and parents to work on the cross-curricular lesson plans with children to meet their learning needs - especially while doing so from the home at present. Gaelic games themed lessons are across all curriculum subjects and are for children at every class level, based on the GAA Céim ar Aghaidh/Step Ahead resource.

For some fresh air and physical exercise, inter-county stars have set physical distancing-appropriate Skill Challenges that can be done at or nearby your home.

A key member of the team driving the #GAAPrimary Challenges is Micheál Martin, Principal of Kilmore National School in Wexford and Chairman of Wexford Co. Board. Michéal, who produced the **GAA Céim ar Adhaigh Learning Resource** in 2007, helped with the design of the weekly curriculum learning activities.

“The idea is not to overwhelm parents or students. One learning activity and one physical activity will be suggested each day with the subject area changing each day. It is important to have realistic expectations for children during this time. This is a challenging time for everyone, and children will sense the anxiety in society.

“Teachers and schools have set work to be completed at home but it’s important to acknowledge that this is a new and difficult experience for children. We are attempting to provide a resource that will be beneficial in some homes. My opinion as a school principal is that one learning activity such as that we are providing as well as continuous book reading will satisfy children’s learning needs for now. It is also essential to get physical activity while respecting social distancing and we hope that the skill challenges can inspire children to get out and practice their skills”.



ZURIEL CHUCKS OF ST CRONAN'S SNS, BRACKENSTOWN, IN ACTION AGAINST ST AIDAN'S SNS, BROOKFIELD, IN THE CORN MHC CHAOILTE SHIELD FINAL DURING DAY TWO OF THE 2019 ALLIANZ CUMANN NA MBUNSCOL FINALS AT CROKE PARK IN DUBLIN.

By John Harrington

# CUALA TEENAGER SHOWING HOW TO KEEP GIRLS PLAYING GAELIC GAMES

**AISSLING NIG RUAIRC IS A SHINING EXAMPLE OF HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THEIR OWN CLUBS AND COMMUNITIES.**

Empowered by her experience of taking part in the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative (DEYLI), she is using the tools she developed there to address what is a huge issue for underage camogie and ladies football teams up and down the country – the high drop-out rate of players.

The 17-year old has had a hugely positive sporting journey herself playing camogie and football with Cuala in Dublin, which is why she is so passionate about the benefits of team sport for teenage girls.

And her ‘Keeping Girls Playing Project’ is having such a positive impact in Cuala that it will hopefully give other clubs some really helpful food for thought as to how best to keep girls involved in team sport.

“As part of my second module in the Dermot Early Young Leadership Initiative I gave a presentation on what the GAA means to me as a female,” Nig Ruairc told GAA.ie

“When I was researching this I came across a survey saying that one of two girls will drop out of team sport by the age of 13 and are three times more likely to give it up than boys are.

“It kind of shocked me at first because I know from my own personal experience of all the benefits that come from playing team sport.

“But when I thought about it it made sense



AISSLING NIG RUAIRC OF CUALA

because my own team lost around half of our players by the time we were 13 and struggled to field a team at that age.

“My third (DEYLI) module was a community project, and I really wanted to focus on doing something that would help our club retain girls.”

Nig Ruairc identified the three groups she felt could be most influential in keeping young girls involved in sport – coaches, parents, and older girls – and set about creating resources that would help all three

groups more positively impact the 12 and 13 year old girls playing football and camogie for Cuala.

“We decided to do a Microsoft Sway presentation for the parents and coaches giving them tips on how to support the girls and give them more of an awareness of the importance of playing sport,” says Nig Ruairc.

“For coaches, we weren’t going to tell them how to improve because they’re obviously much more educated than myself, but just

kind of give them a few different websites to look at or just collect some information that might be useful for them.

“And then the final one was the older girls because I think girls especially are influenced by their peers so we thought the girls coming in from the teams above just even showing that there is a future in sport was very important.”

The plan was that Transition Year students who played for Cuala would mentor the younger players and join them for a training session once a month.

Covid-19, unfortunately, made that impossible, but Nig Ruairc is the sort of person who makes lemonade when life gives her lemons and came up with a variety of new strategies instead.

“Last month, I went down with a box of Christmas cards with a team-member’s name on each of the cards and the girls fished around the box and took a card and they basically had to write on the card a nice Christmas message, but also what that girl whose name was on the card brings to the team.

“It can be anything, because the most important thing we thought is making sure the girls feels valued on the team.

“Like, it doesn’t have to be that she takes the best sideline cuts. It can be, but it can also be things like she’s at every training or she always has a smile on her face or something that makes the girls feel special and that everyone recognises that they’re bringing something valuable to the group.



AISLING NIG RUAIRC (RIGHT) PICTURED WITH HER CUALA FOOTBALL AND CAMOGIE MINOR TEAM-MATE, RÓISÍN NÍ DRISCEOIL.

“We’ve been making videos every month for the coaches and the Sway presentations which are basically presentation slides with different messages, photos, videos or whatever we thought might be useful.

“We’re hoping to do an awards ceremony for the girls so I have made out these badges and on each badge is listed a different kind of trait for each girl like ‘best shot’, ‘most smiley’, ‘hardest working’, or ‘never late’.

“Each badge has something like that so the coaches have been asked to look at the list of the badges, and choose one for each girl.

“We’ve also asked a parent to be a team photographer and we’re hoping to do a nice little slideshow of photos of the girls over the course of the year.”

The 20x20 campaign has highlighted the power of making women’s sport more visible and giving potential role-models a greater platform in order to encourage young girls to participate in sport.

Nig Ruairc has also embraced a similar approach with her own project.

“We’ve written to about 60 names of important female role models in Irish sport and world sport, different people who we

think should have more credit given to them,” she says.

“So we’re hoping these role models will do a short little video and then we’re going to do a Zoom call and maybe watch through the video so the girls all get our understanding of each person, who they can look up to, and what they have worked towards.

“We’ve also given the parents a list of documentaries they can watch with their girls on some of these role models. The girls seem to really enjoy these kinds of interactive bits.”

Every player is an individual and has their own reasons for deciding to drop out of team sport, but quite often the causes for pushing them towards that decision are common ones.

So, what sort of advice would Nig Ruairc give to parents and coaches who want to do all they can to keep their own children or players involved in team sport for as long as possible?

“What I think is most important is making sure the player feels valued,” she says. “Just get them back to enjoying it because girls at that age, I think it’s important to think of the long run, not just by the short term goals like winning matches. Enjoyment is really a key thing in the retention of players.

“So, making sure even if she’s quiet or not the best player that she is still enjoying her sport and that she feels like if she can go to sport she can still get something out of it.

“Maybe if it’s improving one thing or, you know, if a coach gives her a special bit of attention then she might not feel like she’s not needed on the team and nobody will notice if she goes or whatever.

“I think that’s the most important thing and just making sure that they, the coaches, kind of see the person behind the player, not

just the player. So, you know, if you ask them about themselves, or let them have five minutes where they can talk to one another and experience the social side of sport.

“The social side of sport is so important for that age group as well as they’re transitioning from primary school to secondary school they might not see their primary school friends as much so you want to give them that time to get to know other girls or better know the girls in their new school. So I think that’s really important.”

The series of Covid-19 Lockdowns that have interrupted training and matches for underage players could easily act as an accelerant for player drop-out.

Not having the opportunity to play could be a handy excuse for some girls to disengage mentally from their sport and then not make the effort to get involved again when it is possible to do so.

In this latest Lockdown we are now experiencing, Nig Ruairc believes coaches and parents should still make an effort to remind young players why team sport can be such a positive in their lives.

“Definitely, I think that’s so important,” she says. “When you’re not continuously doing your sport or training with your team once or twice a week you do tend to kind of push it to the side and maybe if your parents aren’t that involved in the GAA themselves maybe it can be kind of pushed to the side or overlooked.

“So I think it’s so important for coaches just to kind of keep in contact and make sure the girls know that it will be resuming, and it will be as fun as ever.

“Try to encourage the girls to think about the good times they’ve had in sport during the years they’ve been playing it and how important it is to stick with it.”



LORETO, CLONMEL SUPPORTERS AT THE 2019 LIDL ALL-IRELAND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS SENIOR A FINAL MATCH BETWEEN LORETO, CLONMEL, AND SCOIL CHRÍOST RÍ, PORTLAOISE, AT JOHN LOCKE PARK IN CALLAN, CO KILKENNY.

A study commissioned by Lidl Ireland for the Ladies Gaelic Football Association in 2017 found that girls that play sport have a higher body confidence and better mental wellbeing.

80 per cent of girls who played sports rated their mental wellbeing at a score of 7-10 compared to 67% of girls who didn't play sport.

While zero per cent of girls who played sport reported feeling lonely compared to 10 per cent of girls who didn't play sport said that they did feel lonely on a daily basis.

Personal testimonies can be even more powerful than statistics, and Nig Ruairc herself paints a very convincing picture of

just how beneficial sport can be for young girls.

"I don't even know where to start, it's been amazing," she says of her own experience of playing Gaelic Games.

"I started when I was five and I would say I was the worst player on the pitch until I was about 12. I was the sort who would volunteer to be a substitute or just sit down on the pitch and play with dandelions!

"But then, it was funny, it kind of just clicked for me when I was 12. So, it's really important to continue with it because it could click for you when you're five or it could click for you when you're 16, it varies for everyone.

"I'm shocked my parents kept bringing me to training because I was a nightmare. I'm so glad they did because it's genuinely one of the best things in my life, and I just love every minute of it.

"It's taught me discipline, it's brought me friends. It's brought me so many lifelong skills I think I'll probably even use some day in the workplace.

"It's just been amazing and I miss it a lot now. I miss just seeing my teammates and everything. I think it's just such a good sport, but it doesn't just have to be about playing Gaelic Games, what's important is that girls continue playing sport in general whatever that sport may be.

"All sports have their benefits and I don't think there's any that will bring you one benefit. So, I would just love to make girls aware of that.

"That even maybe you don't have that much time to still give it a shot because sport has so, so many benefits that you wouldn't even think of, like teaching you to be modest and hard-working, which is very important.

"There are all sorts of skills that maybe aren't visible on the pitch but are very visible off the pitch."

Many of those skills that Nig Ruairc developed playing team-sport have been enhanced even more by her involvement in the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative, and she believes it can have a similarly positive impact on any other young people who might be interested in taking part.

"When I first joined I was definitely a quiet enough person," she says.

"And it was interesting because there were people from other clubs, but there were also people from my own club that I didn't really know but by the end of the project you're getting a great understanding of leadership.

"And I think the community project really in the third module is a great step to kind of show what you've learned and to help the community in any way possible..

"I'd highly recommend getting involved in the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative if you can."

# #GAAYOUTH – BEYOND THE PITCH

GAA YOUTH - BEYOND THE PITCH IS A WEBINAR & PODCAST SERIES BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE GAA YOUTHREPS. THROUGHOUT THE SERIES, WE DISCUSSED LIFE BEYOND GAELIC GAMES WITH HIGH PROFILE PLAYERS, COACHES & EXPERTS ON A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS SUCH AS LEADERSHIP & MENTAL RESILIENCE, WELLBEING AND THE PLAYER PATHWAY.

WATCH THE WEBINARS THROUGH THE OFFICIAL [GAA YOUTUBE](#) OR LISTEN TO THE PODCAST [HERE](#)

GAA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

10<sup>TH</sup> DEC 6PM

CAOIBHE SLOANE, CORMAC REAPE AND PODGE COLLINS

'VOLUNTEERING'

GAA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

JONNY COOPER

'LEADERSHIP & MENTAL RESILIENCE'

GAA WHERE WE ALL BELONG

23<sup>RD</sup> DEC 6PM

MICHAEL FENNELLY, CONOR SWEENEY AND VALERIE WHEELER

'COVID-19 & THE 2020 SEASON'

# INTERNATIONAL HACKATHON TO FOCUS ON IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY IN GAEILIC GAMES

**A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL 'HACKATHON' WILL BE VIRTUALLY HOSTED FROM CROKE PARK FROM FEBRUARY 3-7 WITH THE GOAL OF DEVELOPING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO ASSIST IN THE PROMOTION OF GAEILIC GAMES.**

While many of us will associate the 'hack' in the name with hacking and the attempt to crack cyber security – in this instance it is very much a force for good with a 'hackathon' actually an event held over several days in which groups of people meet to engage in collaborative computer programming on a chosen theme.

Organised by the Irish Tech Society and hosted by the GAA IT Department and with the assistance of Microsoft, organisers say the event: "aims to bring together a community of makers, creators, fans and enthusiasts, in both technology and sports to develop a concept that can positively benefit the GAA.

"Using technology to support GAA players, spectators and administrators – ideas will be developed that will benefit the GAA and its promotion of Gaelic games."

The Hackathon begins with two days of workshops and Q&A events online before the programming begins in earnest.

