



**CONNACHT**  
GAA

**Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Comhairle Connacht**

# **An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil 2020**



**An Deardaoin 28 Eanáir 2021,  
ar 8.00 a chlog**

**Ionad Chonnacht CLG,  
Cloonacurry, Beacain,  
Clar Chlainne Mhuiris,  
Co Maigheo.**



Oughterard joint-captains, Eddie O'Sullivan, left, and Ronan Malloy of Oughterard lift the cup following the AIB GAA Football All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship Final. Photo by Ben McShane/Sportsfile



Kilmaine - Connacht Junior football champions, 2019



Sarsfields players celebrate with the trophy. Photo: Harry Murphy/Sportsfile





# Comhdháil Connacht CLG

Áras C.L.G Chonnacht  
Sráid an Chláir,  
Béal Átha h-Amhnais  
Co. Maigheo.  
3 Eanáir 2021

A chara,

Tionólfar an Chomhdáil Bhliantúil don Comhairle Connachta Cumann Lúthchleas Gael ar an **Deardaoin, 28 Eanáir, 2021**, ar a **8.00 a chlog** san **Ionad Chonnacht CLG, Cloonacurry, Beacain, Clar Chlainne Mhuiris, Co Maigheo**. The meeting will be held virtually on Microsoft Teams

## An Clár

		<i>Time</i>
1.	Address of Welcome	8:00 pm
2.	Miontuairiscí Comhdáil 2019	8:05 pm
3.	Adoption of Standing Orders	8:09 p.m.
4.	Óraid an Uachtarán	8:10 pm
5.	Tuarascáil an Rúnaí	8:25 pm
6.	Tuarascáil an Cisteoir	8:45 pm
7.	Tuarascáil ó na Coistí Éagsúla	8:55 pm
8.	Tógadh an Uachtarán, Leas-Uachtarán Cisteoir, Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí	9:00 pm
9.	Aon ghnó eile.	9.:30 pm
10.	Críoch	9:40 pm

## Ainmniúcháin

Uachtarán:	<b>Seán Ó Murchu</b> (Sligeach)
Leas-Uachtarán:	<b>Uinsionn Ó Nearaigh</b> (Maigheo)
Cisteoir:	<b>Mairtin Mac Cartain</b> (Liatroim)
Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí:	<b>S. S. Ó hAllmhurain</b> (Gaillimh)

## Rúin

There are no motions on the Clár

*Connacht GAA Council Publication*



# COROFIN - TREBLE ALL-IRELAND CLUB CHAMPION 2020



**HISTORY:** corofin celebrate with the Andy Merrigan Cup after their istoric victory at Croke Park.  
Photo: Seb Daly / SPORTSFILE.

**COROFIN:** B Power; C Silke, K Fitzgerald, L Silke; C Brady, K Molloy, D Wall; D Burke, R Steede; M Lundy, Michael Farragher, J Leonard; G Sice, Martin Farragher, I Burke. **Subs:** C Cunningham for Wall (35), D McHugh for Molloy (48), G Burke for Brady (58), C McGrath for C Silke (58), D Silke for Martin Farragher (65), D Canney for I Burke (67), Martin Farragher for Silke (69), C Newell for Lundy (74), K Molloy for Martin Farragher (76), R Mahon for L Silke (77).

\*I Burke returned as 15th player for extra-time.



**Corofin joint-captains Micheál Lundy, left, and Jason Leonard lift the Andy Merrigan Cup following the AIB GAA Football All-Ireland Senior Club Championship Final.**  
Photo by Seb Daly/Sportsfile





# Comhairle Cuige Chonnacht CLG

## Minutes of An Chomhdháil Bhliantúil 2019

Connacht GAA Centre on Thursday, 30th January, 2020

**G**EAROID Mac Samhrain, Uachtarán, presided at An Comhairle Bliantúil held in the Connacht GAA Centre, Cloonacurry, Bekan, Claremorris, Co. Mayo, on Thursday, 30th January, 2020.

The following members were present: Leas Uachtarán, **Seán Ó Murchu**; **Martin MacCartain**; Cisteoir; **Seán Ó hOibicin**, Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí; **S. Ó Muilbhígh**, **P. Ó Fitchellaigh** (Liatroim), **G. Ó Concubhair**, **S. Ó Niolain** (Sligeach); **P Mac Niochlais**, **G De Burca** (Maigheo); **Antaine Ó Flathertaigh**, **S. Ó Maoileannaigh** (Ros Comáin); **S.S. Ó hAllmhurain** (Gaillimh); **Mairtín Ó Dubhthaigh** (Reiteoiri); **Aodh Ó Rodain** (Scoilleana Dara Leibheil); **Pádraig Mac Dorcaidh**, Leithsceil, (Triu Leibheil), **Geaeroid Ó Gara** (Cumann na mBunscol); **Cathal De Creig**, PGDM; **Adrian Hasaid**, Operations Manager agus an Rúnaí **Seán Ó Pronntaigh**. Also present were: Iar Uachtarán, **Micheal Mac Carraige**, **Pronnsias Ó Cionnaith**, and auditor, **Michael McHugh**. Friteadh leithsceil o **Criostoir De Brun** (Gaillimh) and Iar Uachtarán, **Dr M. Ó Laghtuis**, **P.S. Mac Craith**, **P. Ó Murchu**, **P. Ó Braonain**, **T. Ó Cuinneagain**.

Officers and members of the various county committees were represented as follows:



**Gaillimh:** **S. Ó Grada**, **C. Mac Lanncaidh**, **Maire Uí Breithuinigh**, **Tomas Ó Ceallaigh**, **Seán Ó Moileain**.



**Liatroim:** **Eanna Mac Stin**, **Deaglan Ó Buichean**.



**Sligeach:** **Breandain Ó Lonain**, **Bernadine Mac Samhrain**, **Seosamh Ó Bradaigh**, **Pádraig Ó Dubhthaigh**, **Diarmuid Ó Geannain**.



**Maigheo:** **Liam Mofaid**, **Pol Ó Cuineain**, **Maire Ni Pronntaigh**, **Liam Ó Ceallaigh**.



**Ros Comáin:** **Séamus Mac Suibhne**, **Balari Ni Murraigh**, **Éamonn Campion**, **Seán Ó Corcorain**, **Aodh Ó Loinn**.

Other attendees included: **Larry McCarthy**, New York.

### Welcome to Delegates

Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí Comhairle Chonnacht, **Seán Ó hOibicin**, welcomed delegates to the

Convention and wished them well in their deliberations.

### Standing Orders

Standing Orders were adopted on proposition of **Maire Ni Breithuinigh** (Gaillimh); seconded by **S.S. Ó hAllmhurain** (Gaillimh).

### Minutes

The Minutes of the 2018 Convention were adopted on the proposition of: **Seán Ó Moileain** (Gaillimh); seconded by **Seán Ó Maoileannaigh** (Ros Comáin).

## Oráid an Uachtarán

### Introduction

A Iar-Uachtarán, Oifigigh an Chomhairle, Oifigigh an Chontae, Oifigeach eile, agus a dhaoine uaisle go leir. Ba mhaith liom fáilte a fherradh romhaibh go Comhdháil Bhliantúil Comhairle Chonnacht 2020 anocht.

It has been a great honour and privilege for me to hold the office of Connacht Council

President for my second year, and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to address you here tonight.

Looking back over 2019, Gaelic Games in the province are in a very healthy state. We had a very entertaining Connacht Championship in all grades and all codes, with the minor and under-20 football championship really stealing the headlines.

I want to pay a special tribute to the Corofin GAA Club, All-Ireland Club Champions for their enormous achievement in completing three All-Ireland Club Championship successes in-a-row. Corofin you are a credit to your Community, County and Province. Sincere Congratulations to everybody involved.

Likewise, heartiest congratulations to Oughterard on winning the All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship. This was a huge achievement for Oughterard and I extend to them our heartiest congratulation.





**The St Pat's (Lacken Cross) and the Colaiste Phobail Acaill Junior Hurling sides pose together after their recent tie in the Mayo Post Primary Junior Competition in Ballina. In the end it finished 3-3 to 1-2 in favour of the Achill school, but Lacken Cross fared very well in their first-ever hurling match.**

This speaks for the standard of club football in Galway with two clubs winning Senior and Intermediate Club All-Irelands.

All our provincial representatives, St Thomas's, Tooreen; Michael Breathnachs, in hurling, and Kilmaine, our junior football champions - while not reaching the final stage, all performed very well and did themselves, their clubs and their counties and our province proud.

## 2019

Unfortunately throughout the year there were occasions when some units within our province got much unwanted criticism in the national and on Social Media. This is wrong and very unfair, particularly when the units in question were doing nothing wrong. These units have acquitted themselves very well, and should not be subjected to torrents of abuse to which they were exposed. This type of abuse is not acceptable.

## Volunteers

We must remember that the people who run our county boards do so in a voluntary capacity. When we consider that, on election, they take on responsibility of a multimillion Euro business in a voluntary capacity, and are expected to run the business in their spare time. Don't forget all our volunteers have to do their day job and a life to live.

## Pressures

Continuously there are growing pressures on the officers of our county boards. I believe it is becoming ever increasingly difficult for volunteering officers of county boards to take on the very onerous administrative tasks that have now become an integral part of running our organisation. As a result of these growing pressures and workloads, very good potential officers are walking away; they don't want to get involved. Unfortunately this applies to both club and

county officers. If this trend is to continue the very grassroots of the association will crumble and decay as nobody will want to do the job. We all know the effects that this will have on our association.

I believe the GAA, as an organisation, has evolved so much, that it has out grown the administration template that has served the association so well for so many years in the past.

## Governance

Governance will always be an issue for the GAA at both club and county level, and I urge club and county officers to apply due diligence to the running their affairs. With the huge increase in the annual budgets required to administer the activities of both clubs and county committee's, finance is always the main area of concern. However, there are many other areas of concern in relation to policies and procedures, in the running of a GAA Committee that require constant attention.

## Operations/Finance Manager

However, with all the pressure that is on county boards, I believe the time has come that each county should have an Operations / Financial Manager. It's important to differentiate between Operations/ Financial Manager and a Commercial Manager, because all pressures that I refer to are not of a financial nature. In reality, the role of a Commercial Manager is to raise money.

As I said, not all pressures are of a financial nature, but the assistance of a qualified Operations Manager would greatly ease the pressure on already overworked county officers as they would have the assistance and guidance of a qualified person to deal with the many difficult situations that arrive on their desks on a daily basis. A person qualified to deal with these issues would be a huge benefit to both county and indeed club officials I'm not saying that county Board officers are not capable of doing this job but I





think that assistance of this nature would leave their job much easier to do.

## Expenditure

Having read reports from County Convention all around the country, it is apparent that the expenditure of county team preparation is totally out of control to an extent that it cannot be sustained.

Act now before this *out-of-control* machine crashes. Collectively the figure spent on inter-county teams in the last year is in excess of €30 million, with some counties spending well over the million euro mark. This cannot continue. Why are we so obsessed with spending millions on inter-county teams when there is very little evidence that expenditure of this nature has brought any county nearer to winning an All-Ireland?

In the last twenty years in football only four counties, with the exception of Dublin and Kerry, have won the Sam Maguire Cup, yet we continue to spend millions. Is this money well spent? The answer is No!

This is financial folly and makes absolutely no sense.

I fully appreciate the pressure county board officers come under to provide this money, so now I believe that in order to address this problem county boards need assistance and support from Croke Park. I'm suggesting that budgets for the preparation of each Inter-county team should be subject to the approval of the *National Financial Management Committee* in Croke Park.

## Time to Change

It's time to act now in order to tackle this problem

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- (1) A capped budget for each county team should be agreed between county board officers and the National Financial Management Committee with only provision for *percentage incremental increases*, success related to be incorporated.
- (2) A projected budget is agreed at the start of the year, and following the teams exit from all competition, a transparent and itemised report of how the budget was spent is forwarded to the County Executive, to the Provincial Council, and to the *National Financial Management Committee*.