Individuals can register for the Hackathon up until 5pm on February 5. Teams will have a maximum of five members without age restriction. The teams will have 50 hours from February 5-7 to prepare and finalise projects which may be conceptual, prototype or complete.

More information is available from e: [info@irishtechsociety.ie](mailto:info@irishtechsociety.ie) or website: [www.irishtechsociety.ie](http://www.irishtechsociety.ie)



# HOW ADOLESCENTS DEAL WITH AND ADJUST TO PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS (ADAPT)

**A TEAM OF PSYCHOLOGISTS IN NUI, GALWAY AND TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN ARE CARRYING OUT A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON THE LIVES OF TEENAGERS.**

They are asking clubs and coaches to take part and share their study invite with parents and young people, and encourage young people to take part.

Young people have experienced many changes in their personal lives and have witnessed many changes in the lives of others over the last year. They have made many sacrifices to protect themselves, members of their family and the broader community. It is important we understand how young people are coping with and responding to the ongoing restrictions and changes in their lives.

“We have learned about the importance of science and evidence-based decision making in the last number of months. As developmental psychologists, we would like to gather comprehensive evidence on the impact of this pandemic on the wellbeing of teenagers (12-18 yr olds). We aim to identify the challenges young people have faced and what has helped young people cope during these extraordinary times. The availability of good evidence on the needs and experiences of young people can assist decision-makers and policy-makers in supporting the needs of young people,” says Caroline Heary, Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology, NUI Galway.



Full information on our study can be obtained from here:

<https://www.adaptresearchstudy.com/>

***In order to take part, parental consent is required. You can access our information sheets and consent forms on our website above. Once we receive parent/guardian consent, the young person is sent a link to an agreement form and a link to the survey.***

You can also follow us on social media: @adaptresearchstudy (Instagram) and <https://www.facebook.com/adaptresearchstudy/>

Contact: [caroline.heary@nuigalway.ie](mailto:caroline.heary@nuigalway.ie)

## 2020 ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

**ELECTRIC IRELAND HAS UNVEILED THE WINNERS OF THE 2020 ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS, WHICH SEES MINORS FROM ALL FOUR PROVINCES OF IRELAND BEING HONOURED FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING OFF-THE-PITCH CONTRIBUTIONS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING 2020. COLM CAVANAGH, 2004 ALL-IRELAND WINNING MINOR, AND ONE OF THE JUDGES FOR THE SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS, WAS ON HAND TO ANNOUNCE THE AWARD RECIPIENTS.**

Having missed out on a host of coming-of-age moments over the past 11 months, including the culmination of the Electric Ireland GAA Minor Championships, these unique Electric Ireland GAA awards have taken into consideration the difficulties experienced in 2020 by players and communities across the country, and aim to bring a major moment back into the lives of this age group. The awards were judged by All-Ireland winning Tyrone Minor, Colm Cavanagh, former Minor Kilkenny forward, Aidan Fogarty and representatives from the GAA and Electric Ireland.

### Ulster

Antrim's Michael Quinn, Josh Schnell, Shane McKenna, and Niall Óg McGuigan from Ruairí Óg Cushendall GAA club have been awarded the Ulster Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award for their brave efforts in saving the lives of a young family who had gotten into distress while swimming on the beach. In June 2020, the four teenagers from St. Killian's College had been enjoying a day at White Park Bay when they noticed the young family had gotten into difficulty while in the water. Thinking quickly and courageously, the boys rushed into the water and successfully prevented a certain tragedy.

### Connacht

The Connacht Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award has been awarded to Strokestown GAA's Jack Beirne and Andrew Jordan and St. Barry's GFC member, Mark Rodgers for their outstanding efforts in raising over €60,000 for the Childhood Cancer Foundation. Jack himself is a childhood survivor of Leukaemia and had benefitted from the Childhood Cancer Foundation's services. As part of a Transition Year project, Jack, Andrew and Mark purchased an old tractor in the hopes of restoring it and selling it, with the proceeds going to the charity. When word spread around the community of the project, people from Roscommon began donating parts to help support the cause. The project went from strength to strength, and they began selling raffle tickets for the now fully restored tractor, which will be raffled off in early 2021.



**MICHAEL QUINN, JOSH SCHNELL, SHANE MCKENNA, AND NIALL ÓG MCGUIGAN FROM RUAIRÍ ÓG CUSHENDALL GAA CLUB HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE ULSTER ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD FOR THEIR BRAVE EFFORTS IN SAVING THE LIVES OF A YOUNG FAMILY WHO HAD GOTTEN INTO DISTRESS WHILE SWIMMING ON THE BEACH.**



**THE CONNACHT ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD HAS BEEN AWARDED TO STROKESTOWN GAA'S JACK BEIRNE AND ANDREW JORDAN AND ST. BARRY'S GFC MEMBER, MARK RODGERS.**

## Leinster

Meath Minor and Trim GAA wing back, Ciarán Caulfield, is the Leinster winner of the Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award for organising a 500km socially-distanced run, which helped raise vital funds for the heart-warming 'Do it for Dan' campaign, which was set up to raise funds for one-year-old, Daniel Donohoe so that he could receive life-saving treatment for a rare spinal disease. In March 2020, Ciarán's school team, St. Patrick's Classical School Navan, qualified for the final of the Paul McGirr Cup however, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the final was ultimately cancelled. Ciarán, who was captain of the team, realised morale amongst his teammates was quite low and saw the fundraiser as a chance to lift the spirits of his teammates and friends, while also raising vital funds for 'Do it for Dan'.



**MEATH MINOR AND TRIM GAA WING BACK, CIARÁN CAULFIELD, IS THE LEINSTER WINNER OF THE ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD**

## Munster

Limerick Minor and Doon GAA goalkeeper, Tomás Lynch, has been honoured with the Munster Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award for becoming a mentor and coach to the students of Doon C.B.S. in Limerick. The Transition Year student from Scoil na Tríonóide Naofa was unable to take part in his Work Experience programme in September 2020 due to Covid-19. Determined not to stay at home and miss one of his key learning experiences though, Tomás reached out to his former primary school, Doon C.B.S., for outdoor work experience opportunities. The school's principal was delighted that Tomás was able to take the students every Tuesday for hurling sessions, and the students were extremely engaged in the sessions and Tomás also put together training programmes for the students to follow at home.



**LIMERICK MINOR AND DOON GAA GOALKEEPER, TOMÁS LYNCH, HAS BEEN HONoured WITH THE MUNSTER ELECTRIC IRELAND GAA MINOR SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD.**

Speaking about the award winners, Edel McCarthy, Head of Sponsorship & Brand at Electric Ireland stated: "Electric Ireland is delighted to recognise these Minors with an Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award for their outstanding contribution to society in 2020. In what has been an extremely challenging year, the winners have stood up, put other's needs first and have positively impacted their local communities."

Uachtarán CLG John Horan said; "On behalf of the GAA, I would like to congratulate each of the Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Award winners. These awards showcase that the GAA is not just about what happens on the pitch, but that the community is at the heart of everything that we do. These young men are a credit to the Association, their clubs, their families, their schools and, most of all, themselves. We are delighted to support these Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Awards and thank Electric Ireland for their continued support for this age group."

Former Tyrone footballer, Colm Cavanagh added: "I was very proud to be on the judging panel for these Electric Ireland GAA Minor Special Recognition Awards. All of these young men have shown incredible initiative and bravery, as well as maturity beyond their years, and they should be very proud of themselves. I am delighted that Electric Ireland and the GAA have recognised their efforts and the incredible impact which they have had on their communities in 2020. While we hope that they can get back on to the pitch soon, they have demonstrated what the GAA is truly about."

The introduction of these four special awards further highlight Electric Ireland's commitment to investing in and the celebration of young talent through its sponsorship of the Electric Ireland GAA Minor Championships. These awards have given Electric Ireland the opportunity to showcase the extraordinary talent that exists within this age group, and has allowed Electric Ireland to herald their fantastic achievements off the field of play, celebrating these young players at a time when this age group has missed out on so many important coming of age moments.

## SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR HURLING HELMETS

**IN ADVANCE OF THE 2021 GAA SEASON, PLAYERS ARE REMINDED ABOUT THE NEED TO CHECK THEIR EQUIPMENT IS IN GOOD CONDITION AND MEETS THE REQUIRED SAFETY STANDARDS.**

The GAA would like to remind all players at all levels in all Hurling Games and Hurling Practice Sessions it is mandatory for, and the responsibility of, each individual player to wear a helmet with a facial guard that meets the standards set out in IS:355 or other replacement standard as determined by the National Safety Authority of Ireland (NSAI).

All players are advised that in the event of a head injury occurring, if the helmet being worn does not meet the standard or is modified or altered from the original manufactured state, they are not covered under the terms of the GAA Player Injury Fund.

The following helmet manufacturers currently provide products which meet the standards set out in IS:355 or other replacement standard as determined by the National Safety Authority of Ireland (NSAI).

- Atak Sports
- Azzuri
- Cooper.ie
- Marc Sports
- Mycro
- O'Neills

Players and parents should note that not all products provided by some of these manufacturers meet the standards of IS:355.

Once the helmet or faceguard is modified in anyway, the player is playing at an increased risk of injury and not covered under the terms of the GAA Player Injury Benefit Fund.




# HELMET SAFETY

## INFORMATION

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
	
<p>✓ ENSURE THAT your helmet is an approved, NSAI Standard IS355, helmet with facial guard</p>	<p>✗ TAKE PART IN ANY game or training session without an approved helmet with facial guard</p>
<p>✓ WEAR AN APPROVED helmet for ALL training sessions and matches</p>	<p>✗ REMOVE/REPLACE the facial guard with an alternative facial guard</p>
<p>✓ ALWAYS CHECK that your helmet is in good condition</p>	<p>✗ MODIFY YOUR HELMET or facial guard in anyway</p>



**BROKEN BARS ON HELMET CAN CAUSE HORRIFIC INJURIES**

By John Harrington

# PROPER NUTRITION ADVICE CAN PROTECT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF OUR PLAYERS

**THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF MANY OF OUR YOUNG GAA PLAYERS IS BEING COMPROMISED BY THE MIXED AND OFTEN MISLEADING MESSAGING THEY ARE BEING EXPOSED TO IN TERMS OF BODY IMAGE AND NUTRITION.**

If you have an interest in sport, then there's a good chance your social media accounts are flooded with targeted advertising telling you how to achieve the perfect six-pack, what supplements you should take to help you in this endeavour, or why even intermittent fasting can transform your body for the better.

The problem with this deluge of information is two-fold.

Firstly, much of this unfiltered and unsolicited nutrition and exercise advice is misleading or even false to the extent that it can damage rather than enhance your health.

Secondly, the 'body beautiful' imagery that is usually used to push this messaging and the pressure to attain what is often unattainable poses a real threat to the mental as well as physical health of our young women and men.

Dr. Sharon Madigan is the Head of Performance Nutrition with the Sport Ireland Institute and has real concerns about this growing trend.

She hopes the newly formed Gaelic Games Sports Science Working Group that she is a member of can produce guidance that will help sift out the "cowboys and snake-oil salesmen" she believes are damaging the health of our young players.

GAA.ie: Sharon, you have long history of working with both male and female GAA teams and players, isn't that right?

Sharon Madigan: I do. I started my trade with Burren back in the day in the 1990s. I spent many years with the Derry county team. I really felt that that's kind of where I learned my trade, before the days of structured service provision through institutes and high performance centres. And there was a great multidisciplinary team where I could learn from them and vice versa.

There were no specialist courses on the island of Ireland and I had done mine in England and was a dietitian in the NHS. I was lucky enough to start a PhD in Jordanstown around the time that the Sports Institute was being developed in Belfast. And GAA was one of the founder sports within the Northern Ireland Institute of Sports. A number of players from each of the counties in Ulster were selected receive support through the Institute in Jordanstown and I would have been working with the county Derry team at that stage as well. So, yeah, I have a long number of years experience of working with GAA players and teams, probably too many counties and clubs to mention. I've worked with a lot of great managers and coaches at county and club level and worked with both codes, men's and women's teams so I'd have a good range of experience.

**GAA.ie: Is one of the main goals of the new Gaelic Games Sports Science Working Group to drive a healthier message around nutrition to younger people through the GAA?**



SM: At the level county teams and club teams are at we're probably looking at some gains that can be made in terms of performance, but we're also looking at just the actual long term health and wellbeing of our players as well. That's our fundamental starting point.

When you get to the level of an All-Ireland or national league the managers and coaches are looking to get as much as they can get out of the player. The player is looking to get as much as they can from their own performance. Nutrition can play a big part in that.

When you're talking about underage, both of my kids used to play for clubs in Down

and Antrim and both have hundreds of kids at all age levels there.

Gaelic Games has such an opportunity to promote really good, healthy messages when it comes to nutrition. The club senior players and county players of whatever code can really encourage those messages down to those age-groups because they're hanging on their every word. They're watching everything they do and they want to be the same.

**GAA.ie: Young people who use social media in particular are bombarded with unfiltered information on how to achieve a perfect body and what supplements they should use to help them. How damaging can it be for young people to be exposed to this?**



SM: I just think there are so many mixed messages out there. The big problem that we are struggling with is that a lot of individuals are very focused on what they see on Instagram or other social media outlets.

Unfortunately, the body beautiful does influence a lot of our athletes across every sport, not just the GAA. And I think some of those messages are filtering down to our players at U-10, U-12, U-14, and U-16. Some of those messages are not appropriate and a lot of them are quite unhealthy.

Supplements for me are the sprinkles on the cake. You have to have your cake right first with all of the basic ingredients there and the basic ingredients for someone who is 14 or 15 are very different than for someone who is 24 or 25. If the 14 or 15 year olds don't get the basic ingredients right, then they're going to run into trouble at 24/25. Because you're building resilience in particular in your bone health. At that age you're effectively paying into your bone pension in the teenage years and if they are following habits which can negatively affect that then it is a cause for

concern. That's why calcium and iron rich foods are very, very important for boys and girls at that age group.

That's why some of the messages that are coming out are so dangerous, messages like dairy isn't good, bread is not good for you or you could have an intolerance to it. Some people could have intolerances, don't get me wrong, but it's highly unlikely. But if people are substituting dairy with non-dairy alternatives, like rice milk and almond milk, and they think they're getting a like for like product they need to be aware that that is not the case when

it comes to nutrition. We need to get across that it's the long-term health and wellbeing that's important, not the kind of short, sharp shock that's going to get you something tomorrow but is not lasting.

**GAA.ie: How big an issue is the growing obsession with body image having on the mental health of young people?**

SM: I've seen significant changes as the years have progressed. I'm now seeing more and more issues in terms of body image with boys and men as well as girls and women. There are issues here in terms of how people are thinking about their body image and the anxiety and stress that that is causing them because they're now so concerned with developing a six-pack or how they look in a shirt. Although most people will laugh it off, there are a significant bunch of people for who it causes some serious mental health issues. Many young sportspeople just aren't eating enough or are scared to eat because the messaging they're getting is not to eat too much because they'll become overweight.

Quite often young players I work with seem very unsure when I come in and give them the message that they need to eat more to fuel what they're trying to do. I've seen some players in Universities who also play for their counties have breakfast at 10am, going into classes, going straight from classes to University training from 1pm to 2.30pm, getting into a car and driving to wherever county training is, doing that training, grabbing a quick sandwich if they're lucky and then getting back in the car back to Belfast and not eating again until 10am the next morning. And then they wonder why they have burn-out and suffer injuries.

Supplements can have a place in sport and for some a really important place, but people don't know enough about them and understand how they work best and

what is appropriate.

I remember a few years ago a supplement was doing the rounds, all the rage, a stimulant, which had been implicated in a number of athlete deaths. That was on changing room tables at half-time for club level teams, and they didn't have a notion what it was going to do to them.

**GAA.ie: Is there much of a correlation between incorrect nutrition and injuries in sport?**

SM: I believe there's a link between injuries and energy intakes and potentially links with bone injuries and low carbohydrate diets. I always try to educate players using the image of a fuel tank. So you have your fuel tank for training and your food gives you the fuel tank. Your food also fills up other tanks for good health, bone health, soft tissue health, blood health, hormones, immunity, et cetera.

What a lot of players do in terms of their routine is to do the same thing every day and seem to forget on the day that they're training they will use more calories. They eat the same amount on those days or even less because they don't have the time to eat properly. So over a period of time the fuel going into those other tanks gets depleted to make sure there's enough fuel for the training tank. Then, 'bang', something happens. You'll find that the players who pick up colds during the winter are also the ones that get the hamstring and groin injuries.

Some of them will say to you that they're cutting back on what they're eating because they want to lose weight and then they're also training very hard, but it's very difficult to do both at the same time.

We do know that males are much more at risk of an injury happening just out of the blue. Females, because of the menstrual cycle, will have red flags that will be telling



them that's something is not right, but they may not listen to it or they don't know that it is a red flag. Whereas males don't have that. Now, let's look at a player with a significantly labour intensive job, about 6' 5", maybe 96 kilos. I would say easily for him his daily calorie expenditure was between 5000-7000 calories on a training day. And for lunch had had two packets of cooked chicken, some salad, and just one bread roll. He didn't want to eat carbohydrates because he wanted to keep

his six-pack, and that's when you run into problems. There were lots of injuries.

**GAA.ie: What different considerations need to be given to the nutrition of female athletes compared to male athletes? You mentioned the menstrual cycle, is that something you have to take into consideration?**

SM: It is. Girls, like boys, would be concerned about body weight and body

image. People mature and change body shape, particularly in their teenage years, at very different rates. So if you've got a girl that hasn't maybe matured as much at 12 or 13, she's maybe trying to do something different to a friend who has a different body shape. It can be hard at that age and you'll have girls who are cutting back on what they are eating and don't recognise how hard they are training. The overall cost is that they can end up actually not having a menstrual cycle. I

have seen so many girls at the age of 16 or 17 who have not had a period because they're playing so much sport.

What you have at the moment is a lot of young people doing extra running during this lockdown because they want to get fit and they think the way to achieve a change in body composition is to cut back on food. That's the first thing that goes when they're trying to change their body shape. Whereas if you eat appropriately and train appropriately, that's the best way to change your body shape. And when they don't have a menstrual cycle that is so important because that will tell us they're much more at risk of bone injuries and bone-health problems down the line because they haven't protected those bones. The other thing is that iron levels for females are different up to the age of 18. And their calcium becomes very important as well. So there are some considerations for females that are not massively different, but there is some difference there all the same.

***GAA.ie: There is little that can be done about all the mixed and misleading messaging that's out there, but can the GAA at least strive to ensure its messaging in terms of nutrition is the best in class?***

SM: 100 per cent. I think the key thing for us is that the messages that are being put out are appropriate for the age-group and the level that people are playing at. And also that the people who are delivering those messages are qualified to do so.

That for me is a tricky situation because there was a long period of time when we didn't have the courses in Ireland to qualify people to deliver those messages, but we do now, and we have a lot of people who have gone away to do appropriate qualifications who have come back to Ireland.

When I was working for any county team my first responsibility was the safety and wellbeing of the player. But I always felt I had a significant responsibility to the county board. If a county board buys supplements for players and those supplements are not appropriate or safe, then they're bringing a whole load of problems down on themselves.

There are too many people swimming outside their lane across too many disciplines. I have called out colleagues and coaches when I felt they were saying things that were completely inappropriate. I think nutrition expertise can bring a lot to the party in terms of the health and wellbeing and safety of players at all levels. And it's not just about performance, it's the wider picture around nutrition for wellbeing throughout your life.

***GAA.ie: Can a system be put in place to make sure every GAA club has access to a qualified nutritionist they can go to for the right messaging?***

SM: That's one of the things we're looking at. We're looking first of all at what counties have that expertise in place already and whether those individuals could work across a region.

As a starting point we would like to look at having appropriately qualified people within the provinces to figure out operationally what is required and support those practitioners within the counties. And then to try to build that up with all the people who are coming out of third level now with qualifications in sport, exercise, and nutrition.

They can help deliver education programmes for players, coaches and parents. They can add value to the overall multidisciplinary team. Ten years ago the big topic of conversation was burn-out, and part of that was due to this but we never really engaged the conversation that players weren't eating enough because maybe it sounds too basic.

***GAA.ie: You sound enthusiastic about the plans the Gaelic Games Sports Science Working Group has and the potential impact of those plans?***

SM: Absolutely. There are enough people with appropriate qualifications in the country if we could just harness that in the right way.

We've got a great sub-group of four people, two of which are based in third level and two of which are based in the Institute. We all come with a lot of experience with a range of counties, clubs and sports. All are practitioners.

I don't know how many referrals I've had over lockdown of young boys and girls getting in trouble over over-training and under-eating. Some serious issues through the last six months which have been really very sad and so many people looking for help.

There is a big body of work to be done and it can be a bit overwhelming when you look at it. The key is to start with evidence based recommendations and build and deliver on that so that all Clubs and Counties have access to appropriate resources for all their players.

There are a lot of cowboys and snake oil salesmen out there and this group is aiming to produce guidance for the GAA to help sift them out.

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The four members of the Gaelic Games Sports Science Working Group's nutrition sub-group are:

**Sharon Madigan** - Head of Performance Nutrition with the Sport Ireland Institute

**Laura Mahony** - Performance Nutrition Consultant with the Sport Ireland Institute

**Catherine Norton** - Lecturer in Nutrition for Sports Performance in UL and Performance Nutritionist with Munster Rugby.

**Ronan Doherty** - Performance Nutrition Consultant with the Sport Ireland Institute and Lecturer in LYIT.

By John Harrington

## JOHN O'BRIEN'S COURAGE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY



JOHN O'BRIEN PICTURED WITH HIS BROTHER STEPHEN (LEFT) AND THE MATTIE MCDONNELL CUP AFTER NOBBER'S VICTORY OVER TRIM IN THE 2019 MEATH INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL FINAL.

### JOHN O'BRIEN WAS JUST 22 YEARS OLD WHEN HE WAS TOLD HE WOULD NEVER WALK AGAIN.

The Nobber club-man's life was changed forever when a car journey to Navan for a bag of chips after football ended tragically when his car collided with cattle on the N3 in August 2012.

The impact left him with a spinal injury that paralysed him from the chest down, but it's a testament to O'Brien's strength of character that he has never let his disability define him.

In recent years he has completed courses in sports journalism, sports psychology, and social care and counselling.

Currently he's taking courses in

counselling and psychotherapy as well as public speaking.

He's also the inspirational club captain of Nobber GAA and one of the men behind the hugely popular Meath GAA Lad Podcast along with Gearoid Rennicks.

But for all the impressive milestones that he has reached and the ones he's eyeing further down the road, he's not going to pretend the journey along the way has been an easy one.

When your life as you know it is shattered forever, glueing the shards together to create something new is a difficult task.

"Yeah, very hard," O'Brien told GAA.ie. "I would have gone through a lot of emotions from my accident.

"Maybe in the early stages I didn't understand the seriousness of it. It happened in August and I was thinking I'd be grand and be out before Christmas.

"Slowly you realise this is serious stuff, this is big stuff, and then when you realise then that you're not going to walk again and when the nurses tell you that, it's kind of like, "Why me? Did I do something wrong? Did I deserve this?"

"Those sort of feelings of self-pity. Then you have anger. And then you take the anger out on the wrong people and then you're sad. All of those emotions in the early days.

"I probably had to come through all of that to learn. My emotions now would be completely different. I'd like to think that I'm positive enough.

"Now, I do have negative days, but I'd like to think the positive ones outweigh the negative ones. I'd like to think I'm more determined and focused now."

He has gained strength along the way from the solidarity of others.

The O'Brien family have always been stalwart supporters of Nobber GAA club, and when their need was greatest the club rallied to their aid.

Along with other clubs in the surrounding



JOHN O'BRIEN PICTURED SHORTLY AFTER MOVING INTO HIS SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOME WHICH WAS BUILT THANKS TO A FUNDRAISING DRIVE BY HIS NOBBER GAA CLUB AND COMMUNITY.

borderlands of Meath, Louth, Monaghan, and Cavan, volunteers from Nobber GAA club spearheaded a community drive that raised €250,000 for the construction of a wheelchair adapted extension to the O'Brien family home.

"That's something that will never leave me," says O'Brien. "At the time of my accident I was rushed to Drogheda Hospital and then I was in the Mater in Dublin, the spinal unit for a while, and then I was brought to the NRH (National Rehabilitation Hospital) in Dun Laoghaire.

"My Mam and Dad and my brother and sister would have told me what was going on at home in terms of fund-raising.

"The work was just unbelievable. Larry McEntee would have been a big Nobber man and one of the people involved in getting the fund-raising going in Nobber.

"Not just even in Nobber, the whole GAA community in Meath and a lot of clubs all over the county just did so many different fundraisers for me to help me. I couldn't believe it, it made me very emotional when I was in hospital but it helped give me that fighting spirit to keep going.

"It wasn't even the clubs in Meath. Where I live I'm quite close to the Meath/Cavan/Monaghan border. So in around Kingscourt and Magheraclone where my mam is from, they would have done fundraisers as well. We're not far from Louth either and the likes of Ardee and other local areas like that helped out too.

"I'm lucky that where I live in the country we had room to build on to the house. Where I am today I have my own adapted home, all wheelchair accessible, and I have all my equipment in it. My ceiling hoist and my special bed and my exercise equipment and my own bathroom, everything.