This, I believe, would be of great assistance to county boards to address the *out-of-control* financial expenditure on county teams.

## The GAA slogan, "Where we all Belong"

If the GAA as an organisation is to continue to be the place where we all belong, I believe there are many influences that are at present tearing the association apart, and need to be addressed, and *if not addressed* will destroy our organisation.

### (1) Managers

The influence of team managers, who are putting training regimes in place from November 'til the time the team exit the All-Ireland series, is destroying the association. This has a detrimental effect on our

players, to the extent that players are not enjoying their game anymore.

Why are so many top inter-county players opting out?

Why are young and prospective players declining the offer to be part of the inter-county panel?

They feel that the exhaustive commitment placed upon them is not worth it. The ESRI report, published in 2018, gave clear indications that modern GAA players were being pushed too hard by respective county team managers. The players themselves are saying "scale it back". "Commitment, time and professional standard setting, has gone too far. Enjoyment is leaving the game". Others are asking: "that it becomes more enjoyable again and less of a non-stop chase". These issues have been highlighted in the 2018 report "The reality of being a senior inter-county player".

2019 ESRI report states that 80% of college students say they had difficulty balancing their studies and playing Gaelic Games due to the pressure exerted on them by their team managers. That is not right.

**Eilish O'Kelly**, ESRI researcher and author of the report, clearly states: "unless the underlying devices that are giving rise to the current inter-county commitment levels are identified and addressed the future knock-on effects are likely to be amplified among future generation of players". Has anything changed or will anything change? Action needs to be taken now!

## Fixtures: The Brexit of GAA

I'm convinced that we have too many fixtures and some competitions need to be removed from our fixture calendar and the under-20 championship should be changed to under-19, hence u-13, u-15, u-17 and u-19.

I welcome the recently published, *Fixtures Review Committee Report*, chaired by **Eddie O'Sullivan**, and I believe that the recommendation's that they have provided us with, are the basis for the change that we need, and can lead us to a situation where we can have a proper calendar of GAA fixtures at club and county.

I strongly recommend the proposal to divide the country into four regions. This is not in any way an attempt to undermine the Provincial Councils, as the role of the Provincial Councils would not change. This proposal would introduce an equitable competition where every county would have the same number of games to qualify for the latter games in the series.

This to me would go a long way to solve our fixture problem, but as some counties would have to Change regions, my fear is that it will encounter the N I M B Y syndrome. It's ok As long as it is not in my back yard, or as long as it does not affect my county.

In any change it is also important that New York and London are afforded the opportunity to continue to compete in the All-Ireland series.

### (3) Rule Change

Constant rule changes are another problem. We must resist the requests for new rules to change the pattern of our games. Why do we have to change our





Kilkerrin-Clonberne goalkeeper Lisa Murphy celebrates with her team-mates after their win in the 2019 All-Ireland club semi-final against Foxrock-Cabinteely.

Photo: Piaras Ó

rules so often and incorporate rules in our game that are borrowed from other sports? These rule changes continue to confuse players and supporters alike and are extremely difficult for referees to implement. Leave our rules alone because when implemented properly the rules of Gaelic Games have served us well.

#### (4) Elitism

We need to rescue our organisation from the claws of *Elitism*, where we spend millions on an elite group, while the clubs, the grassroots of the association, are struggling to survive. It's time, maybe, to balance our expenditure and not forget the ones most in need.

#### Two Tier Competitions

The format for the future All-Ireland Football Championship was decided at special congress in 2019. While there are murmurs of dissatisfaction out there to the two tier competition, **I believe two tiers is not enough**, but I'm happy it is good starting point. I hope it will be marketed sufficiently to make it attractive for the counties who will participate.

#### Academy Report

I welcome the Talent Academy and Player Review Report and I sincerely hope that its finding will be taken on board in all our counties. It recommends a *player pathway* which would involve players, parents, clubs and counties in a *player pathway framework* with less emphasis on elite development squads. There is no evidence that the development squads, as they have been organised, has progressed or enhanced the performance of the participating players but has, in actual fact, created a divide between players at club level where squad players felt they were superior to

the ordinary club player. This is doing nothing for the club players.

#### Féile

Once again the organising of Féile in the province was again an *outstanding success* with massive attendance at the finals here at the Centre of Excellence. The success of this year's Féile can once again be attributed to the hard working Féile committee led by **Chairperson, John Hopkins, and Secretary, Michael O'Connor**, who done outstanding work in co-ordinating this event. I also pay tribute to all the Counties Féile Committees for their efforts in making the competition such a success. Also to everybody here at the Centre of Excellence for the huge amount of work done in organising this event.

#### Centre of Excellence

Once again the Centre of Excellence can report another excellent year as usage has increased on a yearly basis with more and more counties and clubs making use of the great facilities here. It is with great excitement that we look forward to the opening of our world standard indoor playing pitch. *It is a credit to the Connacht Council that we will have the biggest indoor playing facility in the country in which full size GAA games can be played regardless of weather conditions.* I commend everybody associated with this development, all the staff at the Centre of Excellence, but in particular the man with the vision, the initiative, the foresight, the expertise, to provide a facility of this nature in the province, that man, of course, is our **Provincial Secretary, John Prenty.**

I believe that in order to really complete the magnificent facility here at the Connacht Centre of Excellence, we need to provide team accommodation and swimming pool facilities so we can cater for club and county teams mid or weekend training camps.







## Retirees

As per the five year rule a number of our delegates are retiring from the council. Collectively we have paid tribute to them at our awards night and tonight I want to thank them sincerely for their contribution to the working of the council. I wish you all well; some are going to higher office on Central Council to join the other county delegates who have served their apprenticeship here in Connacht Council.

## New Delegates

I welcome the new delegates to the council and I hope your time on the council will be an enjoyable one. I look forward to working with you.

## New Public Relations Officer

I wish our new PRO, **John Joe Holleran**, from Galway, a long-standing servant of GAA at both county and provincial level, and to wish John Joe the very best in his new role, and I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

## Committees

To all the committees of the council who have worked very hard throughout the year, I want to say a very special word of gratitude. I want in particular highlight the great work done by our *Health & Well Being /Games for All Committee* in the promotion of Wheelchair Hurling. To our dedicated delegates who have been extremely supportive of all our initiative throughout the year I say a sincere 'thank you'.

As the Liaison Officer, on behalf of Coiste Bainistíochta for Rounders Ireland, I want to compliment the people in the province who are working hard to promote the sport and recognise the progress they are making.

I want to sincerely thank all our outstanding volunteers who assist the council in the various tasks assigned to them.

## New Officers

To all the new officers of five county boards, I wish you well and I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

## Staff

To all the staff at the Centre of Excellence, I sincerely 'thank you' for your huge commitment and dedication to the work of Connacht GAA in your various capacities.

*To all the families who have suffered bereavements throughout the province on behalf of the Connacht Council I extend my sincere sympathy.*

Finally, it has been a great honour for me to serve as your Uachtarán for the last year and to everybody that I worked with I thank you for your advice, assistance, patience and support during the year and I look forward to working with you in 2020.

Go raibh míle mhaith agat,

**Gearóid MacSamhráin,**  
Uachtarán Comhairle Chonnacht.

## Tuarascail an Rúnaí

The Secretary's Report was adopted on the proposition of **Gearóid De Burca** (Maigheo); seconded by **Pádraig Ó Fitchellaigh** (Liatroim).

Leas Uachtarán congratulated the Rúnaí on his report and also the Féile Committee for the hugely successful Féile Peil in June. He referred to the Dome and encouraged all counties to make use of the facilities at the COE.

Referring to Infrastructure he said that counties should have patience in progressing projects and that they should be phased. He emphasised that the core business of the Association is in offering games' opportunities.

**C. Mac Lanncaidh** said that the report highlighted the great work being undertaken across the province. He expressed disappointment that the Inter-County Junior Championship was being discontinued.

**D. Ó Bochain** complimented the Rúnaí and thanked the council for its support for the Leitrim GAA Centre at Annaduff.

**G. De Burca** expressed concern at the continued increases of expenditure year-on-year.

The Rúnaí highlighted a number of concerns he had outlined in his Report.

## Tuarascail an Cisteoir

The Treasurer's Report was adopted on the proposition of **S. Ó Muilbhigh** (Liatroim); seconded by **G. Ó Concubhair** (Sligeach)

The Cisteoir at the outset stated that the accounts were management accounts and that the Audit had been delayed. He said that audited accounts would be available at next council meeting. The accounts showed an Income of €3,439,633 and an Expenditure of €3,425,286 with an overall surplus of €14,347 after depreciation is taken into account.

The Uachtarán thanked the Cisteoir and Michael McHugh for the presentation of the accounts.

**Martin MacCartain** thanked the counties for their courtesy on the day of games. He thanked his team of voluntary stewards and also Gilmore Security for all their work in the collection of gates throughout the province,

He thanked **Michael McHugh** for his work with the accounts and also **Adrian Hassett** and the Rúnaí for their help during the year.

## Tuarascail o na fo-choisti

The Uachtarán thanked the various sub-committees for their work during the year and wished them well in the future.

**Development Committee Report** adopted on proposition of **P. Mac Dorcaigh** (Triu Leibheil); seconded **G. de Burca** (Maigheo).

**Fixtures Planners Report** adopted on proposition of **D. Ó Buicheain** (Liatroim); seconded **P. Mac Samhrain** (Sligeach).

**Coaching & Games Development Report** adopted on proposition of **L. Mofaid** (Maigheo); seconded **S. Ó Niolain** (Sligeach).





PGDM, Cathal Cregg, highlighted that all Coaching & Development Programmes must fit into the six key areas of Cúl Camps, Child Games Opportunities, Youth Games Opportunities, Schools, Talent Academies, Coach Education.

**Risk & Insurance Report** adopted on proposition of P. Ó Fitchellaigh (Liatroim); seconded G. De Burca (Maigheo).

**Coiste Comarsaíde Report** adopted on proposition of B. Ó Loineain; seconded P. Ó Cuineain.

**Coach Education Report** adopted on the proposition of A. Ó Rodain; seconded by A. Ó Flathartaigh.

**Coiste Eisteachta Report** adopted on proposition of S. Ó hOibicin; seconded by P. Ó Cuineain.

**Post Primary Schools Report** was adopted on the proposition of M. Ó Breithuínigh; seconded by P. Ó Cuineain.

**Cumann na mBunscol Report** was adopted on proposition of B. Ó Loineain; seconded M. Mac Giolla Rua.

**Third Level Report** was adopted on proposition of V. Ó Muiri; seconded, P. Ó Fitchellaigh.

P. Mac Dorcaidh highlighted the difficulties being encountered in this sector due to the change of date of the under-20 season and the pressures being put on the young players involved.

**Pitch Maintenance Report** adopted on proposition of G. de Burca seconded by S.S. Ó hAllmhurain

**Glacadh leis Tuarascail Ó Coiste Scór ar mholadh,** A. Ó Loinn, S. Ó hOibicin ag cuidiu leis.

**Coisde Iomana** adopted on the proposition of A. Ó Flathartaigh; seconded by M Mac Giolla Rua.

**Coiste na Reiteoiri Report** was adopted on proposition of S. Ó Niolain; seconded by S. Ó Muilbhígh.

**Health & Wellbeing Report** was on adopted on proposition of S. Ó hOibicin; seconded by S. Mac Suibhne.

M. Mac Giolla Rua asked all counties to support the work of the Health & Wellbeing Committees in their counties. He congratulated Pat Carty (Sligo) who captained the Irish Wheelchair hurling team in the recent international tournament.