"I do think about it a lot, the way the



JOHN O'BRIEN PICTURED WITH SOME OF THE €1,000 WORTH OF EQUIPMENT WHICH HE WON FOR NOBBER GAA CLUB THROUGH LEINSTER GAA'S BEKO CLUB CHAMPION COMPETITION.

people really rallied around me and helped me so much. I suppose in a way when I got an opportunity to help Nobber football club I had to because they helped me so much back in 2012/2013.

"So I wanted to help them and I hope I have and I hope I can continue to do so, just to repay the community back."

The most recent way that O'Brien helped his club was by entering Nobber in the Beko Club Champion Competition in association with Leinster GAA before Christmas.

In an emotional video interview he put together as part of the entry he explained how the club had done so much for his own mental health over the years and had been a force of good in the community during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Thanks to O'Brien's testimony, Nobber won the Beko Club Champion Award for Meath which netted the club €1,000 worth of equipment.

What you can't put a monetary value on is the priceless contribution that O'Brien has made to Nobber as their club captain since he was asked to take on the role in March 2019.

The players will tell you he was a vital source of inspiration for them as they beat the odds to win the Meath Intermediate Football Championship that year.

It was a mutually beneficial arrangement, because being closely involved with the team was a huge boost for O'Brien's mental health at a time when he needed it.

"It was just unbelievable to be asked and just a shock at first because I never expected something like that," he says.

"They just said they wanted me to be on board with the panel and any ideas I had that they wanted to hear them. They wanted me to be at training sessions and be with the team before games in the dressing-room and things like that.

"Straight away it was a shock, but then I

was thinking, "This is class, what can I do to help?" The championship was coming up in April and my focus was on that, we were playing Oldcastle and I was just thinking what could I do to help the lads?>

"We were in the Intermediate grade at the time and what we wanted to do was win the Championship, deep down that would have been our goal. That was something in the back of my head, if I could help the lads do that it would be great.

"It just gave such a huge boost. I have people who come in to help me, personal assistants, because I need help with basically everything that I do.

"Getting up out of bed in the morning, the preparing of my meals, setting me up to do my exercise, bringing me to the gym when I could do that pre-Covid.

"I have a wheelchair adapted van so they would drive me. I need help with everything and this just gave me a real boost. My brother is involved and plays football with the team and it kind of gave me a purpose.

"My accident was in August 2012 and I know this was 2019, seven years later, but it probably took me a long time to really push myself because I was probably in a comfort zone here at home for a while.

"By being asked to become part of the football group it made me get out of that comfort zone because I had to go to training and matches and speak to people whereas beforehand I might have shied away from that kind of thing. So it really helped my confidence and over time it was huge for my self-belief and self-confidence.

"Looking back to March 2019 compared to now, it's just completely different, it changed me massively."



JOHN O'BRIEN PICTURED CELEBRATING WITH NOBBER TEAM-MATES AND SUPPORTERS AFTER THE CLUB'S VICTORY OVER TRIM IN THE 2019 MEATH INTERMEDIATE FOOTBALL FINAL.

O'Brien made good use of his qualification in sports psychology as he became an integral part of the team during their unbeaten run to the Meath Intermediate Football title.

Underdogs going into the County Final against Trim, they played the game of their lives to triumph by 15 points.

O'Brien was a lightning rod for the explosion of emotion that followed the final whistle, and framed photos of those moments now hang as proud mementos on his walls.

"They're class memories and they'll never leave me. It was just so emotional," he says.

"For a long time before and afterwards I couldn't stop thinking about it. It basically

took over my life.

"At home when I'd go to bed I'd think about it before I went to sleep and when I'd wake up in the morning I'd be visualising again us winning the championship. So it was just brilliant that it came through.

"I got my Intermediate medal, we had our dinner dance last January, and it's just something that will never leave me. It's a brilliant memory.

"And that day in Navan when we were out on the pitch and everyone was hugging you and high-fiving you and wanting to take pictures with me. I was like, "What's going on here?", it was a bit unbelievable. I nearly felt like a celebrity.

"Then Brian Farrell who was our joint-captain with Brendan Heffernan came up

to me and said, "Are you coming over to get this Cup or what?"

"I was like, "What are you on about?", because the Cup is always presented up in the stand and there are steps up to it so I was presuming I'd be with the supporters on the pitch looking up at the lads lifting the Cup.

"But the Meath County Board, and this was the first time I've ever seen anything like it, had set up a table on the pitch and the Cup was presented there so I could be there with the team and they presented the Cup to me.

"It was a moment that will always live with me, it was just unbelievable."



STEPHEN O'BRIEN PICTURED WITH MEATH FOOTBALL LEGEND MARK O'REILLY WHO HE INTERVIEWED FOR HIS MEATH GAA LAD PODCAST SERIES.

Nobber will have new management whenever the club scene resumes in 2021 but O'Brien has already been asked to stay on as club captain and is only too happy to do so.

He has had to be to be extra-cautious

during this Covid-19 pandemic, but he's still keeping himself very busy.

His latest podcast for Meath GAA TV is an excellent interview with his fellow Nobber club-man and former county star, Brian Farrell, and intends to keep that flame for sports journalism lit.

What he wants to focus on most in the future though is to earn the qualifications required to help people deal with the sort of adversity he's overcome himself.

The course he completed with eight distinctions out of eight in social care and counselling skills last year has set him on a path he intends to explore further.

"I've done work experience in SOSAD in Navan and I really enjoyed that and I recently just started an online certificate in counselling and psychotherapy," he says.

"That's all online for the year. I've been doing that once a week since September and I'm really enjoying that.

"My hope is to go into counselling and psychotherapy. I know that will be another three years of study but the hope would be to eventually get a bit of work in that sphere if the course goes well.

"I'd love to see myself as a counsellor or psychotherapist in three or four years time.

"I'd like to be able to help people in years to come who might be going through something that I have gone through and continue to go through.

"It is a life-changing thing and there are a lot of dark days but you have to overcome them and reach your full potential and I'd love to help others do the same."

You don't doubt that he will.

By John Harrington

## JOANNE O'RIORDAN ENCOURAGES GAA CLUBS TO EMBRACE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

**ONE OF ONLY SEVEN PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WITH TOTAL AMELIA, A CONDITION WHERE YOU'RE BORN WITHOUT YOUR LIMBS, JOANNE O'RIORDAN HAS NEVER ALLOWED HERSELF BE DEFINED BY HER DISABILITY.**

Rather than be constrained by a society that doesn't always make it easy for people with disabilities to live the life they want to live, the Cork woman has never been shy about demanding equal opportunities.

This attitude combined with her vibrant communication skills has made her a powerful activist and advocate for people with disabilities.

On Saturday, she recently spoke on the topic of Diversity and Inclusion at the 2021 GAA Healthy Clubs Conference.

A sports journalist with the Irish Times and RedFM, her lifelong passion for sport and involvement in gaelic games makes her very qualified to spread the message of how the GAA can better include everyone in the community.

"My family are absolutely mad into sport," O'Riordan told GAA.ie

"When I was just two weeks old my parents brought me to my first local GAA match, one of my brothers was playing.

"That was basically where it all started. My siblings always got me involved. They'd bring me outside and put me in goals and literally kick footballs at my head until I was concussed!

"Gaelic Football was always number one for me growing up. I loved watching the Cork footballers, both the men and women. I loved the whole excitement of it.

"My Dad brought me to my first game when I was just four years old. It was Cork against Kerry down in Fitzgerald Stadium and there's a picture of me in the Kerry's Eye with my Dad and he's throwing me up in the air after Cork scored a goal!"

When O'Riordan was ten years of age her parents signed her up for a power chaired soccer tournament in Tralee because they figured that might be a more suitable sporting arena than having footballs kicked at her by her siblings.

But years of being treated no differently than anyone else made that a jarring experience for O'Riordan.

The competitive instincts honed in her own back-garden reacted adversely to the concession of six goals and she had the dubious distinction of being red-carded for letting her team's goalkeeper know in pretty agricultural terms just how lowly she rated his goalkeeping skills.

"I literally made Roy Keane look like Mother Theresa!", says O'Riordan. "I suppose I was just so accustomed participating in sport with my siblings and friends and not feeling any different to them.

"So, when I went to a place that emphasised difference and that I was different and I didn't really enjoy that. That wasn't an environment that I wanted to



JOANNE O'RIORDAN PICTURED WITH LEGION GAA CLUB-MATE, JAMES O'DONOGHUE, AFTER VICTORY OVER DR. CROKES IN THE 2019 EAST KERRY FOOTBALL FINAL.



JOANNE O'RIORDAN PICTURED WITH CORK PLAYERS (CLOCKWISE) DEIRDRE O'REILLY, VALERIE MULCAHY, JULIET MURPHY, BRIEGE CORKERY AND GERALDINE O'FLYNN WITH THEIR 2013 TG4 LADIES FOOTBALL ALL-STAR AWARDS.

be in. I wanted to be the same as others even though I was different. I wanted to be involved.

“If I had to adapt to play the sport, then so be it, everybody else had to change with me. I wasn’t a person who wanted to find an environment that matched me, I was more of a person that wanted to change my environment as I went along and hopefully for the better.”

O’Riordan’s own experience highlights the fact that there is no one size fits all approach to being inclusive to everyone in the community.

For example, GAA clubs like Raheny, Scoil Ui Chonaill, Midleton, and Lucan Sarsfields all run hugely successful sports programmes for children with additional needs.

But you can be sure too that some children with additional needs would prefer to receive specialist coaching that would allow them to play with all the other children in the GAA club rather than be segregated from them.

“There’s no one blueprint because every club and every person is different,” says O’Riordan.

“I think diversity and inclusion starts with everyone. You know it’s not just one disability group talking to other disability groups.

“It’s people talking to everyone in society and having a collaborative approach in order to make sure that at least we are on a bit of an equal footing.

“I’m actually involved with Killarney Legion across the border in Kerry. Even small things they do like getting children involved in the Go Games even if they’re not able to play.

“They get them helping in some other way

on the sideline giving out water or bibs or to just encourage their friends during games.

“It’s all very important in terms of integration. Not everyone is going to be able to kick a football and that’s absolutely okay. You will always need volunteers in the GAA, you need managers, you need coaches, you need people to hand out the bibs and water boys and water girls.

“It’s great if you can kick the winner in a county final, but for others to even feel like they have played a small part along the way can make it all so much more worthwhile.

“As James O’Donoghue once said to me, he’s not playing for himself out there, he’s playing for all the volunteers who have helped him along the way.

“I just think it’s important to have a diverse volunteer group. The only way you’re

going to know if other people want to get involved in other ways is to ask the people in your community. A quarter of the population have identified as having a disability, so there’s definitely people with disabilities in every club across the country that you could get involved.

“GAA clubs should reflect the community that they are part of, and all our communities are very diverse.

“Clubs shouldn’t feel under pressure to get it right the first time, but make the effort the first time then adapt and get it right the second or third time down the road.

“That’s why it’s great to have a Community and Health department in the GAA now, a national group that can share different ideas to see which ones work best and how we can accommodate everyone.”

The day to day obstacles that make life more difficult for people with disabilities

often exist because those without disabilities simply don’t realise they’re there.

The first step that many GAA clubs could make to becoming more inclusive is to make a genuine effort to see the not so visible barriers they have unconsciously put in the way of others.

“Exactly, you wouldn’t know the certain barriers that exist to someone with a disability until you are around someone with a disability every day,” says O’Riordan.

“Even speaking for myself, for a long time I would have only seen the physical challenges someone like myself with no limbs would have experienced.

“But then I was studying abroad in York in England and I saw that Manchester City were the first club in northern England to have an area in the stadium for fans with autism.

“I had never seen anything like that before and it just blew my mind. It then seemed obvious then that this sort of integration was needed but I had never thought about it before.

“It was basically a sound-proof box in the stand with a sensory room to help keep the children with autism calm.

“I’m not saying every club needs to do something like that, but it’s good to raise awareness because I wouldn’t have previously thought about how to facilitate people with autism.

“The more you open your club to the diversity in your community the more you’ll learn.”

Once you have that mindset, then practical initiatives to make GAA clubs more inclusive and diverse will follow more easily, and some should be more obvious than others.



THE RAHENY ALL-STARS PICTURED AT ÁRAS AN UACHTARÁIN WITH PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS AND HIS WIFE SABINA.



AN INABILITY TO ACCESS PRESS BOXES IS A SOURCE OF FRUSTRATION FOR IRISH TIMES AND RED FM SPORTS JOURNALIST, JOANNE O'RIORDAN.

There's no excuse for a GAA club not to be fully wheelchair accessible, and O'Riordan is right to be frustrated too that in her job as a sports journalist she has yet to find a press box she has been able to gain access to.

"I'm going to go down in history as the only sports journalist who has never gotten into a press box," she says. "It's going to be the tag-line on my gravestone!"