**Féile Report** was on adopted on proposition of A. Ó Flathartaigh; seconded by S. Ó Corcorain.

### **Togadh an Uachtarán, Leas-Uachtarán, Cisteoir, Rúnaí**

The following officers were elected:

Uachtaran: **Gearoid Mac Samhrain** (Liatroim)

Proposed: **P. Ó Fitchellaigh**

Seconded: **D. Ó Buicheain**

Leas-Uachtaran: **Sean Ó Murchu** (Sligeach)

Proposed: **B. MacSamhrain**

Seconded: **B. Ó Loineain**

Cisteoir: **Mairtin Mac Cartain** (Liatroim)

Proposed: **E. Mac Stin**

Seconded: **S. Ó Muilbhígh**

Oifigeach Caidreamh Poibli: **Seán S. Ó hAllmhurain** (Gaillimh).

Propose: **C. Mac Lanncaidh**

Seconded: **S. Ó Grada**

**S.S. Ó hAllmhurain** said that it was a great honour to be elected as PRO of Connacht

Council. He said that he has had a life-long connection with the GAA at all levels and that he is looking forward to the next three years. The Uachtarán welcomed John Joe to the new role and thanked **John Hopkins** for his efforts during his term of office.

Rúnaí: **Seán Ó Promntaigh** (Maigheo)

## **Rúin**

Ni raibh aon Ruin ar an gClar.

## **Aon Gno Eile**

The Rúnaí thanked the council staff for their dedication to all aspects of the running of the council.

This concluded Convention.

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Cathaoirleach.

## **Bun Órdaithe (Standing Orders)**

In order that the proceedings of the Convention are carried out without delay, the following Standing Orders will be observed:

1. The Proposer of a resolution or an Amendment thereto may speak for 5 minutes, but not more than 5 minutes.
2. A Delegate speaking to a Resolution or an Amendment thereto may speak for 5 minutes but not more than 5 minutes.
3. The Proposer of a resolution or an Amendment may speak a second time for 3 minutes before a vote is taken, but no other Delegate may speak a second time to the same Resolution or Amendment.
4. The Chairman may at any time he considers a matter has been sufficiently discussed call on the Proposer for a reply, and when that has been given a vote must be taken.
5. A Delegate may, with the consent of the Chairman, move "that the question be now put" after which, when the Proposer has spoken, a vote must be taken
6. Standing Orders shall not be suspended for the purpose of considering any matter not on the Agenda, except by the consent of the majority equal to two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote.





# Tuarisc an Rúnaí 2020

## Seán Ó Pronntaigh

**A**R dtús ba mhaith liom mo fhíor buíochas a ghabhail do gach duine a chabhraigh le gníomhaíochtaí Comhairle Chonnacht i rith na bliana.

Ba mhaith liom freisin comhgairdeas a gabhail do na foirne a bhuaidh craoibh na hEireann i 2020.

As we embarked on a new decade we had great plans, expectations of great games with huge crowds and a bright new dawn for the Council and for the Association as a whole. However, 2020 turned out to be a year like no other in the annals of the GAA. Who could have imagined at last year's Convention that from 12th March everything would change instantly and come to a shuddering stop? Since that date our actions, conversations and thinking has been dominated by the fears and challenges of living with Covid-19. The Association has seen lockdown, reopening, closing again, easing of restrictions followed by more restrictions and now back into full lockdown again. Covid-19 has played havoc with how we, as an association, were accustomed to doing things our way but were forced to adapt and are continuing to adapt to the new ways of organising our affairs. To us sport is of the utmost importance from a participation point of view but also as a means of raising the mood of the nation and brightening our daily lives either by attending or viewing on television or following on the radio. This was particularly evident during the summer months when our underage and adult players were allowed back to train and play with in some cases limited spectators allowed. Unfortunately it did not last.

The decision to allow our inter-county competitions to be played was a great fillip for our Association with the short days and long nights of November and December being shortened further with a feast of football and hurling games all of which could be viewed on some medium with thousands of GAA followers and in many cases non GAA followers spending their time shouting at the television ... I'd say that the Tipperary win in the Munster Final raised the roof in many a house.

As an Association one of our greatest strengths has always been coming to the assistance of our friends, neighbours and the local community in times of crisis. Covid-19 brought this to the fore all year and we can be justifiably proud of the efforts of all of our clubs and volunteers in helping the vulnerable in their respective communities by demonstrating what a club and community is all about by ensuring that life was made a little easier for those who were cocooning and isolated in their communities. It brought true values to the forefront as we proved, yet again, that the GAA is not all about playing our games. The Covid Advisory Group under Chairman, **Shay Bannon**, and Secretary, **Fergal McGill**, has carefully guided our Association on all of the protocols around the various restrictions



and have done a marvellous job in keeping us all safe. Our efforts, on the ground, yet again, proved that our Association are more rooted in our parishes and communities than any of our government departments or agencies. To all of our clubs, I say Comhgairdais and Míle Buíochas.

I wish also to pay tribute to health staff and frontline workers, many of whom are dedicated GAA players and members, for their commitment and for their response to the crisis that the pandemic brought and continues to bring to society as a whole.

There is no doubt that we will endure more pain in 2021 but there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel with the imminent roll out of a vaccine. Hopefully, in the near future, we will see players return to the playing fields, supporters return to the terraces and officials from club to county to provincial level be able to meet physically, free of the burdens of bad wi-fi, Zoom calls or virtual meetings on MS teams. It is hard to believe that we had no physical meeting of the Council since the last Convention, hopefully we will be back meeting each other at council meetings in the near future. It is very important to be able to see where the enemy in the room is.

Despite all of the restrictions 2020 was a very successful year on the field of play. Over 4,000 club games were played at all levels.

### **National titles came to:**

**ROS COMÁIN** - Allianz League Division 2 Football Champions

**GAILLIMH** - All-Ireland U-20 Football Champions

**SLIGEACH** - Allianz League Division 3B Hurling Champions

**COROFIN** - All-Ireland Senior Club Football Champions

**OUGHTERARD** - All-Ireland Intermediate Football Champions

**SARSFIELDS** - All-Ireland Club Senior Camogie Champions

**PRESENTATION COLLEGE, ATHENRY** - All-Ireland Schools Junior 'A' Hurling Champions

### **Unsuccessful in national finals were:**

**MAIGHEO** - All-Ireland Senior Football Final

**MAIGHEO** - Nickey Rackard Hurling Final

**LIATROIM** - Allianz League Division 3B Hurling One All-Ireland Scór title came to the province with a win at Scór na nÓg level by **Mainistir Chnoc Muaidhe**, Co na Gaillimhe (sa chomórtas Rince Seit).

Congratulations to President's Award winners: **Hugh Rudden**, Ballyhaunis, and **John A. McAndrew**, St Michael's, Sligo.

Overall 2020 was a good, if challenging, year for the Association in the province.





**Hugh Rudden of Ballyhaunis GAA, Mayo, is presented with the Education Award by Maolmhuire Tynan, Head of Public Affairs AIB, and Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael John Horan during the GAA President's Awards at Croke Park in Dublin.**

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile.



**John McAndrew of St Michael's GAA Club, Sligo, is presented with the Connacht Award by Maolmhuire Tynan, Head of Public Affairs AIB, and Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael John Horan during the GAA President's Awards at Croke Park in Dublin.**

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach/Sportsfile

## Senior Football Championship

Covid-19 had a major impact on the structure of the Connacht Senior Football Championship. Due to travel restrictions the competition had to be moved from May to November with the consequent withdrawal of New York and London.

Mayo travelled to Avantcard Pairc Sheain Mac Diarmada to play Leitrim in the first round. Leitrim started brightly but were eventually defeated by a stronger Mayo team on a 2-15 to 0-10 scoreline.

Unfortunately the first semi-final had to be conceded by Sligo after they were unable to field a team due to the number of Covid-19 cases in the panel. This was a most regrettable incident but was one that Sligo took in the best interests of their players and of the Association as a whole.

Roscommon played hosts to Mayo in the semi-final at Dr Hyde Park and were slowly out of the blocks when the visitors built-up an early lead which they never relinquished when winning by 1-16 to 0-13.

The final, played at Pearse Stadium, was an eerie occasion in an empty stadium where every word uttered by players and management re-echoed over the ground!

By half-time the issue was delicately poised with Mayo, with the aid of the wind, leading by 0-8 to 0-5. Early in the second-half Mayo went ahead by five points but Galway rallied and reduced the deficit to one point with time running out. However, they were unable to force extra-time and Mayo held on to win by the minimum margin, 0-14 to 0-13.

In the All-Ireland semi-finals Ulster champions, Cavan, and Munster champions, Tipperary, qualified to meet Leinster champions, Dublin, and Mayo respectively. The provincial victories by Cavan and Tipperary were some of the highlights of the year and proved that the provincial championships still give an opportunity for the minnows to gain silverware.

Dublin proved too strong for Cavan and won by 1-

24 to 0-12; while Mayo overcame Tipperary by 5-20 to 3-13 with Cillian O'Connor hitting 4-9.

The All-Ireland Final, played on the Sunday before Christmas, saw the underdogs, Mayo, take the game to Dublin in the first-half but still went in two points behind at half-time. A Black Card for Dublin's Robbie McDaid on the stroke of half-time gave Mayo followers hope for what was to come. However, Dublin eventually came out in top in the fourth quarter to take their sixth title in-a-row on a 2-14 to 0-15 scoreline.

At the end of the Connacht Championship Paul Taylor stepped down as Sligo Manager and has been replaced by **Tony McEntee** for the 2021 series. All other managers remain in place for what will hopefully be a great championship played safely before large crowds.

2021 will see a Split Season with inter-county games played in the first-half of the season and the club games in the second-half of the season. The Connacht Senior Football Championship currently is scheduled to commence in mid-April with the Connacht Final played in late May.

The decision, by Ard Chomhairle, to go with inter-county games first has given a major boost to clubs and club players who can now look forward to some quality playing time, in the Summer and Autumn months, in the knowledge that the availability of their county colleagues will not be hindered by the Inter county game and the vagaries of the inter-county managers. It should also bring a welcome boost to the county board coffers.

The coming championship will also see the introduction of the Tailteann Cup.

Whereby teams from Divisions III and IV, who fail to reach their provincial finals, will enter this competition rather than the qualifiers. This gives teams from those divisions an opportunity to compete in their province and also for a national title.





Galway captain Jack Glynn (left), lifts the Connacht U-20 title following his side's victory over Roscommon in the EirGrid Connacht GAA Football U-20 Championship Final at Tuam Stadium.

Photo: Seb Daly/Sportsfile.

We all look forward to the 2021 championship. At this point in time it is unclear whether New York and London will be able to participate.

## U-20 Championship

The scheduling of this championship in early Spring brought the post-primary schools competitions and the Third Level competitions into conflict with this inter-county competition and also into conflict with the prevailing weather conditions at that time of year.

The preliminary round saw a repeat of last year's final with champions, Galway, travelling to MacHale Park to play Mayo. In a game played in dire weather conditions the game finished in a draw 0-10 each after extra-time. The tie was settled on penalties with Galway winning 3-2.

Galway played Leitrim in the semi-final, which had to be changed to Elphin due to pitch conditions, and had a facile 1-12 to 0-2 victory. Roscommon travelled to Markievicz Park to meet Sligo and after a very good game took the honours on a 1-11 to 1-8 scoreline.

The final, which was played at Tuam Stadium, saw Galway retain their title when winning by 4-13 to 0-5.

Covid-19 restrictions saw the All-Ireland series postponed until October when Galway, despite a number of players missing due to the virus, defeated Kerry on a 1-15 to 0-10 scoreline. In the other semi-final Dublin defeated Tyrone by 1-14 to 1-12.

The All-Ireland Final was, again, delayed due to the pandemic, but was eventually played, in Croke Park as a curtain raiser to the All-Ireland Senior Final on 19th December. After a marvellous performance by the Tribesmen they held on to win by the narrowest of margins Galway 1-11 Dublin 0-13. On behalf of the council I wish to congratulate the team, their manager, **Donal Ó Fatharta**, and the board on a wonderful victory.

## Minor football Championship (U-17)

The Connacht Minor Football Championship was scheduled to be played on the Round Robin format. However, Covid-19 restrictions forced the cancellation of the competition twice before we got underway on December 12th. When the decision was taken by CCC to dispense with the Round Robin format it was agreed that all games would be played at the Centre of Excellence.

In the quarter-final Galway and Leitrim played a very entertaining game before the Tribesmen pulled away in the final quarter to win by 2-17 to 0-12.

In the semi-finals Roscommon were too strong for Galway and had a 2-13 to 0-11 victory; while a late first-half goal saw Sligo hold on to defeat Mayo by 1-9 to 1-7.

In the final, which had to be brought forward to St Stephen's Day, Roscommon denied Sligo their first minor title in over 50 years when winning by 1-5 to 1-2 in a game played in atrocious wind and rain. Unfortunately Covid-19 restrictions ordained that the game could not be played inside in the Dome which would have been an ideal occasions to showcase the possibilities of the Dome in the prevailing weather conditions.

In the end we were lucky to get the competition finished before further restrictions came into effect and we wish Roscommon well in the All-Ireland series which hopefully will be completed in 2021.

## FBD Insurance League

FBD Insurance League commenced in early January and was completed in a two week period and proved an ideal pipe-opener for counties preparing for the Allianz Football.

Roscommon travelled to Markievicz Park for a quarter-final game with Sligo and emerged victorious





**Galway captain Shane Walsh lifts the FBD League at Dr Hyde Park in Roscommon.** Photo: Ray Ryan / SPORTSFILE.



**Oughterard joint-captains, Eddie O'Sullivan, left, and Ronan Malloy of Oughterard lift the cup following the AIB GAA Football All-Ireland Intermediate Club Championship Final.** Photo by Ben McShane/Sportsfile

on a 1-15 to 0-14 scoreline after an entertaining game. In the semi-finals, Roscommon had a facile 7-16 to 0-7 victory over Leitrim at Carrick; while Galway travelled to MacHale Park to play Mayo. The game finished in a 1-17 draw with Galway advancing to the final 3-2 on penalties.

The final at Dr Hyde Park saw Galway take the title by defeating Roscommon on a 1-14 to 0-11 scoreline.

On behalf of the council I wish to thank the counties and teams for their support of the finish on the day format and the decision to finish the games by a penalty shootout. The format has been adopted now in all other competitions and has proven to be successful way of putting certainty into our fixtures schedules.

I wish to thank FBD for their continued valued support for the council and the competition and look forward to continued support into the future.

### **Ted Webb Cup**

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic this competition was cancelled for this year.

### **Club Championships**

Our clubs have again been to the forefront of the All-Ireland Club title race where the excellent Corofin took their third All-Ireland senior football titles in-a-



**Corofin's Treble Champs - Kieran Molloy, Martin Farragher, Bernard Power and Dylan Wall celebrate.**

row; while Oughterard took the All-Ireland Intermediate Football title.

The county championships were, again, well contested this year with only Tourlestrane (Sligo) retaining their county senior football title with new champions Mohill (Leitrim), Moycullen (Galway), Knockmore (Mayo) and St Brigid's in Roscommon taking their county championships respectively. In London the championship has not been completed yet.

At intermediate level Balla (Mayo), Oran (Roscommon), Cortoon Shamrocks (Galway) and Curry (Sligo) won their respective county championships.

The Leitrim championship has to be completed when Covid-19 restrictions will allow the final to be staged.

Kilmaine (Mayo) and Tourlestrane (Sligo) won their county junior titles.

The Leitrim and Roscommon championships have to be completed.

Unfortunately, the provincial and club All-Ireland championships fell foul of the pandemic and were cancelled.

### **Leo Kenny Cup**

This competition was not held due to the pandemic.

### **Minor Club Competitions**

Competition not held in 2020 due to the pandemic.

### **Hurling Competitions**

In the county championships, St Thomas (Galway) and Carrick HC, retained their county titles; with new champions in Ballyhaunis (Mayo), Pádraig Pearses (Roscommon) and Easkey (Sligo).

At inter-county level Sligo continued their recent progress when taking the Allianz 3B hurling title when defeating Leitrim, in a game hosted at the Centre of Excellence. Despite being relegated in the league Mayo qualified for the Nickey Rackard Cup final but were defeated following a late rally by Donegal at Croke Park.





Galway captain Jack Glynn accepts the cup from Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael John Horan following victory in the EirGrid GAA Football All-Ireland Under-20 Championship Final match between Dublin and Galway at Croke Park in Dublin. Photo by Ray McManus/Sportsfile

In the Leinster Hurling Championship, Galway senior hurlers had a bye into the semi-final where they met reigning champions, Wexford. They had an easy 1-27 to 0-17 victory. In the final against Kilkenny they were defeated on a scoreline of 0-24 to 2-20 following a late Kilkenny rally. In the All-Ireland quarter-final they met reigning All-Ireland champions, Tipperary, where they emerged victorious on a 3-23 to 2-24 scoreline after a great game.

In the All-Ireland semi-final Galway were defeated by 0-27 to 0-24 by eventual champions Limerick. In the other semi-final Waterford defeated Kilkenny by 2-27 to 2-23 before being defeated in the All-Ireland Final 0-19 to Limericks 0-30.

The Celtic Challenge and Táin Óg Leagues were postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Hopefully we will be able to return to the field of play with those competitions in 2021.

### A New Decade/New Challenges

The plans and expectations we had at last year's Convention as we entered a new decade were quickly thrown into disarray within 2 months with the arrival of the pandemic.

Suddenly we had no games, no attendances, lockdowns and very little financial opportunities. For a number of years I have decried the excessive costs of the inter-county game in particular with year-on-year increases in expenditure.

The way that the year panned out meant that the previous demands of inter-county team managers and players to train more, have more professional staff involved and consequently spend more, could not be accommodated as 2020 had to be different and we managed to have a very exciting, high quality inter-county championship with county team costs at a fraction of the year before.

Maybe we have stumbled onto a formula for the future:

- Split season
- Match day panels of 26
- Senior team panel expenses for 32 (all counties should be confined to 32)
- Team expenses paid centrally with additional costs confirmed by auditor
- Teams allowed to train on a maximum of 3 times per week. Two sessions plus a game. GPA cooperation is required to police this
- Official off season enshrined in fixtures calendar
- Back room size confined to 12 officially. Counties carrying huge backroom teams has shown to be unnecessary, in my opinion, whereby some counties have almost a back room panel on a one to-one ratio with the players. Reduction measures are required to be done in this area
- To fully comply with the above it may be necessary to confine the Injury Benefit Fund for inter-county players from the official return to play dates until the end of competition for each squad.

Hopefully the runaway train of previous years can be slowed down to keep within the speed limits.

From a Provincial Council point of view the greatest threat we face in the new decade, because of Covid19, will be the challenges that the lack of attendances and consequent lack of finance that the pandemic has imposed.

2020 has been a most challenging year financially for the council with zero gate receipts from the Connacht Senior Football Championship and our Provincial Club Championships (which were cancelled). Dire weather conditions impacted on attendances for the FBD Insurance League and the EirGrid Connacht U-20 Championship, after which there were no attendances allowed at our games with our only game income coming from the streaming of our u-17 championship.

2021 will probably be more challenging, than 2020.





At the minute there is little or no prospect of attendances at our championship games and it is important that the council is allowed to avail of any streaming opportunities which are available for non-live televised games.

Our financial situation will place a significant pressure on the council and it will have a huge impact on our operational capability long into the future. There will be a need for the incoming council to examine our financial situation, going forward, at an early date.

## Fixture Calendar Review Task Force Report

Congress 2020 discussed some of the recommendations from the Fixture Calendar Review Task Force and passed a number of motions which will have far reaching consequences for the improvement of fixture making and in particular giving certainty to the fixture plans for the club player.

Of particular importance has been the establishment of the National Club Fixtures Oversight Committee consisting of a chairperson, nominated by the management committee, the nominated provincial appointee with responsibility for club fixtures from each province, and the director of games administration. It shall investigate and process on behalf of the management committee matters related to the enforcement of rules on the scheduling and postponement of club fixtures, inter-county player availability to clubs, inter-county challenge and tournament games and *closed periods/collective training*. It shall have responsibility for approving county club fixture programmes on an annual basis and ensuring that county club fixture programmes are consistent with the rules and stated policies of the Association in relation to club fixtures and shall only approve programmes that meet these criteria. This is a vital support for a County CCC in implementing a fair, certain, consistent and sustainable fixture programme in their county.

This committee will be a game changer for the future for fixture scheduling across the Association.

Following the debate at the Congress workshop and on the floor of Congress it was decided to call a *Special Congress* in September before which the Task Force would revisit some outstanding proposals. Unfortunately the Covid-19 Pandemic put a halt to the *Special Congress* and a unique Split Season was organised for 2020 with the club season played between August and October and the inter-county played in November and December. This accidental eventuality has seen us stumble onto a system that we had not believed possible beforehand in the deliberations of the Task Force.

Following the positive feedback from all sources to the core principles of the Split Season model the Task Force was reconvened and requested specifically:

- That the committee further consider and make recommendations regarding the option of adopting a "Split Season" model for the GAA's calendar including impact and implications, and
- Prepare a status report on the initial Task Force recommendations and consultation proposals.

The experiences of Summer 2020 for our clubs were significant and following wide consultation the advantages of having a split season gained huge traction due to:

- No crossover between the inter-county and club seasons
- No interruptions due to the county game
- No ambiguity over player availability, and
- More regularity and certainty in the planning of club fixture programmes

The upcoming Congress will decide whether a Split Season model will be implemented in 2022.

Congress will also debate the *football championship proposals* with four options being considered:

### Football Championship Option 1:

8 Team Provincial Football Championships

### Football Championship Option 2

League structure for All-Ireland Championships

In the event that neither proposal finds favour then we are left with 2 Options:

- To persist with the current trial structures for the All-Ireland Senior Football Championships (i.e. *Round Robin* quarter-finals)
- or -
- To revert to the system that pertained up to 2017 (knock-out quarter finals).

Other important recommendations are made for the following:

### U-20 Hurling

- That All-Ireland semi-finals in the U-20 Hurling Championship be discontinued
- That the U-20 Hurling eligibility (*Liam Mac Carthy* counties) be restricted to those who have not played in the senior hurling championship in a given year

### 2nd and 3rd Level Dates

- 3rd Level Dates - That General Rule state that the Sigerson Cup must be completed on or before the 7th Sunday of the year; Fitzgibbon Cup to be completed on or before the 8th Sunday of the year
- That all post primary schools finals be completed by the weekend immediately after St Patrick's Day annually

### All Ireland Junior Football Championship

That Provincial Junior Championships in Ireland be discontinued and a new All-Ireland Junior Football Championship to be played annually. The semi-finals will consist of the British Junior Champions and runners-up, Kilkenny and New York (U.S born players only). The All-Ireland semi-finals and finals will be played over a single weekend in Ireland annually, with the semi-finals taking place on a Friday and the All-Ireland Final on the Sunday.

The Task Force is also recommending that the following proposals from its report adopted by Ard Chomhairle:

- That no collective inter-county training or games be permitted at any level before January 1st and Allianz Leagues to be the first inter-county competitions annually.







**The Ballyhaunis U12 Hurling side who claimed the U12B title with a win over Claremorris in Ballyhaunis.**

- That the top team in Divisions II and III of the Allianz Hurling League qualify directly for the final in each group; 2nd and 3rd placed teams play in a semi-final against each other. The Task Force under Chairman, **Eddie O'Sullivan**, and Secretary, **Fergal McGill**, has put a huge amount of time, effort and thought into the very complex area of fixture making and fixture scheduling and their deliberations have mapped out a roadmap, which if adopted, will give a clear indication to our players that the club game and the inter-county game can happily live side-by-side in a progressive and respectful fashion long into the future.