"I've had to get used to sitting out in monsoons in Ballybofey or freezing in Pairc Ui Chaoimh, Game of Thrones style, with ice hanging off my nose!"

"Access to press-boxes wasn't ever an issue until someone like me came along, but hopefully in the future it's something there will be more consideration given to."

The GAA has made significant efforts to be a more inclusive and diverse sporting organisation in recent years.

Ger McTavish, the Association's National Diversity and Inclusion Officer, has played a big role in that as have initiatives such as National Inclusive Fitness Day and the Responding to Racism education and awareness campaign.



JOANNE O'RIORDAN CELEBRATES WITH THE LEGION FOOTBALLERS AFTER VICTORY OVER DR. CROKES IN THE 2019 EAST KERRY FINAL.

It's important we keep pushing that conversation on how better to be more inclusive and diverse, and O'Riordan's presentation on Saturday should certainly help in that regard to encourage GAA clubs and volunteers to open their minds and arms to everyone in their community.

"Diversity and inclusion in the GAA is just so important," she says. "We're so engrained in the community that it is important to make sure that everyone feels involved."

"But I would also say that if your first attempt to be more inclusive as a club isn't necessarily a success, don't be discouraged."

"It's important to remember what the foundations of sport and the GAA are and why we get involved, it's to create friendships, create a social group and to create a fun and learning environment that stimulates people and keeps them interested and healthy and active."

"I think once you realise what your core foundation and your core objective is, then the rest of it should come seamlessly."

"So I would say not to sweat the small stuff. Ask people who are in the know. And then just have fun, go with it, and see what happens."

# CLUB LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME PROVIDING VITAL TRAINING TO CLUB OFFICERS IN NEW ONLINE FORMAT

**AT THE TIME OF WRITING, OVER 3,000 CLUB OFFICERS ACROSS THE THREE SISTER ASSOCIATIONS HAVE RECEIVED ONLINE TRAINING AS PART OF THE CLUB LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. THIS HUGE INTEREST IS REFLECTIVE OF THE DESIRE AND WILLINGNESS OF VOLUNTEERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, AND ABROAD, TO UPSKILL AND ENSURE THEIR CLUBS ARE AS PREPARED AS POSSIBLE TO EMERGE FROM THE PANDEMIC.**

Since late November, some 30 events have been held across a broad range of modules, with approximately 14 more workshops scheduled as part of this year's rollout. Details of the remaining modules and how participants can register are listed below.

Ger Corkery is the Limerick GAA Development Officer and Secretary to his Club, Knockaderry. As such, Ger has an insight into the benefits and reach of the programme from two angles. He spoke to us shortly after attending the Munster Club Secretaries online workshop - "The Webinar was extremely well organised. It covered a vast, but clear amount of information which I'm sure was very beneficial to new officers in particular. This coupled with the online material which can be accessed via the GAA Learning Portal is an excellent resource for any Club Officer".

"The convenience to log in from anywhere is great. Logistically it's easier too - no need to book facilities etc. The sessions can be interactive too, with options to screen share, have polls and discussions on topics too. Obviously, the face-to-face aspect is missed, but it's been invaluable to be able to keep up to date with the

latest developments via workshops with experienced facilitators."

Another volunteer who has played an active role in a different capacity during the current rollout of online training is Gerard Bradley, Tyrone GAA IT Officer and CLDP Associate, or Facilitator. Gerard specialises in the Club Treasurer and Office 365 modules. He explains how the 2020 rollout of training has gone so far -

"We are certainly delivering a wider range of courses to larger audiences. Groups of associates have shared experiences, and the online platform allows several associates to be online simultaneously. While one associate is delivering a presentation or demonstration, other associates are online answering 'chat' questions. In several instances, we have had excellent Q & A sessions with large audience engagement. Many of us had concerns about delivering an IT module online but experience has shown that many aspects can be covered using Teams." "In the circumstances, everyone realises that we have no alternative and online workshops are the only possible way to deliver the courses during the pandemic. We were always made very welcome, and the reaction from online audiences is very positive. Some people find the environment of a large online meeting slightly intimidating and are probably less willing to ask questions. Overall, the reaction has been very positive. Club Officers can attend a session from the comfort of their own homes, and this could become a new 'norm'."



In general, the overarching feedback coming from attendees, counties and Associates alike is that the online learning experience is here to stay moving forward. There will always be a place for in-person learning of course, but the benefits in terms of logistics and reach are such that a hybrid approach for the programme will likely be pioneered into the future.

Calendar of Online Club Officer Events

There are still numerous events to be run over the course of the next month or so, and registration remains open for all the below events. Participants need simply log onto <https://learning.gaa.ie/officertrainingcalendar>, click "registration link" next to the module(s) of their choice, complete the form and submit. They will then receive a link to the session one day in advance.



GER CORKERY, LIMERICK GAA DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Monday, February 1st @11am  
Microsoft 365 Training – Word

Tuesday, February 16th @2pm  
Microsoft 365 Training – Excel

Wednesday February 17th @11am  
Microsoft 365 Training – Forms

Monday, February 8th @11am  
Microsoft 365 Training – PowerPoint

Tuesday, February 16th @7pm  
Microsoft 365 Training – OneDrive & Forms

Wednesday February 17th @11am  
Essential Training for Data Protection

Tuesday, February 9th @7pm  
Creating a Safe Club

Tuesday, February 16th @7pm  
An Ghaeilge sa Chlub

By John Harrington

## ALEXANDRE SAN MARTIN COSTA'S ZEAL OF THE CONVERTED



**WHEN ALEXANDRE SAN MARTIN COSTA WATCHED HIS FIRST GAME OF GAELIC FOOTBALL IN 2012 IT WAS A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE.**

Rather than be constrained by a society, he was part of a cultural association that helped organise an 'international' match between a team from his native Galicia in Spain and Brittany in France, but until the ball was thrown in he didn't quite know what to expect.

When you consider that less than eight years later he was appointed Gaelic Games Europe's Coaching and Games Development Officer, it's fair to say the Gaelic Games bug bit him bad.

After that match between Galicia and Brittany he returned home to his native Santiago de Compostela with the zeal of a convert, determined to establish a GAA club there.

"When I saw Gaelic Football for the first

time that day I just fell in love with the game," Sanmartin Costa told GAA.ie

"Myself and most of my friends played together on a soccer team so I asked them if they want to play Gaelic Football.

"So they asked me, "What's that? What's Gaelic Football?" So I showed them a few videos on YouTube and they liked the game so we transformed our soccer club into a Gaelic Football Club.

"In Galicia by that time there were three or four clubs and we played in a small league among these four clubs and we won our first game and the players were like, "Okay, we have to continue, this game is amazing!" So that's how it started."

"Gaelic Football has a lot of skills related with soccer and basketball so it was quite easy for us to adapt or at least to try to play.

"At the start we were very amateur and playing something only similar to Gaelic football because at the beginning we played a mixture of Gaelic football and soccer. At the beginning we didn't know all the skills well so sometimes we used soccer skills but after only one year we started to play real Gaelic football.

"We started to play against Irish players in the Iberian championship, we started to watch more videos, read and learn about the rules, and that's how we started to get better."

Sanmartin Costa's club, Estrela Vermelha, quickly established themselves as the dominant force in the Galician League

and have grown stronger year on year.

With players who are all born and bred Galicians, they now more than hold their own against teams stacked with Irish players across the Iberian peninsula and beyond.

"In the Iberian championship we have reached the final several times. But Madrid is the strongest team here as most of their players are Irish. They have beaten us in the final several times, but we are close to them. Hopefully in the near future we can beat them.

"All of our team are locals, all of them are Galicians. Most of them from my city of Santiago de Compostela.

"The standard is getting better. Last year we had almost 50 men in the club for the summer. We had two teams in the league, an A team and a B team. Also we have the women's team and we started last year with the kids."





When a shoulder injury prevented Sanmartin Costa from playing the game for a period, he decided to coach the team instead and quickly found he had a flair for it.

He completed his Foundation Award and Award 1 coaching courses in Galicia and then a tutor coaching course with Leinster GAA through Colm Clear and Gerard O'Connor.

He was then invited to Down by Ulster GAA's Coach Development Manager, Roger Keenan, where he completed his Award 2 coaching course which set him on the path to becoming Gaelic Games Europe's Coaching and Games Development Officer last year.

"I love coaching," he says. "Once I'm on the pitch I forget about everything. All the problems, your work, your life, everything.

"I concentrate on the game, the drills, so I forget about everything."

The timing of the Coronavirus pandemic couldn't have been worse from Sanmartin Costa's point of view because it has limited the work he has been able to do in his role.

Webinars are a very useful tool, but from a coaching point of view nothing beats getting boots on pitches and interacting with fellow coaches and players face to face.

The challenge for the European board is that they are responsible for such a sprawling geographic area that is now divided into five divisions – Benelux, Central East, North West, Iberia, and Nordics.

Each division has a coaching officer that Sanmartin Costa works with, and he is also responsible for a tutor coaching group that runs coaching courses and clinics.

Coaching is particularly crucial in Europe



because new clubs are springing up all the time (there are now 90 on the continent) and are increasingly made up of players who are totally new to gaelic football and hurling.

“The game is rapidly growing in Europe and mainly that growth has been among natives starting to play gaelic football and hurling,” says Sanmartin Costa.

“Every year we have more natives and we now play a European Cup for natives where you have teams from all over Europe coming together for one weekend, and they play a type of nations cup.

“We have a lot of Irish people in Europe playing Gaelic Games, but, at the same time, more and more natives playing every year.

“For example, in France, they have a lot of players, over 1,000 (native) players and around 25 clubs and every year they have more and more natives playing which is great to see.”

More and more European clubs now have juvenile teams too, and Sanmartin Costa believes that a focus on coaching and development at underage level will be what drives the next acceleration in the game's growth on the continent.

“Here in Galicia we have a generation of players now but in five years we will need another generation,” he says.

“So, we have to work on that. We have to work like five or six years in advance. We have to create now this generation for five years later.

“Because in five years this current generation of players won't be playing anymore because they'll be too old so we have to get ready for that moment and work now on bringing through the next generation. So that's where we are putting

all of our efforts.

“We're trying to introduce Gaelic Games into the schools in Galicia and in Brittany they already have a plan for introducing Gaelic games into the schools.

“It is a big project, it is a very good project. Brittany sometimes acts as our big brother because they started earlier than us.

“We see what they do because they are quite similar to us in that they have all native players so we always look at what they do and try to follow in their footsteps.

“They have a very good project about working in schools and we would like to do the same. But just in this moment with the coronavirus situation it is difficult, but we have big plans for the future.

“I'm personally working on a book with another coach in Galicia which will focus on secondary schools and teach young players the story of Gaelic Games, how it has developed in Galicia, and some

skills and drills. It would be mainly for PE teachers, that's just another idea we have for promoting the game.”

If you have a good product then people will buy it, but is there more to the growth of Gaelic Games in Europe than the simple fact that gaelic football and hurling are great sports?

“In my experience in Galicia it is due to three main themes,” says Sanmartin Costa.

“First, Gaelic football is a sport that sounds quite similar to soccer, so it gets your attention straight away when you first hear about it.

“Secondly, because of the culture. In Galicia our culture is related to the celtic culture and have somewhat similar celtic roots and traditions and culture.

“And, finally, probably because of the opportunity Gaelic Games gives you to play for a Galician team.

“The Galician team is the selection of the best players in Galicia and we compete against other countries in the World Games.

“And for Galicians to put on the jersey of Galicia is just the best feeling. Those who do it feel very, very proud to represent Galicia. The jersey of Galicia represents so much for us.

“So I think these three things are the most important things for getting players involved in Galica.”

For human beings there are few more important needs than feeling like you are part of a community.

That is why the GAA is such a positive force in Irish society, and, increasingly, beyond these shores too.

Pride in the jersey is what it's all about whether you're from Galway or Galicia.



By John Harrington

## FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA - GAA IN THE USA



**FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA, GAELIC GAMES ARE NOW BEING PLAYED ALL ACROSS THE USA AND THE NUMBERS PARTICIPATING CONTINUES TO GROW YEAR ON YEAR.**

Where once Gaelic Football and Hurling were only deeply rooted in the ex-pat Irish community in major migrant cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco, now green shoots are sprouting up all over the States.

USGAA is the governing body for promoting gaelic football, hurling, and camogie across the USA apart from in New York which has its own county board, and one of their biggest challenges in recent years has been accommodating the growth of the games.

New clubs have formed in cities like Portland, Oregon; Butte, Montana; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Grand Rapids, Michigan; and Little Rock, Arkansas, and one of the most notable aspects of the development of the game in these areas is that it's been driven

by non-Irish who are totally new to Gaelic Games.