### **Coaching & Games Development**

Our Coaching & Games Development Committee, under the chairmanship of **Padraic McGourty** has overseen and supported a *games-based approach* in all of our activities. All of our coaching activities are underpinned by the national and *Provincial Coaching & Games Development Plan* and are based around six key areas and all of our counties tailor their Coaching & Games Development Plans to meet the individual needs pertaining to their county:

#### **6 Key Areas**

- Child Games Opportunities (0-12 year),
- Youth Games Opportunities (12-18years),
- School Initiatives,
- Camps,
- Talent Academies
- Learning & Development

Unfortunately the Pandemic had a significant effect on the roll out of the various programmes under the six key areas but thanks to the magnificent efforts of our Provincial Games Manager and his staff a huge bank of work was undertaken which will have a significant impact on Coaching & Games Development into the future.

### **Cúl Camps**

After the initial lockdown and various restrictions our 2020 Cúl Camp programme was the first sign that

normal life could resume and I feel the national success of our Cúl Camps, organised in a well-planned and safe environment, had a bearing on the Government decision to allow children back to school in September. 106 Camps have taken place with a total of 11,465 boys and girls participating.

Camp coaches received coach education, Garda vetting clearance and child safeguarding upskilling to participate in the camp. In addition the camps saw many of our young people employed at a difficult time in the country.

Particular thanks are due to **Charles Harrison**, the National Cúl Camp Co-Ordinator, without whose dedication to the cause there would not have been a Cúl Camp programme in 2020. This Cúl Camp programme may well be a template for the future.

Go Games, County Go Games days in Croke Park and the Connacht U-12 Skills were severely impacted with only limited Go Games in the counties and the other initiatives being cancelled.

Our national schools coaching was suspended in March but thankfully recommenced with the schools opening in September. During this period when primary schools were closed and children were at home, the GAA published a series of daily learning activities and skill challenges to support parents and children in achieving their academic and physical activity needs.

### **Youth Opportunities (12-18)**

*Our Féile, Celtic Challenge, Academy and Feile Days were all cancelled.*

### **Coach Education**

**86 Football and Hurling Coaching Courses were delivered throughout Connacht with 1,971 participants involved.**

Three of the five days of the Award 2 course was completed with fifty participants. The group practical work still has to be undertaken in order to complete the course. These two days will be completed as soon as we are able to perform practicals without restrictions.





The Provincial Club Support Programme, whose primary purpose is to build self-sufficiency and self-sustainability within each club in all aspects of coaching/management and player development, was in full swing before the restrictions were imposed, with twenty-five selected clubs having started engaging in the programme.

**Séamus Burns**, our Strength & Conditioning Officer, has also rolled out Four Strength & Conditioning Courses designed and delivered so that coaches can carry out training in a safe and effective manner in their own particular club/county setting with the assistance of Séamus.

Fifty-three coaches took part in the courses and will now work with club and county teams across the province. The course covers many aspects surrounding the physical preparation of our teams with modules including *Physical Demands* of Gaelic Games, Basic Science Theory, Fitness Testing, Warm Ups, Recovery, Conditioning for Gaelic Games and Supervision of a Resistance Training Programme. The idea behind such a course is to build a volunteer-led module for clubs so that they can implement a safe and cost-effective physical fitness programme in place within their own club. This course will, again, be offered out to all clubs around the province in 2021.

During 2020 a follow-on course has been developed and will be rolled out as a pilot during 2021. This will include three additional modules in the area of Speed Development, Conditioning through Small-Sided Games and *advanced body weight resistance training*.

The pandemic has been a hugely-stressful time for our full-time coaching staff. With schools closed there was an impression that they had very little to do, but, in my opinion, the work they undertook in the lockdown will have a significant effect on coaching and games development long into the future.

I include a synopsis from **Cathal Cregg's** report of the body of work undertaken by the full-time staff in 2020 at a time when they were on reduced pay due to the pandemic:

## Full-Time Staff

*"The full-time C&G staff engaged in thirteen weeks of online projects (listed below) in March when the first lockdown was implemented by the government. During this time all of our normal C&G projects were stopped. These projects have been used in 2020 and will be very useful in the years ahead for all clubs, schools, counties and their coaches.*

*"The projects were allocated over three time-lines along with staff upskilling in IT platforms, coaching styles/techniques, project planning/management, communication and mental health in young people. Coaches also engaged extensively online with all their own internal coaches in the county during this period.*

*"While the lockdown was obviously a very difficult time for the whole country and as coaches we would much rather have our boots on and be out on the pitch coaching, I feel that the skills picked up by staff in this period will be hugely beneficial to the C&G programmes we run in the future. The time allowed us to take a step back and forensically analyse each facet of C&G in the province and look at ways to improve. The IT skills picked up by all staff members will be*

*hugely beneficial in 2021 and beyond from an organisational perspective and I look forward to seeing these improvements implemented practically in the future."*

## Provincial Projects

- Redevelop the U-12 Skills Test
  - Audit of Youth Games Programme by county
  - Development of a Club Support Manual (<https://connachtgaa.ie/structure-of-coaching-committee/>)
  - A bank of 365 forms for all project for use by all counties
  - How can we make the 5-star centre project central to the school's programme
  - Guidelines for developing a *club school link*
  - Microsoft Planner Programme - come up with plans for all existing projects
  - Update fitness testing protocols for Connacht Centre for use by clubs and academy squads
  - C&G Coach Recruitment Model
  - Coach Development Manual/Assessment tool to help mentor coaches
  - Develop a model of how can we make communities of practice viable for volunteer coaches in GAA
  - An 8-12-week schedule of fundamental and skill development progressions for school teachers, club school link coaches and staff
  - Updating/refreshing of Award 1 Coach Education material in conjunction with Leinster group
  - Bank of interactive games/drills for distribution on social media and in emails to clubs (Connacht GAA Interactive Coaching Drills)
  - Development of Physical Fitness Level 2
  - Develop a paper/book review club for staff
  - Getting engagement from secondary schools (How can we make an even bigger impact in this area?)
  - Analysis of all research gathered from each County Youth Forum shared amongst all staff members
  - Planning the next Connacht C&G Seminar when the dome is open and Coronavirus is finished.
  - Development of running, strength and skills weekly material for return to play at youth and adult level
  - Introduction of Connacht GAA Podcast Series with *Darragh Cox*. Up to episode 18 on a wide range of topics with a different guest in each (<https://connachtgaa.ie/coaching/podcast/>)
- I have no doubt that this body of work will serve the council and its constituent counties and clubs well into the future.
- On behalf of the council I wish to thank the following:
- > Our Coaching Committee under the Chairmanship of, **Padraig McGourty**, and our County Coaching Officers, **Declan O'Reilly** (Mayo), **John Tobin** (Galway), **David McDonnell** (Roscommon), **Peadar Niland** (Sligo) and **Paul Murphy** (Leitrim).
  - > Our Coach Education Committee under the Chairmanship of **Denis O'Boyle**.
  - > To our Games Managers, **Tom Mc Manus**, **Thomas Keenan**, **Willie Hegarty**, **Billy Mc Nicholas** and **Liam Óg Gormley**. I wish **Tom**





**McManus** well in his retirement. Special thanks is also due to **Padraic Ó Conaire** for his work under Sceimoiiluna.

- Also to our Third Level Officers, **Michael Harte** (S.I.T), **Damien Curley** (G.M.I.T) **Michael O'Connor** (N.U.I G) for all of their efforts throughout the year.
- Séamus Burns had a massive influence on clubs and development squads with Fitness Testing, Training Programmes and Video Analysis. Their student trainees, **Emma Judge** (Mayo), **Ronan Donovan** (Galway Hurling), **Daniel Forde** (Galway Football), **Cormac Haslam** (Leitrim), **Cian O'Connor** (Sligo), **David McManus** (Roscommon) who worked for six months from March to August in their assigned county and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and we wish them well in the future.

I wish to pay tribute to our Provincial Games Manager, **Cathal Cregg**, and our Hurling Director, **Damien Coleman**, for their continued commitment to the promotion of our games within the province.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to the National Coaching & Games Development Committee, under the chairmanship of **Ciaran McLaughlin** and the guidance and direction of **Shane Flanagan**, **Jimmy Darcy** and **Peter Horgan**.

## Schools & Colleges

2020 was a frustrating year for schools and colleges competing at second and third level post-primary schools games came to a shuddering halt on March 12th by which stage we were lucky to have completed eighteen competitions.

On the playing fields **St Gerald's College** took the Senior 'A' Football title, after beating Summerhill College in the final. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the All-Ireland semi-final was cancelled.

**St Joseph's, Galway**, took the Senior 'B' Football title and the Richie Bell Cup when defeating St Nathy's, Ballaghderreen, in the Connacht Final. Again, unfortunately, their All-Ireland semi-final was cancelled.

At 'C' level, **Dunmore CS** defeated Balla Secondary School to take the Connacht title before being denied a chance at All-Ireland glory due to the pandemic.

At senior 'D' level **Foxford** took the title when defeating Belmullet in the final and suffered the ultimate disappointment of being unable to play in the cancelled All-Ireland Final.

**Claregalway CS** won the Junior 'A' title when defeating St Gerald's in the final. They were defeated by St Brendan's, Killarney, in the All-Ireland semi-final.

In Senior 'A' 'Hurling, **St Raphael's, Loughrea**, defeated Presentation, Athenry, to take the Senior 'A' Hurling Championship. Both schools had qualified for the All-Ireland semi-finals before the competition was cancelled.

At Senior 'B' level **Calasactius College** took the title when defeating St Cuan's but were defeated in the All-Ireland semi-final by Cashel C.S.

The Senior 'C' title went to **Holy Rosary College** who defeated St. Killian's New Inn in the final. They were defeated in the All-Ireland semi-final by Colaiste Treasa, Kanturk.

**Presentation College, Athenry**, were crowned All-Ireland Junior 'A' Hurling champions when defeating St Kieran's, Kilkenny, in the All-Ireland Final.

As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic we were unable to complete twelve of our provincial competitions. The school year was disrupted as never before and for many students at second level in particular the hum drum nature of school work and classes has traditionally been broken up by the excitement of representing their school at Gaelic Games. 2020 was different with school days replaced by 'teams' calls or Zoom calls and remote virtual learning, no games, no exams and the uncertainty of their future. However, the safety of all of us became paramount.

For the 2020/2021 school year our schools committee had to look at our schools fixtures in a different light. They amalgamated the league and championships into one competition initially but the continuance of the Pandemic led to a further change with all competitions being organised on a knock-out basis. This gave some hope to the players and teachers for a return to play in January. Unfortunately current restrictions may impact on this and we wait with baited breath that some type of activity will return.

I wish to thank our Second Level Schools Committee, under the Chairmanship of **Joe McCabe**, for their great cooperation during the year. **Hugh Rudden** has done tremendous work to ensure that second level games are organised and played on time. Credit is also due to **Attracta** and **Amanda** and **Adrian**, in the office, for ensuring that all of the school games, we were allowed play, were completed. I wish to thank the many clubs and county committees who make their facilities available to our second level schools. I also wish to thank our new Second Level School Competition sponsors **Mezzino.ie** who have signed up for a five year deal which will bring major benefits for the promotion of second level schools competitions.

The student trainees, Emma Judge (Mayo), Ronan Donovan (Galway Hurling), Daniel Forde (Galway Football), Cormac Haslam (Leitrim), Cian O'Connor (Sligo), David McManus (Roscommon) who worked for six months from March to August in their assigned county and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and we wish them well in the future

At Third Level 2019/2020 was initially a very busy year with teams from NUI Galway, GMIT, IT Sligo, GMIT Castlebar, GMIT Letterfrack and a number of Colleges of Further Education and ETBs in Connacht competing in all grades within the Comhairle Ardoideachais Electric Ireland Leagues. In the various competitions:

- NUIG reached the final of the Senior Football League Division
- NUIG also reached the final of the Intermediate football league where they were defeated by DCU.
- NUIG and GMIT reached the semi-finals of the Fresher's Division I football league
- NUIG won the Fresher Football League Division III title for the second year in-a-row
- NUIG were defeated in the intermediate championship final by DCU





- GMT captured the Division II hurling title. GMT reached the final of the intermediate hurling league where they lost out to University of Limerick.
- GMT won the Fresher Hurling Division 2 league defeating Trinity College in the final. In the championships Sligo IT defeated UL in the opening round of Sigerson Cup but were defeated by Letterkenny I.T in the quarter final. NUIG were defeated by 1 point by UCC in the opening round. In the Trench Cup CIT, who eventually went on to win the competition, defeated GMT on the opening round.

NUIG and GMT competed in the Fitzgibbon Cup with NUIG eventually being defeated at the quarter final stage.

**Padraig McGourty** has given a comprehensive report on the participation of our colleges in the various competitions.

The future of Gaelic Games at third level faces many challenges into the future including:

- Remote online learning due to Covid-19 has robbed the college student of face-to-face contact with his fellow classmates
- The significant problem of no training or games since March
- The possibility of 2020/2021 college playing season being truncated or cancelled
- The possibility that players may go through their college life without ever playing any sport while in college
- Player eligibility issues
- Number of students leaving the province to go East and South in particular. It is time for our colleges, county boards and clubs to highlight the advantages of going to college locally. Our Third Level institutions in the province offer a range of courses that compare more than favourable with courses on offer elsewhere.

Despite the challenges being faced Gaelic Games continue to prosper in our Connacht Third Level Institutions and the increased cost of accommodation for students attending courses outside Connacht may in the future see an increase in numbers in our Connacht Colleges in the coming years.

## College Bursaries

The council has continued its commitment to providing Bursaries to Third Level students from the province who are active members in their higher education club in an administrative or playing capacity. All five Connacht counties are represented in the initiative which provides financial assistance to students who have displayed potential and commitment on the Gaelic Games front. Forty-four Bursaries have been awarded in 2019/2020. Unfortunately due to the Pandemic the initiative has been postponed for 2020/2021. When Bursaries are back on track again maybe it is time that we, as a province, positively support those that attend our constituent colleges in Connacht.

Our Third Level Committee, under the Chairmanship of **Padraig McGourty** continue to do tremendous work at this sector and play a valuable part in promoting Gaelic Games.

I wish to thank our Third Level Development Officers, **Damien Curley** (GMT), **Michael Harte** (Sligo IT) and **Michael O'Connor** (NUIG) for their co-operation and dedication to promoting Gaelic Games in their colleges. I also wish to pay tribute to **Nigel Jennings** Sports Officer at GMT Castlebar for all of his work.

At primary schools level our Cumann na mBunscol committee work closely in the promotion of Gaelic Games in conjunction with our games managers, coaches and GPO's.

Coaching & Games Development initiatives were hugely impacted by the Pandemic especially from March when little or no face-to-face engagement in primary schools was possible. A major disappointment with the deferment of the senior football championship was our inability to host the exhibition games during our championship games. However, I must congratulate the committee who initiated the excellent Allianz Cumann na mBunscol Poster Campaign supporting the teams taking part which were designed by primary school children for display at Connacht SFC games in Hyde Park and Pearse Stadium. I wish to congratulate all of the pupils involved, the teachers and staff in our primary schools and especially to those who coordinated the process, **Hugh Lynn** (Ros Comáin), **Danny Charlton** (Maigh Eo), **Cyril Mannion** (Gaillimh)

Cumann na mBunscol also continued their initiatives for Handball and Rounders with three **Rounders Days** being held at the Centre of Excellence. We are looking forward to that a **Rounders Participation Day** for primary school children from all Connacht counties which hopefully will be held by the end of the year in the Connacht COE.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to the representatives of the Educational Sector on the Council, **Padraig McGourty** (Third Level), **Hugh Rudden** (Secondary Schools), and **Gerry O'Gara** (Cumann na mBunscol) for their contribution to their respective sectors and also to the overall work of the council.

On behalf of the council I wish to thank all of those who promote Gaelic Games in each sector and I look forward to working with them in the future.

## Infrastructure & Development

From an infrastructure and club development perspective 2020 has been a most challenging year. Annually €370,000 has been awarded to clubs in the province for infrastructural development, by Ard Chomhairle and the council, to supplement the great works they are undertaking in very difficult times. Unfortunately, due to the fact that there has been no gate receipts in 2020, this scheme has been suspended and because of the ongoing Covid-19 situation, it is highly unlikely that there will be any funds available for 2021 and probably in 2022. This scheme will reopen again and in the meantime clubs are encouraged to submit their plans for development to the council in order for our Planning & Physical Development Committee to plan for future distributions.

There are currently no major infrastructure developments ongoing by our counties. With the concern over finances due to the impact of Covid-19,





most counties are holding off on any major developments until the required finances are in place.

Both Roscommon and Mayo have plans for the development of their county grounds and are hoping to carry out major work in the next few years. Roscommon have again raised significant money from their *Win a Home in London Draw* and are to be congratulated on their huge success at fund-raising over the past two years and have plans for their *Training Centre* and also the development of Dr Hyde Park.

Mayo have plans for redeveloping the surface at MacHale Park. Both counties will need significant government support in order for their plans to come to fruition.

All of our units, must ensure, in the current climate, that they fully explore the feasibility of what they are undertaking and that a robust financial plan is developed before they embark on any development. No development or borrowings can be undertaken without the required permission at County Committee, Provincial Council and National Finance level being obtained. During the year many of our units have availed of the *Bank Loan Deferral Scheme* which covered the period of six months but most are now back on their repayment plan.

For the past number of years the council organised a number of very informative Seminars in each of the five counties and in a number of clubs covering the following topics:

- Corporate Trustees
- Coaching initiatives
- Club Planning
- Strategic Planning
- Steward Training
- Officer Training

Unfortunately we have been unable to deliver any courses face-to-face but a number of very informative *seminars/webinars* have been organised virtually. It is obvious that there is still a great need by clubs for further information around the *Corporate Trustee* issue in particular. It is hoped that the council will address this issue as soon as possible in 2021. I also advise our clubs to obtain a copy of our **Club Manual**, available through our Connacht Office, which is an invaluable reference point for club officers/coaches etc. on a wide range of topics and issues including:

- Coaching
- Services at Connacht GAA Centre
- Club Information on -
  - Membership
  - Fundraising
  - Tax Relief for Donations
  - Property transactions
  - Trustees
  - Borrowings
  - Injury & Insurance Funds, etc

## Steward Training

218 Match Day Stewards have been certified and accredited in the past year. The council trained three tutors to deliver the courses in Connacht and they delivered courses in Galway with 27 attendees and Mayo, 67 attendees. The coming weeks will see an online **Stewards Training Course** being delivered on line and I encourage our county officers to vigorously

promote the upcoming courses in order manage our risks at a time when there are additional Covid-19 regulations to observe.

I wish to pay tribute to the venues which hosted our Connacht senior championship games during the pandemic. The arrangements put in place at Avantcard Pairc Sheain Mac Diarmada, Dr Hyde Park and Pearse Stadium were first class. A significant part of our Event Planning involved, hand sanitisers, signage, etc. Online questionnaires and access lists were now a significant part of the planning and hosting of any event. Other issues for the teams centred around the use of dressing rooms, water bottles, and at club level in particular whether crowds were permitted to attend or not. Our county and club officers, Covid Officers and event organisers faced many challenges at our games and gates in particular, but carried off their duties in a very professional manner. I thank them for all of their help during a very challenging year.

*County & Club Officer Training* has continued initially at workshops delivered in Croke Park and here at the Connacht GAA Centre in January and latterly on Zoom and Microsoft Teams. 22 Webinars have been delivered to over 1,200 participants. The online format has not suited everybody due, in particular, to poor broadband connections and with little activity on the ground at the moment it is important that we as full-time staff are available to assist and advise our clubs on any problems they may have. Our volunteers are experiencing many challenges and we must be available to help at all times.

The coming Congress will see a motion to redefine the *Role of the County Development Officer*. It is vital that the Development Officer is the main point of contact with the clubs within a county and in my opinion should have the following Work Groups under their remit:

- Club Planning
- Club Officer Training
- Health & Safety
- Insurance
- Physical Planning & Development

***Any dilution of the role of the Development Officers in those areas will lead to confusion, lack of focus and direction and a situation where "too many cooks spoil the broth".***

**Adrian Hassett** in his report, from the Planning & Physical Development Committee, adequately covers the areas of Player Injury and the Liability Insurance Schemes. Many clubs looked for a rebate on their Injury Scheme Premium for 2021 but amazingly the number of injury claims were consistent with the 2019 figures which consequently meant that the fund suffered a loss of €2 million due to there being no gate receipts collected. Ard Chomhairle will underwrite this loss.

Due to the short lead in time between return to training and return to play many of the injuries occurred in the first number of games, probably due to inadequate preparation and little or no pre-season work done.

2021, which may also see no gate receipts, sees a number of changes to the scheme:





- 2020 registrations have been extended to the 31st March, 2021. As of the 1st January, loss of wages cover is temporarily removed
- Registration for 2021 fund will open from the 1st February, 2021
- Registration will be on existing GMS Servasport Portal.
- Payments must be received by the 30th April, 2021

On the liability front there are a number of issues that clubs should bear in mind:

- The fact that there are no games does not mean that there is no liability or danger
- All of our unit's officers must treat Association property as if it was their own
- Storms and bad weather do not know that there is a Pandemic
- The fact that at times Covid-19 restrictions may mean that our facilities are not in use but still need care and attention
- Be vigilant. Bí cúramach.

On behalf of the council I wish to thank all our County Grounds Committees, Event Controllers and Match Day Stewards for their contributions throughout the truncated year.

I also wish to pay tribute to the National Infrastructure Committee, under the chairmanship of **John Murphy**, for their support and advice during the year.

Finally, I wish to thank our Council Development Committee, in particular, for their help and co-operation during the year.

## Foireann

The Association has developed a brand new online management system replacing what was previously available in the Games Management System - or Servasport - called Foireann. Its aim is to provide club members with a system that allows them to view and manage their own information as well as choose how they want to interact with the clubs and teams they are involved in, through an integrated, easy-to-use application. Everything from knowing when training is on to submitting health questionnaires; confirming availability for matches, paying membership subscription or managing what communications they

wish to receive from the club all will be made available.

The membership section of Foireann is particularly valuable as it provides *club administrators* with all the functionality required to manage their *club membership online*, including the option to make payments as either one-off payment or a regular payment schedule over a set period of time.

In order to facilitate online payment of membership subscriptions, *club administrators* will need to complete two essential steps:

1. Set-Up Online Payments within the Foireann system, using our electronic payment partner, Stripe - you cannot use an existing Stripe account, your club must create a new Stripe account via Foireann.
2. Create your club specific membership options

Once these tasks have been completed, club members will be able to login to Foireann and pay the relevant club membership subscription for themselves or a dependent.

Members will be able to select the *Membership Option* which best suits them or their dependent and make the relevant payment. After the successful transaction, the member will be registered for the current season.

Clubs also have the option to collect all payments offline, or in some other process but Club Administrators must still create the Membership Options within Foireann.

Once Membership Options have been created, members can be registered for the current season.