"Yes, it's mostly amongst non-Irish outside of the traditional Irish population centres now where the growth is and even within that there's a sizable group that does not even have Irish ancestry," says USGAA Games Development Officer, Rob Tierney.

"You might have students who were studying in Ireland or maybe people just on vacation to Ireland and they saw it, particularly hurling, and they came back saying, 'Wow, we've got to play that here', and they introduce it whether it's within the college environment or if they look to get a group of friends together and they start off small and they form a team.

"We've had new clubs formed in cities you might never almost have heard of and I think it has been aided by the fact we've got a pretty good development programme here, we've come out with some solid initiatives in terms of new club development grants, new team development grants, pairing our game development administrators with emerging teams or emerging clubs.

"Things like the Global Games Development Fund which is run by the department of foreign affairs and Croke Park and the World GAA Grant which we're also very happy to get from Croke Park.

"We also get massive support from Munster GAA who we are partnered with. Pat O'Shea from Kerry and Joey Carton from Waterford traditionally come out once a year and provide massive help in terms of advice.

They've been a huge help to myself as a Games Development Officer."

There are 142 senior GAA clubs in the USA outside of New York and 19 youth teams.

In the space of a year the number of women playing gaelic football or camogie has grown by 25 per cent, and another interesting trend has been the rapid growth of hurling teams.

"Hurling's growth has been quite tribal," says Tierney. "You see a lot of folks with beards and tattoos and kilts when we have the national playoffs.

"It's very much a kind of a tribal experience I think for people and that's what they're trying to connect it into."

It's a combination of that desire to belong to a community as well as the opportunity to play team sport in a competitive environment that seems to be driving the growth of gaelic games in the USA where it can be difficult to find outlets for both.

"The States would be a more individualistic society and trying to find that group of people that will welcome you can be tough," says Tierney.

"With us, I kind of think you're in until you work your way out of the group. There's a huge welcome and when you show up we're delighted to get you in and you're included straight away.

"One of the great opportunities we have here and something that aids development is that American sports has a massive drop

off after college.

“If you’re a handy sports player at whatever it is be it running, lacrosse, football, basketball, you might have played for your high school, you head off to college, and you come back to your city and you’re kind of at a loss.

“Yes, there are kind of recreational leagues that’s more of an after-work getting together scene. But for competitive sport there isn’t a lot here. Hurling, football, camogie are kind of fixing a hole that these athletes have.

“In our own city here in Pittsburgh where I am we’ve recruited a lot of people that have finished college.

“They didn’t play in our youth programme which is relatively new. They didn’t play there, they came out of college, we’re trying to do some recruitment locally as all cities do and then you find these athletes.

“You’re just going, ‘wow’, when you look at them. They’re super-fit, they have ball skills. We have basketballers that come out and you can see immediately they have those hand skills.

“They obviously have to work on their co-ordination and the skills when they play hurling and football for the first time, but they show up fit and that’s a massive thing for us.”

One of the biggest challenges in administrating gaelic games in the USA is the sheer geographic size of the country as well as the explosion in the numbers playing the game.

The country is divided into ten divisions, and many of those would cover sprawling areas where clubs are located many hours from one another which leads to obvious logistical challenges.

“The South West Division goes all the way from San Diego on the coast up to Denver, and then out to Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin,” says Tierney.

“So that’s a massive area of the United States and that’s a huge problem in terms of it’s hard for them to create a championship.

“In my own division (MidWest) we’re less than five hours away from everybody so it’s a lot easier to create a championship situation than in some of those more remote areas.

“Tied into the geography issue then is your meaningful games issue. So, somewhere like Denver would have a massive amount of practices, and the practice to games ratio is very high. Some cities have tried to and successfully created pub leagues.

“Indianapolis in terms of the hurling or Milwaukee in terms of hurling have done massive work in creating city-wide leagues where they have drafts. It’s a great social night where they have a draft very similar to what you’ll see in American sports.

“It’s kind of selling this sport to the Americans in language they know, that’s an important thing. So they have tackled the distance thing by having inner-city pub leagues where a pub or company sponsors this team and then they have a great competition.

“So those are our biggest challenges - the practice to games ratio and the sheer geographic area we’re working with.”

If you want to really appreciate the growth of the game on the continent of North America as a whole, then look no further than the Continental Youth Championships (CYC) which is the largest Gaelic Sports competition outside of Ireland.



CHILDREN FROM PITTSBURGH, PHILADELPHIA, DETROIT, AND CLEVELAND PICTURED AT THE 2019 CONTINENTAL YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS.

Every year over 2,500 children aged from U-6 to U-18 and representing USGAA, New York GAA, and Canadian GAA play hundreds of matches organised over the course of four days.

“A lot of parents are now starting to look at it as one of their weeks of vacation during the summer and they travel to whatever city it is in,” says Tierney. “It’s Chicago this year, Buffalo next year. There’s a rotation that’s been created.

“But it’s great, it’s great for those kids. It’s unbelievable when you see these children and teenagers playing these sports.

“Look, it is the future. It’s all very well that we have players coming out here during the summer on J1s, I see that as a rite of

passage for young people in college, but also you have others who have come out to play and it’s not very developmentally sound. You have teams that are only there because of that.

“So, when you see the thousands of kids that are playing in the CYC, it’s a really positive thing for the future but we need to do more work to encourage clubs to field teams at youth level and to develop gaelic games in schools and also local youth clubs.

“We’ve had more growth in the last two to three years than in the previous ten, and it’s up to us to make sure that trend continues by doing our best to foster the new generation.”

Le Jamie Ó Tuama

## ÁR GCLUICHÍ, ÁR LAOCHRA – DIARMAID CARNEY

**SAN EAGRÁN IS DEIREANÁI SEO DE 'ÁR GCLUICHÍ, ÁR LAOCHRA; CUIREANN MUID 20 CEIST SCIOBTHAÍ AR DHIARMAID CARNEY. TÁ FEAR ÓG CHEILTIGH NA MUINCHILLE AG IMIRT LEIS AN GCABHÁN LE DHÁ BHLIAIN ANUAS AGUS É AG SÚIL GO MÓR LE BHEITH AG CAITHEAMH GHEANSAÍ A CHONTAE GO CEANN TAMAILL FHADA!**

“Tá ról lárnach ag an nGaeilge i mo shaol, labhraím í gach lá agus is cuid de mo phearsantacht agus mo stíl mhaireachtála í. Tá an Ghaeilge an-tábhachtach dom maidir le féiniúlacht mar is linne í an Ghaeilge agus is féidir linn a bheith fíorbhródúil aisti,”

Diarmaid Carney, Eanáir, 2021  
Seo mar a d'fhreagair Diarmaid ár gcuid ceisteanna!  
Ainm: Diarmaid Carney  
Aois: 21

Club: Ceiltigh na Muinchille

Contae: An Cabhán

An scannán is fearr leat? Home Alone 2

An banna ceoil is fearr leat? Ní éistim le banna ceoil áirithe, ach is maith liom Christy Moore agus Gerry Cinnamon

An áit is fearr leat? An Mhuinchille, mo bhaile féin!

An bia is fearr leat? Stobhach a dhéanann mo mháthair!

Clár teilifíse is fearr leat? The Office US

An t-imreoir ab fhearr leat nuair a bhí tú óg: Seán Óg Ó hAilpín

An chéad chuimhne CLG atá agat: M'athair ag tabhairt mo chéad bhróga peile dom agus muid thuas sa pháirc pheile ag cleachtadh

An chéad uair ar imir tú le do chontae: i gcoinne Liatroma, 2019 sa tSraith Allianz  
An t-imreoir is fearr le himirt leat: Mo dheartháireacha, John agus Caoimhín

An t-imreoir is fearr le himirt i do aghaidh: Rory McHugh, Sligeach

An cluiche is fearr a d'imir tú riamh: Cluiche Ceannais Iomána na hÉireann Fresher B 2019, ar son St. Pats i gcoinne DCU!

Buaicphointe (highlight) do shaoil imeartha le do chontae go dtí seo: Ag imirt le mo bheirt deartháireacha

Buaicphointe do shaoil imeartha (career) le do chlub go dtí seo: Ag imirt le mo chairde ó bhí mé faoi 10 go dtí an fhoireann shinseareach

An duine is mó a raibh tionchar (influence) aige/aici ar do shaol imeartha go dtí seo: Mo chlann, go háirithe m'athair

Aon chomhairle (advice) agat do imreoirí óga? Bain taitneamh as!  
Aon chaitheamh aimsire eile? Imrím Peil Ghaelach le mo chlub freisin. Leanaim Celtic sa sacar, cé go mbriseann said mo chroí go minic.

Laoch spóirt agat taobh amuigh de CLG? Neil Lennon, Leo Messi



Gluais / Glossary

CLG Cheiltigh na Muinchille – Cootehill geansaí a chontae – his county jersey ról lárnach – central role stíl mhaireachtála – lifestyle féiniúlacht – identity áirithe – certain go minic – often

Le Jamie Ó Tuama

## CLÁRAIGH DO CHLUB LE FONDÚIREACHT SHEOSAIMH MHC DHONNCHA DO 2021

**IS SCÉIM TACAÍOCHTA DE CHUID CHUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL AGUS GHLÓR NA NGAEL Í FONDÚIREACHT SHEOSAIMH MHC DHONNCHA ATÁ DÍRITHE AR CHLUBANNA CLG ATÁ GNÍOMHACH I GCUR CHUN CINN NA GAEILGE. IS IAD GLÓR NA NGAEL A RIARANN AN SCÉIM SEO I GCOMHAR LE COISTE NAISIUNTA GAEILGE CHUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL.**

Cuireann clubanna fud fad na tíre an Ghaeilge chun cinn ina gcuid clubanna gan aon aitheantas. Is é cuspóir na fondúireachta seo ná aitheantas a thabhairt don obair sin, agus deis a thabhairt do chlubanna forbairt a dhéanamh ar an obair sin, ar bhonn tomhaiste agus pleanáilte. Tá treoir agus moltaí ar fáil don scéim seo ach teagmháil a dhéanamh le hOifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, Jamie Ó Tuama, [jamie.otuama@gaa.ie](mailto:jamie.otuama@gaa.ie) nó le [eolas@glornangael.ie](mailto:eolas@glornangael.ie).

Mar chuid den fhondúireacht seo, freisin, tá ciste miondeontas ann le cabhrú le clubanna imeachtaí Gaeilge a eagrú ina gcuid clubanna. Cuirtear na cistí seo ar fáil ag amantaí éagsúla le linn na bliana. Bronntar boinn chré-umha, airgid agus óir ar chlubanna ag deireadh na bliana – ag brath ar an líon spriocanna a leagtar síos san Fhondúireacht a bhaineann clubanna amach.

Is in ómós do Sheosamh 'Joe' Mac Donncha (1953-2016) an Fhondúireacht seo. Fear le háireamh a bhí i Joe a bhain go leor amach dó féin agus do phobal na tíre seo i gcoitinne le linn a shaoil. D'éirigh leis

an post is airde a bhaint amach i gCumann Lúthchleas Gael. Mar iománaí, thóg sé Corn Mhic Cárthaigh leis siar go Gaillimh agus bhí sé ina phríomhfheidhmeannach, agus ina chathaoirleach, ar chuid de mhóreagraíochtaí na tíre seo, Foras na Gaeilge ina measc.

Is scéim iontach í Fondúireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha a thugann aitheantas cú do chlubanna ar fud na hÉireann a chuireann an Ghaeilge chun cinn taobh istigh dá gcuid clubanna. Bhí an-rath ar an scéim seo ó bunaíodh í. Tá beagnach 200 club tar éis leas a bhaint as an scéim miondeontas atá mar chuid den fhondúireacht agus chabhraigh an t-airgead seo go mór le clubanna imeachtaí Gaeilge a eagrú ina gcuid clubanna.

Seán Ó hÓráin, Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael

Trí chláru leis an bhFondúireacht tá do chlub ag tabhairt tiomantais go gcuirfeá an Ghaeilge chun cinn go gníomhach agus go dtabharfar spás lárnach di i saol laethúil an chlub. Tapaigh an deis. Cláraigh leis an bhfondúireacht go beo!