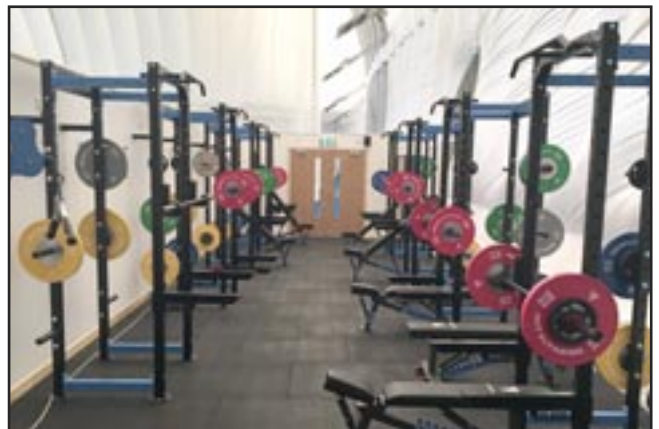
It is vital that all units understand that as per Rules 2.2, 2.3 and 3.2 of the GAA Official Guide and 5.10 of the GAA Club Constitution, **All Club Members Must be registered on the Foireann system.**

## Connacht GAA Centre

When planning for the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence was first being mooted one of the items that we included in the planning permission was a full-size **Indoor GAA Pitch**. I'm sure that most people, at the time, believed that it merely an application for something that would never happen.

Since the official opening in 2012 footfall at the centre has grown year-on-year but weather was always







a deterrent to the council maximising our activities all year round. While not built on a “foggy boggy hill” there is no doubt that the centre has been built on a “windy, rainy site” which has inhibited our activities too many times. Consequently we have always, at the back of our minds, harboured the idea of an indoor facility in Cloonacurry. After visits to the Tennis Court Dome in Castlebar and several sites in Finland the council came firmly down on building a 150m x 100m x 26m high Air Dome containing a full size GAA field, a gym with testing area, tiered seating for 600 patrons which will provide year round indoor facilities to ensure the continued focus on sports as a cornerstone of rural communities.

Many people must have thought that the idea was farfetched and I’m sure that many thought that we were mad.

Work commenced in October 2019 and while Covid-19 restrictions delayed the project the Dome was inflated for the first time on 23rd July, 2020! A hugely significant day for the council and the Association as a whole. For the last six months there has been a constant stream of visitors to the centre to admire and marvel at the size and scale of the Dome.

All that remains for us to do is to officially open the facility as soon as possible when we return to a safe environment.

On behalf of the council I wish to thank **Minister Ring** and also the members of the Sligo Leader Partnership, for their cooperation in progressing this project. I also wish to pay tribute to the following, **Prunty Contracts**, Slovenian-based **DBS Engineering**, **SIS Pitches** and **Tobin Consulting Engineers** who helped deliver this state of the art facility, which within 72 hours, uniquely, can be transformed into fully functional, adaptable conference or concert arena.

The Dome will have a huge impact on our affairs in a number of areas:

On-site Dome Capacity

- 2,000 + for games
- 10,000-20,000 (seated and standing) for concerts/ events
- Projected 100% increase in patron footfall (to 100,000 p/a) over three years beginning with a conservative 20% increase in 2021
- Continued organic growth in our social media engagement
- Partnerships with multiple entities and outside agencies
- Year-round, all-weather training and games
- Simultaneous gym sessions for a full squad
- Bespoke player assessment and programme development including establishment of individual fitness levels and monitoring of progress through season
- Market leading in-game video analysis with 10 HD cameras simultaneously recording the action
- Streaming of live games via our YouTube Channel and other social media platforms.
- Concerts & Exhibitions
- Executive training days
- Greatly increased capacity to work with minority, disadvantaged and/or marginalised groups e.g. newcomers to the area, recent immigrants, children and adults with special needs, young school leavers

The council is currently engaging with a number of partners to help future proof the Dome and promote the centre’s associated programmes and offerings far and wide.

We have developed attractive sponsorship opportunities with benefits including naming rights,







promotional opportunities, discrete employee health and wellbeing programmes, and access to events and tickets and hope to make significant announcements in the near future.

### **Sustainability & Bio-Diversity Programme**

Since the outset of the Centre of Excellence project we have had an eye on sustainability, in the early days this led to planting a 5-acre area of the site with Ash trees and then in 2011 delivering an **A grade energy efficient building** which was best in class at that time. In 2019 we began to review our sustainability efforts and decided to map out a plan for our future.

Initially we set out educating ourselves on the latest technologies and best practice in the area. This led us to applying for a grant for LED lighting upgrade of the full site not including the floodlighting on the pitches. To enhance this initial effort, we installed sensors on all public lighting and meters on all our services, water, electricity, diesel and gas. The data that has been collected from these meters has led us to better behaviour and practice around our use of energy at the centre.

We have, since 2011, been rain water harvesting in a 72,000 litre underground tank, this water is used for all our toilet facilities. We have since updated our water usage now using low flow solenoid valves and sensors for our toilets.

Through 2020 we have continued to move our sustainability and Bio diversity efforts forward, in Q3 we identified an area of land west of the current Astro turf pitch which was most suitable to become a focus for our Bio Diversity and sustainability efforts. We have initiated a programme with local schools for bio diversity, planting of native plants and trees, wild flowers, Bug Hotels and bee hives. In this area we have also been granted planning permission for a small solar farm which will, in time, supply all our daytime electrical requirements. We believe by engaging the local schools and community in this way, albeit away from our games, it is in some ways similar, building relationships with the local community, promoting our values and instilling the concept of pride of place. It is a programme that will attract assistance and investment in our community and our environment. As part of our long-term goal we envisage further renewable energy installation subject to grant assistance which will bring the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence closer to a carbon neutral target which will secure our sustainability and diversity long into the future.

In early 2020 we engaged a Croke Park-led programme on building sustainability and bio diversity programmes for our clubs. This programme has now become the National “Green Clubs Programme” and has been launched recently by An Uachtarán, **John Horan**, and Minister **Eamonn Ryan**. 60 clubs nationally have been selected for the initial pilot scheme in 2021 and this will extend out to all clubs in 2022.

Given our own internal Sustainability and Bio Diversity programme that we have been running, and, its successes to date the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence has been selected as a regional centre for technology as part of the programme and will serve as a leader in the programme. The GAA Green Club

Programme, is supported by the County & City Management Association and the local authority Climate Action Regional Offices, is delivered in partnership with the LGFA and Camogie Association, with additional support from expert agencies across the five thematic focus areas of the programme, namely: Energy, Waste, Biodiversity, Water, Travel & Transport.

Our efforts around sustainability and Bio Diversity will be a long-term ever evolving programme that will, no doubt, lead us securing our energy needs, lead us to a better environment, a sustainable future, and a more efficiently run, cleanly-run centre. I wish to pay tribute to our facilities manager, **Kurt Reinhardt**, for his work in this area and acknowledge the support of **Jimmy Darcy** in Croke Park for our efforts.

Taking all of the recent developments into account 2021 promises to be an exciting time and I look forward to a further increase in activity at the centre.

### **Twinning**

Our contact with our twinning partners, London, New York and Asia has been severely impacted by the Pandemic. **Aaron Costello** continues to play a significant role as Development Officer in Asia. Regrettably neither New York nor London were able to participate in the Connacht Senior Football Championship due to the Pandemic which also led to the post-ponement of the London clubs involvement in our cancelled senior football and intermediate hurling competitions.

Our Coaching & Games Development Manager has regular contact with all three areas and we look forward to further engagement on the ground as soon as possible.

London have almost completed their Strategic Plan and both **Stephen Lohan** and **Adrian Hassett** have had regular meetings to progress this major work to imminent publication.

I wish to congratulate **Joan Henchy** on her election as Chairperson of the New York GAA Board and also pay tribute to London Chairman, **John Lacey**, as he comes to the end of his term of office, for the diplomatic way he has always dealt with the council.

On behalf of the council, I wish to sympathise with the families of: **Tadhg Meehan**, former Secretary of the Provincial Council of Britain; **Séamus Dooley**, New York, who sadly passed away during the year, both of whom gave a life-time of dedicated service to Cumann Luthchleas Gael overseas and were hugely supportive of the council’s affairs.

### **Communications & Media**

Our PRO, **John Joe Holleran**, in his first year in office had an easy introduction to the role with only the under-20 final and the minor championship games being played since he came into office. While it was a challenging year it also gave us an opportunity to develop our online presence and to improve our website and social media channels. Our match day experience was also different with no spectators allowed at our senior and under-17 games our Social Media platforms were kept busy with core updates and videos being updated on a regular basis.



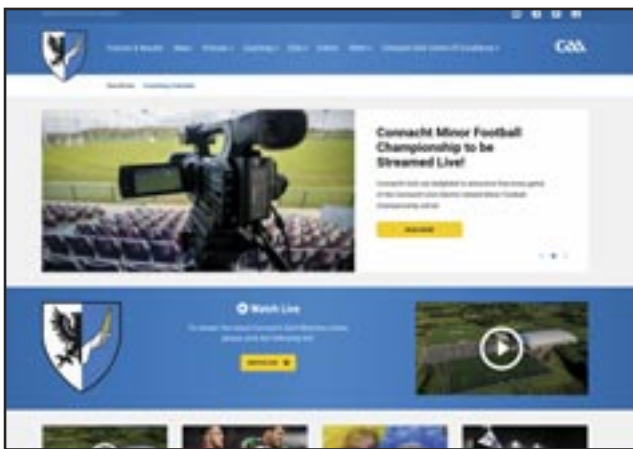


## Streaming

Live streaming by the council was a new experience with all four of our Under-17 championship games being *streamed* live. With no attendances at games this proved to be a financial life saver at the conclusion of the year.

I wish to thank our producer, **Rory O'Brien**, for a very professional overall package as well as cameraman, **Séamus Burns**, and also main commentator, **John Lynch**, and co-commentators/analysts, **Cathal Cregg**, **David Kelly**, **Kevin Dwyer** and **Martin McGowan**. The experiment was highly successful and I look forward to continuing the project in 2021 when hopefully we will be allowed stream more games on our own platform, especially those in the senior, U-20, U-17 and club championships which are not scheduled for transmission live on television.

## Website



Our website was extensively used during the year with particular successes encountered in areas such as:

- Covid public health updates to keep up with the ever changing guidelines and rules relevant to the GAA
- Connacht GAA Podcast with **Darragh Cox**
- Online match programmes
- The publication in PDF format of the Connacht GAA Coaching Manual which contains information and advice on every facet of coaching imaginable
- A section to house all streaming information
- **"Into the West"** Bi-Monthly magazine published on the site as a downloadable PDF.

## Social Media

Social Media is an extremely powerful resource we have for the promotion of our games and this was never more evident than it was in 2020. We have:

- 34k Twitter followers and 10k Facebook followers
- Instagram page with 2,010 followers
- Interactive videos of coaching drills were widely shared and very well received by coaches all over the country and beyond.
- County specific coaching and games pages for each county

I wish to thank our PR and Marketing Committee, under **John Joe Holleran** for their work during the year. I also wish to pay tribute to all of our staff for

the positive way they have promoted the Association in the province in trying times.

I pay tribute to the five county PROs and in particular **Paul Cunnane** and **Hugh Lynn** who have come to the end of their term of office and by coincidence both have been promoted onto the council as Mayo and Roscommon delegates respectively. I welcome the new county PROs **John Walker** (Mayo) and **John O'Connor** (Roscommon) and wish them well.

Finally I wish to pay tribute to **Brian Mangan** for his tremendous work on behalf of the council and for the way he has brought us up to speed with all of the modern day technology challenges.

## Changes to the Council

2021 will be a time of change and this Convention sees a number of changes to the council. Uachtarán, **Gerry McGovern**, comes to the end of his term of office. Gerry has seen many changes for the betterment of the Association in the province, not least being the completion of the world's largest Air Dome at Cloonacurry. Unfortunately his final year has been interrupted by Covid-19 restrictions and we wish him many years of health and happiness in the future.

Gerry is being replaced as Uachtarán by outgoing, Leas Uachtarán, **John Murphy**. John has presided over our CCC and also our Scór activities during the past three years and has lead by example. John brings a wealth of experience with him to his role having served as Sligo Chairman and Ard Chomhairle delegate and also as a member of Coisde Bainisti and chair of the National Infrastructure Committee. We wish John well during his term of office.