Tá tuilleadh eolais maidir le Fondúireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha ar fáil ANSEO [www.glornangael.ie/clg](http://www.glornangael.ie/clg)



BONN ÓIR FSMD Á BHRONNADH AR CHUMANN NAOMH ANNA, LEITIR MÓIR

## FOIREANN SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR CLUBS PROCESSING MEMBERSHIP AND REGISTRATION

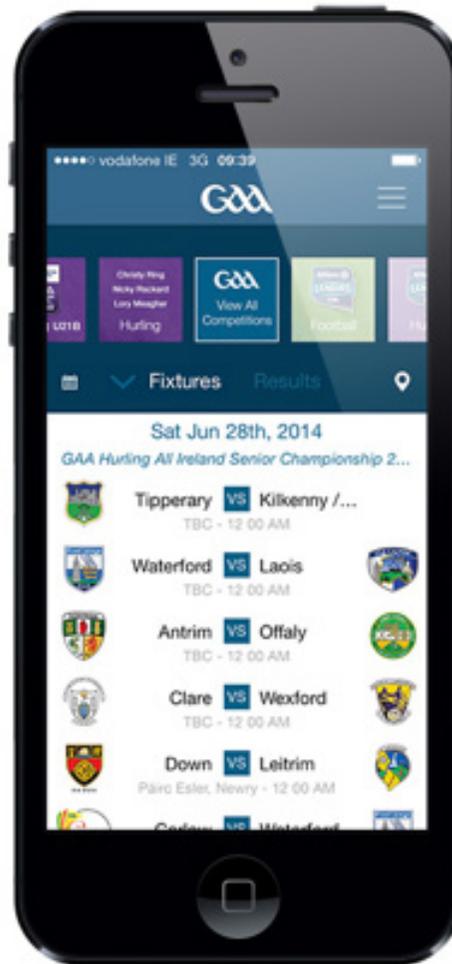
**IN SPITE OF THE UNCERTAINTY CAUSED BY THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC, MANY CLUBS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD BY GETTING STARTED ON THEIR MEMBERSHIP PROCESSES.**

Cuireann clubanna fud fad na tíre an This year sees the GAA / LGFA / Camogie / Handball and Rounders Associations using Foireann, a single, integrated Membership system for the first time and all Membership registrations (for playing and other rule-based eligibility requirements) must be completed on this system.

If you are involved in collecting your club's membership subscriptions or registering your members with the GAA, or other Association as relevant, you should ensure that you have access to login to Foireann and are familiar with how to use it.

As Foireann is a new system, significant support materials have been prepared and are available [HERE](#).

Included are documents describing how to complete all of the main tasks, with screenshots as appropriate. There are also a large number of videos which run through the tasks also and some of the most important videos are highlighted below.



Topic	Description	Link
Accessing Foireann	This video describes how to create an online account on Foireann, how to update your profile (name, contact details etc) and how to select the club(s) that you are a member of or otherwise involved with.	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Finding your way around	This video gives a brief overview of the main functionality within Foireann and how to navigate the system	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Club Administrators	An overview of the administrator role on the system is given in this video which also explains how to add additional administrators, how to check who the existing administrator(s) are and to remove admin access if relevant	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Setting up online payments	The steps required for clubs to receive on-line payments through Foireann, including setting up a Stripe account, are described in this video.	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Membership Options	This video describes how to configure the specific Membership options (or plans) that are available to your club's members when registering. These are the options that will be available to Members if buying on-line and registrars when completing the process manually	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Members List	This video gives an overview of the functionality available to review your club's list of members and how to add additional members	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Verifying & Registering Members	An overview of how to verify (confirm that online applications are from bona fide Club members) and registering members is given in this video. Specific details on how to process registrations for LGFA and Camogie Association members is also included	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Managing Teams	This video gives an overview of how Clubs, and coaches, can use the Teams functionality in Foireann to schedule training sessions, receive responses from players / guardians, verify that Health Questionnaires have been completed (when relevant) and record attendance	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>
Viewing & responding to an Event invitation	This video gives an overview of how players / guardians interact with Teams on Foireann and how they view upcoming events (training / matches etc), confirm attendance at training, submit Health Questionnaires (when relevant).	<a href="#">Click here to watch the video</a>

### One Clubs

One significant change in Foireann is the ability for GAA Clubs who work closely with their LGFA and Camogie counterparts to operate as One Club on the system. This makes membership and administrative tasks less onerous and all membership registrations can be completed from one place, rather than from three separate systems. If you wish to operate as 'One Club' on Foireann then you must email [gmssupport@gaa.ie](mailto:gmssupport@gaa.ie) and request that this happens (the three (or two) separate instances on your clubs will be merged into one with a single list of members). You will then be able to accept membership subscriptions for all Associations and register all members with their relevant governing body in one easy process.

### Duplicates

Foireann is a new system that has been implemented using components of the Returntoplay system, used during 2020 for processing Health Questionnaires, and the legacy Games Management System (Servasport) that was previously used for Registrations. Data from both systems is available on Foireann meaning that Membership history (going back to 2009) is available from the old Games Management System and the ability to access the system is in place for anyone who previously submitted a Health Questionnaire on the Returntoplay system. For clubs registrars and administrators, the above process will result in duplicate entries for some members being present in the Foireann system – one record relating to their old Membership record and one relating to their

Returntoplay account. At the moment, it is necessary to maintain both records on Foireann and in the coming months, once the Membership Registration period has passed, it will be possible to merge the records or delete them as relevant. The Foireann Support team will advise further on the process for this when appropriate to do.

### Bulk processing

If your club has an existing process for collecting Membership subscriptions that you wish to maintain then this is facilitated but Foireann will still need to be used to Register members with their relevant Associations (GAA / LGFA / Camogie). Without completing the registration steps, members may be ineligible to play or fulfil a role on the Club committee and may not be covered by Injury Fund / insurance or eligible to vote at the Club AGM (Note eligibility etc varies depending on the Association and relevant Official Rules).

It was possible in the legacy Games Management System to import member information from files through a bulk upload process. This process will be supported in Foireann also, however the functionality is not yet available. It will be in place as soon as possible and well in advance of any registration deadlines.

### Training

Online training and webinars will be delivered throughout the coming months to assist clubs, details of upcoming sessions are available [here](#)

## NEW VETTING RECOGNITION TIME FRAME

**WE HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED BY THE NATIONAL GARDA VETTING BUREAU THAT AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED TO AMEND VETTING LEGISLATION THAT WILL STIPULATE THAT THE VETTING CARRIED OUT ON AN INDIVIDUAL IN THE GAA AND ELSEWHERE SHALL IN FUTURE HAVE A 3-YEAR RECOGNITION PERIOD.**

To date all recognised vetting organisations had the right to set their own re-vetting period. The GAA, Camogie and LGFA previously agreed a 5 yr. re-vetting or recognition period, as per our Code of Behaviour (Underage), and this will now change to a 3-year recognition period for our volunteers and staff, in light of the proposed changes to the Act.

While we await the signing of this order by the Minister, the 3 yr. vetting recognition period shall apply in all of the Gaelic Games Associations as and from 1st January 2021. This new 3-year vetting recognition will apply for all vetting carried out on our behalf for those who work with children, whether it is via the Garda National Vetting Bureau or AccessNI. A similar 3-year recognition period applies to all levels of safeguarding training delivered by the Gaelic Games Associations.

Clubs must check that all persons, who work with children on their behalf, and whose vetting falls outside of this new 3-year time frame, are re-vetted now. As the Ministerial order has yet to be signed, we are able to offer our volunteers and Clubs a six-month period of grace to enable this re-vetting to be completed and the period of grace shall coincide with the date for completing the Child Safeguarding Statement, 31 May 2021.

Remember it is not permitted for a person to work with children in the GAA unless they have been satisfactorily vetted as per the new 3 year recognition period, have also attended relevant child safeguarding training and have a minimum coaching qualification.

If you or any of your colleagues fall into the 3 year time frame and require to be re-vetted please commence this process by completing the Vetting Identification Validation Form, along with required ID Documents, to your Children's Officer and then proceed to complete the vetting process at <https://www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/child-welfare-and-protection/vetting>

Until a coach or any other person working with children has been vetted, has attended safeguarding training and has a coaching qualification they are not permitted to work with children in any of the Gaelic Games Associations.



# CHILD SAFEGUARDING TRAINING IN THE GAA

## Safeguarding Training

The Child Safeguarding 1 Programme (Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshop) is perhaps the most attended programme for those who work with children in the GAA with over 12,000 attending this programme last year, despite the many Covid restrictions placed upon our ability to deliver training. Recognition of this programme continues for a 3-year period when the coach or mentor is then obliged to re-attend the face to face workshop, if they are still working at underage level, or undertake an online refresher training programme. Clubs will be aware that all face to face workshops are now indefinitely postponed and the Child Safeguarding 1 workshop has been replaced by a new virtual and interactive workshop.

Temporarily, due to the current exceptional circumstances, this 3-year recognition period for safeguarding training has now been extended to 5 years until 31 June 2021. For example, if a person attended a Child Safeguarding 1 workshop anytime in 2016, they may now complete the Online Safeguarding Refresher programme up to the end of June of this year.

## Virtual Safeguarding 1 Workshop

The Virtual Safeguarding 1 Workshop is a live interactive programme, delivered by a Tutor via a virtual classroom platform. There were 166 Virtual Safeguarding 1 workshops delivered in 2020.

Clubs are asked with the assistance of their Children's Officer to draw up a list of those who require Child Safeguarding 1 training and particularly new coaches who then liaises with the County Children's Officer, the person responsible for coordinating safeguarding training within the County. The County Children's Officer will contact Michelle Harte and agree on the available time slots and dates for delivering the workshop. All queries should be forwarded to [safeguardingonline@gaa.ie](mailto:safeguardingonline@gaa.ie)

## Virtual Safeguarding 3 (Designated Liaison Person) Workshop

The Virtual Safeguarding 3 Workshop is now available and similar to Safeguarding 1 it is a live interactive programme delivered by a Tutor via a virtual classroom platform. This workshop will be organised on a County basis and your Club should provide the name of your DLP to your County Children's Officer who are compiling the list of those who require the training in their County. Your County Children's Officer will then agree an available time slot and date for the workshop to be delivered for the County.

## Online Safeguarding Refresher Programme

The online Safeguarding Refresher programme is always available as an online programme and may be accessed at <https://learning.gaa.ie/safeguardingrefresher>. Last year, 3,700 people completed the Online Safeguarding Refresher Programme.

Applicants click in and complete the programme at any time and once completed it has a 3-year recognition period.

The online Safeguarding Refresher is targeted at:

- Any person who completed the Gaelic Games Safeguarding 1 face to face workshop in the last 5 years i.e. since 2016. They may now complete the online Safeguarding Refresher to enable them to continue in their role for the next 3 years or may defer the training until the new year. If a person can defer until the new year, we ask that they consider this.

- Any person who attended an LSP or other Sports NGB's Safeguarding 1 workshops can 'top up' their training by availing of our Child Safeguarding Refresher and this fulfils their child safeguarding training requirements so that they may work with children in our Gaelic Games Associations.
- Any person who attends the new Sport Ireland or Sport Northern Ireland Safeguarding 1 virtual workshop online may also undertake the Gaelic Games online Safeguarding Refresher to fulfil their child safeguarding training requirements.



# GUIDANCE FOR DEALING WITH & REPORTING ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS OF ABUSE

**NEVER BEFORE HAS THE GUIDANCE FOR DEALING WITH AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS OF ABUSE POLICY, WHICH APPLIES TO ALL OF OUR GAELIC GAMES ASSOCIATIONS, BEEN SO IMPORTANT AS WE ARE INFORMED IN REPORT AFTER REPORT OF THE SURGE IN ABUSE CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN DOMESTIC SITUATIONS IN IRELAND, PARTICULARLY DURING THESE TIMES OF COVID RESTRICTIONS.**

While our coaches at underage level may not under current circumstances be involved in face to face training or organising our games, we still enjoy the traditional GAA community spirit in our Clubs and the message from our safeguarding authorities and from the National Child Safeguarding Committee is the same: we need to be vigilant at all times in our community; we need to be prepared to respond if called upon, and we need to be prepared to show an understanding when children and young people return to face to face activity as they have missed out on the physical activity and the enjoyment and camaraderie between friends when playing our games. They also miss their GAA.

If at any time you are called upon due to a child abuse concern we must all act upon this in a confidential manner and your local or national DLP is there to advise.

As an All-Ireland policy document the

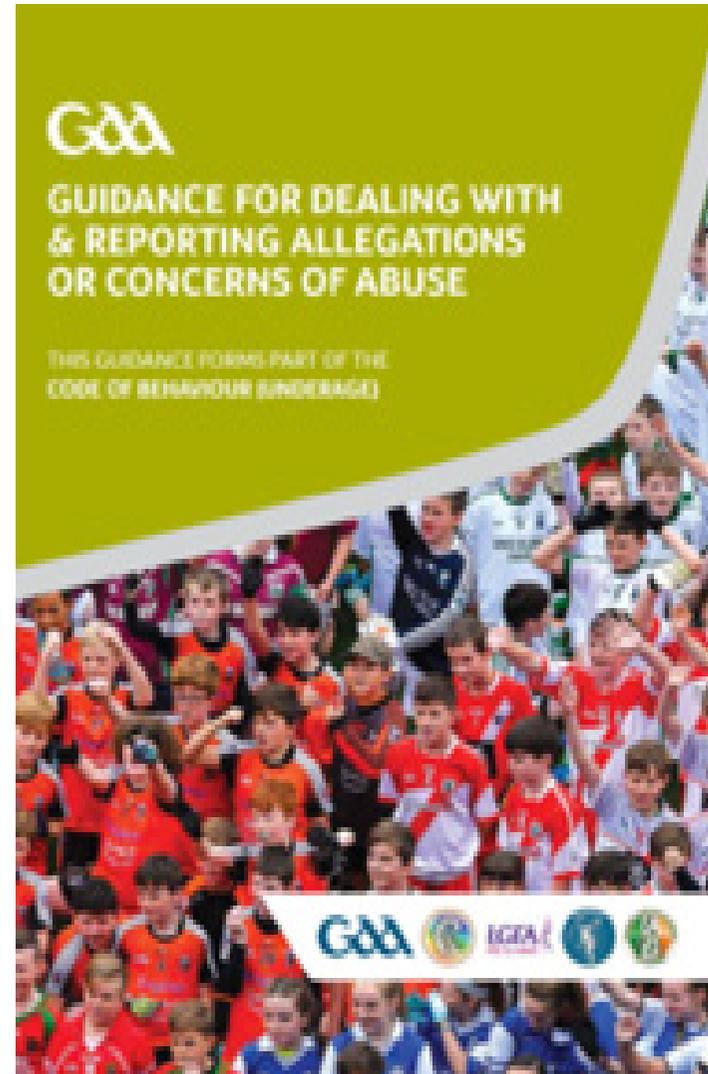
guidance provided applies equally to both the jurisdictions covered by Tusla and by the HSC Gateway teams and by the PSNI and an Garda Síochána.

Available at <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/n5hsvzyl3eb5kbrfbyfe.pdf> to download this is a must read and a reference booklet for Designated Liaison Persons (DLP) for Children's Officers and for underage Coaches.

The Guidance is packed with very useful information including:

- the role of the DLP, such as the role of the DLP
- our statutory obligations in all jurisdictions
- our Policy & Practice in recording and reporting
- child safeguarding structures in independent, amalgamated or combined teams
- clear direction on how to specifically deal with allegations/concerns, how to impose a debarment and how to report without delay to the relevant statutory authority and to the Association's National DLP
- contact details for both Tusla and Gateway Teams

The Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations and Concerns of Abuse should be downloaded and placed on every Club and County website for members and parents to read.





## Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse

### Relevant safeguarding checklist & dates for diary

- Commencement of national re- vetting programme 1st January 2021 to be completed by 31 May 2021 and 3-year recognition for vetting.

Following the announcement by the Garda National Vetting Bureau of a 3-year recognition for vetting any person in the GAA who requires to be re-vetted, due this new procedure should commence a new vetting application immediately at <https://www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/child-welfare-and-protection/vetting>. Vetting services are also available for new coaches who may have been recruited of late or who are currently attending Foundation Level Courses and who wish to work with children.
- Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement process completion date 31 May 2021

All Gaelic Games Clubs (GAA, LGFA, Camogie, Handball and Rounders) must carry out a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment in their Club and subsequently agree and display a Child Safeguarding Statement. A template, outlining how to commence the Safeguarding Risk Assessment process and how to complete the Safeguarding Statement will be issued shortly. This is a legal requirement under the Children First Act (2015) and by agreement it applies to all clubs throughout Ireland.
- Safeguarding training recognition period now \*3 years

All Safeguarding Training, where it is the current virtual training or the face to face and in person training delivery has a 3-year recognition period. As with all other recruitment and eligibility requirements a person must have a recognised and up to date Safeguarding Training Certificate to enable them work children. The Gaelic Games Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshops (Safeguarding 1) and the Designated Liaison Persons (Safeguarding 3) Workshops are now available as three-hour virtual live online workshops. Any person who requires to attend this training should make enquires, preferably through their Children's Officer, by contacting [safeguardingonline@gaa.ie](mailto:safeguardingonline@gaa.ie)
- Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement process completion date 31 May 2021

All Gaelic Games Clubs (GAA, LGFA, Camogie, Handball and Rounders) must carry out a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment in their Club and subsequently agree and display a Child Safeguarding Statement. A template, outlining how to commence the Safeguarding Risk Assessment process and how to complete the Safeguarding Statement will be issued shortly. This is a legal requirement under the Children First Act (2015) and by agreement it applies to all clubs throughout Ireland.
- Distribution of vetting completion lists and safeguarding attendance lists February 2021.

To assist Clubs in completing the Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement process a list of members will be issued to all clubs in February 2021 containing the details of their Club members who have registered as completing the vetting process and as having attended relevant child safeguarding training. The list has been drafted in line with GDPR and

## Have you got a Child Safeguarding concern?

If you have a child safeguarding concern please pass on this concern without delay to the relevant safeguarding authority or in the case of an internal GAA matter also to the GAA Mandated Person or your Club/County DLP who will advise and assist you in submitting your statutory report.

**GAA Mandated Person:** [mandateperson@gaa.ie](mailto:mandateperson@gaa.ie)

### How do I report a concern in the 26 Counties?

- Tusla social workers provide frontline services to children and families and may be contacted at Tusla <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/>
- An Garda Síochána at 999/112

### How do I report a concern in the 6 Counties?

- Contact your local gateway service team and social worker at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/GatewayServiceTeamContactDetails.pdf>
- PSNI at 999
- Contact the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000

**The GAA National Children's Office acts as a resource to our members and is available daily to advise on any child safeguarding matter.**

**You may contact us at 353 1 8658675 or by email at [nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalchildrensoffice@gaa.ie)**

legal requirements. This will assist Clubs when addressing the Risk Assessment & Child Safeguarding Statement process which must be completed by 31 May 2021.

- Children's Officer Webinar 20 February 2021  
The next Children's Officer Webinar takes place on 20 February 2021 at midday. These one-hour webinars were previously organised for County Children's Officers but as we have received many requests from their Club counterparts to attend this next webinar will be open to all Children's Officer, both Club and County. These events enable us to present the most up to date information directly to relevant Club and County personnel and key questions, if submitted in advance, are responded to live as part of the webinar.

If you wish to attend the webinar on 20 February 2021 at midday please contact [safeguardingonline@gaa.ie](mailto:safeguardingonline@gaa.ie)

- Designated Liaison Person (DLP) Webinar 20 March 2021  
The DLP webinar on 20 March is the first such webinar for Designated Liaison Persons at Club and County level. Given that the roll out of the virtual DLP Safeguarding 3 workshop will have commenced by then the webinar will be an ideal opportunity for both Club and County DLPs to discuss their own roles and to be presented with useful ideas and guidance for 2021. We invite all DLPs to join us on 20 March 2021 at midday and if you wish to attend please contact [nationaldpl@gaa.ie](mailto:nationaldpl@gaa.ie) to book your place.

- Revised Code of Behaviour (Underage)  
In the last few weeks, we have reviewed many suggestions on amending, improving and adding additional content to our Code of Behaviour (Underage). This policy document is the basis of all good practice in our work with children and along with our Treoraí Oifigiúil/Rule Book is the most sought after booklet in the GAA. For many years now the 'Code' has been adopted and implemented as a joint policy document not just by the GAA but by our colleagues in LGFA, Camogie, Rounders and Handball Associations. A joint approach allows for greater uniformity in practice and in ensuring that we adopt common but equally high standards in our work with children and young people in our Associations.

The revised Code, including new sections, has been designed to enable coaches, parents, club personnel, young people and others to download in leaflet format relevant information detailing the standards we require of everybody participating in our games. The Code will also contain useful hints and guidance on hosting and organising events, anti-bullying strategies, inclusivity in our work with minority groups and people with a disability and much more. Keep an eye out for this launch in March 2021.

## IS YOUR CLUB WINTER READY?

All units should pay attention to weather warnings where the latest updates can be found on Met Eireann. Clubs should also pay attention via local radio to any local warnings which may be in effect for certain areas. In winter the expected main impacts will include high winds, heavy rainfall and an increased risk of flooding.

These warnings are in place for a reason - to protect lives and mitigate property damage. If clubs have any planned activities for example underage training sessions, scheduled to take place during the weather warning, the activities should be cancelled where appropriate. If you proceed with holding the activity, you are putting the lives of members, visitors such as parents coming to collect children and the club property in danger. A common sense approach should be taken.

Below are some of the most common claims which have arisen at GAA properties as a result of previous weather incidents / storms:

- **Ball Stop Nets:** It is a condition of Property Insurance cover that retractable nets are retracted when not in use. If your nets are retractable they need to be retracted & secured now.
- **Roof tiles & Roofs:** These are easily blown off in severe weather, and gutters and fascias can also sustain



some damage. Roofs in stands have also suffered damage in previous storms.

- **Fallen trees and building damage:** Trees are currently in full leaf with a large surface area, so even moderate strength winds can bring down weakened trees and/or tree limbs. Some trees may already be compromised due to saturated soils at the moment and during wind warning some disruption due to falling trees/branches is likely. Heavy rain, coupled with falling leaves may block drains and gullies, leading to surface flooding.
- **Flooding:** If your club property is located in an area where a flood warning is in effect it might be worth investing in some sandbags and/or flood barriers to protect your property, particularly if you live in a flood risk area.
- **Broken glass:** Glass in windows can be damaged by severe winds or flying objects. Take care if trying to remove the glass, wear protective gloves and eye goggles.
- **Boundary walls and fencing:** collapsing in storm weather

## Preparation:

- The best thing you can do at any time of the year is to make sure your property is well looked after. Property Insurance is not a maintenance cover and damage to property where the underlying cause of loss is determined to have occurred due to a lack of regular maintenance and/or upkeep will not be covered by property insurance
- Retract Ball Stop Nets: It is a condition of Property Insurance cover that retractable nets are retracted when not in use. If your nets are retractable they need to be retracted & secured now
- Check your roof regularly: Roof tiles should be checked once a year, and again after a severe storm, to make sure no tiles have come loose. Loose tiles could cause damage to your property or neighbouring property. Look for loose or missing tiles, crumbling pointing or any other signs of damage. Also ensure any television

aerials and satellite dishes are securely attached. Professional contractors should only be engaged to carry out such works

- Check and secure your fencing and check boundary walls: Secure all fences, gates or posts on your property and regularly inspect boundary walls. These can cause severe damage to club property and neighbouring properties if blown away in a storm
- Check any trees on the property and remove hazardous branches: Cut down loose or overhanging branches, particularly those close to windows or power lines. Professional contractors should only be engaged to carry out such works
- Keep gutters clear of moss and leaves: If your gutters overflow during a downpour, it's time to give them a good clean. Remember to make sure they're securely fixed in place once you've finished. Professional contractors should only be engaged to carry out such works

- Property Generally: Secure any loose objects such as portable goals or ground maintenance equipment which could be blown. Items must be locked away or safely secured at all times
- Windows and doors: Close and lock all windows and doors securely
- Services - ensure you know where water, gas and electricity mains are, should you need to turn them off or on at any stage. Have contact numbers available for professional contractors should services be required

Professionals perform many of the above jobs for a reason. If a task involves any hazardous activity such as working at heights, use of ladders, working near power lines, or use of power tools you must engage bone fide contractors to carry out such works.



#### After a Weather incident /Storm:

- If your property has been affected by a weather event / storm, it can be frightening, but do not panic; there are some steps you can follow.
- Be careful: The most important thing is that you look after your safety. Do not touch cables which may have been blown down or are hanging. If your property has suffered damage, proceed with caution do not walk too close to buildings or trees that may have been weakened. Check for damage from a safe distance
- Take photos: From a safe distance, take photos of any damage that occurred. Make a list also, as this will be useful for your insurer to process any claims more smoothly
- Report the damage: if your property suffers damage as claims can be reported to Marsh Ireland via email at [propertyclaimsgaa@marsh.com](mailto:propertyclaimsgaa@marsh.com) or to [sinead.leavy@gaa.ie](mailto:sinead.leavy@gaa.ie) or [ciara.clarke@gaa.ie](mailto:ciara.clarke@gaa.ie). Details on property insurance policy excesses are in the policy document
- Keep receipts: If you make any emergency repairs such as roof repair or glass replacement you must retain these receipts

Make decisions in the best interest of the club – do not reopen your club to normal club activities until it is safe to do so, be safe not sorry.

## Weather Warnings

<b>Yellow</b>	<b>Not unusual weather. Localised danger.</b>
<b>Orange</b>	<b>Infrequent. Dangerous/disruptive.</b>
<b>Red</b>	<b>Rare. Extremely dangerous/destructive.</b>



Football

Hurling

Club

General

## MÍLE BUÍOCHAS

Thank you to all of those who have contributed to this month's edition of the GAA Club Newsletter. Your feedback is welcome and any comments, suggestions or queries should be directed to [clubnewsletter@gaa.ie](mailto:clubnewsletter@gaa.ie).

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