The new Leas Uachtarán, **Vincent Neary**, brings a lifetime of GAA involvement to his new role. He has served as former Mayo Secretary and as an inter-county referee as well as serving on many national committees. I look forward to working with Vincent in his new role.

**Vincent Neary** and former Council Treasurer & PRO, **John Hopkins**, were ratified as Mayo Delegates in September to the council and at the recent Mayo Convention former Mayo PRO, **Paul Cunnane**, replaced Vincent as Mayo Delegate. We wish them well in their roles.

Roscommon delegates **Anthony Flaherty** and **Seán Mullaney** complete their term of office on Connacht Council. Both have made a telling contribution to the council and they are wished well in their future roles in the Association. They are being replaced by former county PRO, **Hugh Lynn**, Eire Og, and **John Carty**, St Aidan's. We wish them well on the council.

Gerry O'Connor, Sligo Delegate, is leaving the council at this Convention. Gerry has worked very hard on behalf of the council during his term and we wish him well for the future. He is being replaced by **Pádraig Clancy**, who is no stranger to the workings of the council having previously been a member of the Connacht Coaching & Games Development Committee.

I wish to thank all of the officers and members of the council for their guidance and support during the year. Also to all of our sub committees who have done trojan work on behalf of the council. Míle buíochas.





## Sympathy

Unfortunately the Covid-19 Pandemic has seen many GAA families lose loved ones in the past year. The restrictions around funeral attendance has meant that we have been unable to attend and give them the send-off they deserve. It is impossible to record the names of all who passed away during the year and I will only refer to two bereavements which were particularly poignant.

The sudden death of former Roscommon footballer, **Conor Connelly**, at such a young age, was shocking to all that knew him on the playing field.

The tragic death of Detective Garda **Colm Horkan**, in the line of duty in Castlerea, robbed his family, his club, Charlestown; his friends and colleagues and the wider GAA community of a wholl-committed GAA-man. Colm was often to be seen around the centre watching whatever games were going on at any time of the day.

*On behalf of the council I wish to extend deepest sympathy to all of the families of the bereaved. Go ndeara Dia Trocaire ar a n-ainmneacha.*

## Buiochas

On my own behalf and on behalf of Chomhairle Connacht it is a pleasure to record our gratitude to the many groups and individuals who have ensured the smooth running of the council over the past year:

- To the members and representatives on the council and its various subcommittees, CCC, Coisde Iomana, Development, Coaching & Games Development, Scór, Games for All Communications, Marketing and our schools bodies.
- Our Referees Co-ordinator, **Marty Duffy**, and his committee and to his tutors and assessors who have had a busy year.
- To the members from the province who are representing us on national committees.
- To the five county secretaries, for their assistance and help, and to all of the county board officers and members. We wish them well during their term of office. I wish to thank former Sligo Chairman, **Brendan Leonard**, and Roscommon Chairman, **Séamus Sweeney**, for their cooperation during their term of office and wish them well in the future.
- Sligo Treasurer, **Peter Greene**, has also stepped down and I wish him well and thank him for his help over the years.
- To the members of the various development and park committees and in particular to our Event Controllers for their assistance at the major games we have hosted this year. To our voluntary workers, ticket collectors, stewards, stiles men and medical personnel.
- To the Gardai and services for their co-operation, at all times.
- To the media in its various forms for the continued excellent reporting and previewing of our games.
- To our sponsors, Eir, AIB, Supervalu, Bord Gais Energy Centra, Littlewoods, GAA GO, FBD

Insurance, for their immense contribution to our affairs.

- To the many players, referees and officials who have given many hours of pleasure and enjoyment a special word of gratitude is due.
- I want to thank accountant, Michael McHugh, and auditor, Gerry O'Mara, for their advice and professional assistance during the year.
- I wish to thank **Ger Mulryan**, **Kathy Slattery** and the members of the National Finance Committee, with whom we have worked very closely during the year.
- I want to record our sincere thanks to Ard Stiurthoir, **Tomás Ó Riain** and all of the staff at Pairc an Chrocaigh for their continued valued advice, courtesy and assistance.
- To Uachtarán, **Seán Ó hOrain**, I say míle buiochas for his advice, support and help during the past three years and wish him well in the future.
- I wish the incoming **Uachtarán**, **Labhras MacCartaigh**, every success in the appointment. Larry has had very close ties with Connacht Council over the years through our twinning with New York and he can be assured of Connacht's support during his term of office.
- I wish to thank the National Covid Advisory Group under, **Shay Bannon**, and **Fergal McGill** for their advice and direction.
- I wish to thank Coaching & Games Manager, **Cathal Cregg**, for his tremendous work in the area of coaching and games development.
- I also wish to thank our Operations Manager, **Adrian Hassett**, for his work and cooperation
- I pay tribute to **Séamus Burns**, Strength & Conditioning Officer, for his trojan work in the Connacht GAA Centre. Séamus has coordinated the activities in the the gym and Video Analysis Suite. I'm sure that Séamus is looking forward to working in his new home in the Dome.
- Also **Brian Mangan** who looks after our various information and Media platforms.
- I wish to thank our facilities manager **Kurt Reinhardt** for all of his help and support and for his unenviable task of keeping the Dome inflated at all times.
- A special word of thanks is due to **Amanda Diskin**, and **Attracta Hunt** in the office for the way that they have undertaken their duties. Also thanks to caretaker, **John Clancy**.

Finally, I want to thank my fellow Officers, **Gerry McGovern**, **John Murphy**, **Martin McCartin** and **John Joe Holleran** for their major and unselfish contribution to the workings of Chomhairle Connacht in 2020

In conclusion I look forward to 2021 when hopefully we will have all of our games played before the crowds of supporters who like nothing better than going to our championship games and supporting their club and county teams. Here's to 2021 being a successful one for the province when we can get back to fully undertaking our core business, Playing Games.

Rath De oraibh go leir.

*Seán Ó Pronntaigh, Rúnaí.*





# Planning & Physical Development Committee 2020

By Adrian Hassett

**T**HE Planning & Physical Development Committee is responsible for advising and assisting all units within the province on:

- Physical Infrastructure Development
- Best Practice in the area of Physical Infrastructure
- Administering Club Grants
- Sourcing financial aid towards club development
- Preparing and managing our venues in hosting our games
- Steward Training
- Club Officer Training
- Club Planning.

The members of the committee are:

**Gerry McGovern, John Murphy, John Prenty, Martin McCartin, John Joe Holleran, Christy Browne, Pat Feeley, John Hopkins, Anthony Flaherty, Gerry O'Connor, Adrian Hassett.**

## Covid19 Pandemic

Across all areas of our association the Covid19 Pandemic had a significant effect with consequences at every facet of the GAA. From the basics of people just meeting up, to the playing and attending of our games, the pandemic has left an imprint that will be felt for generations to come.

Simple day-to-day activities like going to training, supporting your team, selling the lotto, playing of games now involves a level of planning by players, administrators, supporters and officials that heretofore were taken for granted. It is to the eternal credit of the Association that this challenge was met by all, members, clubs, players, administrators, who were advised each step of the way by the GAA at national level and the National Covid Advisory Group. A great deal of documentation and support was made available to all units of the Association to tackle this pandemic and ensure that games were played and a level of activity was allowed to happen for our members.

## Club Response

Last March the announcement from government of the initial **national lockdown** impacted across all levels of our society. People were now confined to their homes with strict measures in place in order to 'flatten the curve'. The true worth of the GAA was now seen throughout the country with clubs across the island volunteering their services to vulnerable members of the community. GAA clubs played a focal role in the community in assisting in the delivery of



groceries, medicines, fuel drops and checking on the elderly and those living on their own. In Connacht 144 clubs across the province provided this service on a formal basis within their community with an additional 21 clubs assisting in the community on an informal basis - i.e. they were part of a community group within their area. Clubs are to be commended for this as it is testament to the GAA's values of community, teamwork and respect and that this is just not confined to the playing field.

As I write, clubs and their volunteers, maybe called again as we face another wave of restrictions.

## Club Grants

The provincial council annually assists clubs with their infrastructure developments with the provision of Club Grants. Unfortunately due to the Pandemic club grants for 2020 were unavailable. It is hoped that these grants will return in the coming years with the return of supporters to our games. Clubs are reminded that works undertaken will be considered for grant aid in future years.

*Our Club Ground Improvement Scheme* was also postponed for this year.

## Sports Capital

In November it was announced that the **Sports Capital Programme** would be open for applications. The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is operated by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media and provides grants to assist in the development or refurbishment of sports facilities and the provision of sports equipment. It is part-funded from the proceeds of the National Lottery. The fund opened for new applications on December 11th, 2020, and will close on February, 12th 2021. In advance of the programme reopening for new applications, clubs are advised:

- The complete application is online
- You must have registered with OSCAR - Tax Registration number is a requirement of registration
- Short period of time to prepare full application so get prepared and review videos. etc.. on website <https://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie>
- Plan now.

All clubs are reminded that we are in the midst of a pandemic and if undertaking any developments to ensure that all finances are in place. Where possible, if developments and enhancements to facilities can be undertaken without recourse to borrowings, it would be an ideal opportunity to undertake these works. However, clubs should factor into their decision



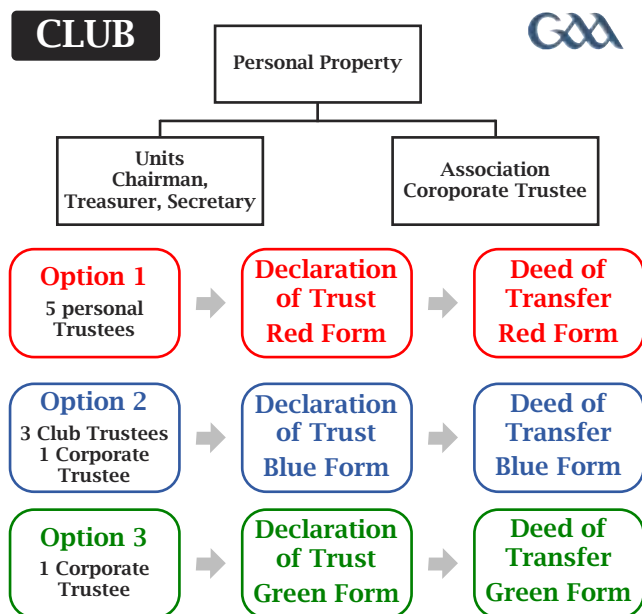


making that there may be very limited further income this year before using up cash balances on capital works or maintenance. Clubs should be absolutely sure they have enough funding to see them through to 2022 before spending now. Where borrowings are required, clubs are advised not to enter debt at the present time when the fund-raising ability of our clubs is reduced due to the Public Health Restrictions. The current crisis has given rise to a very difficult financial situation for our units, and indeed the wider economy, whilst we are all anxious to develop our facilities, we should take a prudent approach in this regard.

Finally, clubs should advise the Department of Sport (or other funders) where grants have been allocated that the project is being delayed due to the current restrictions.

## Club Trustees & Vesting

The GAA has established a Trust Company, "Iontaobhas Corparáideach Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Cuideachta Faoi Theorainn Rátháiochta", Corporate Trustee to hold on trust, property for various units of the Association. Traditionally, real property of the Association was held by personal trustees and this can prove cumbersome from time-to-time. In an effort to streamline how property is held throughout the Association the GAA is providing its units with the option to hold property through the Corporate Trustee. This is a facility open to units but is entirely optional. Holding property through the Corporate Trustee does not in any way affect the ownership; the Corporate Trustee is merely holding on trust in the same way as personal trustees do.



Following various meetings with clubs over the past year it has been evident that it is an area that clubs do need more information on. It is our intention to deliver more workshops on this topic in the coming year.

## Hosting of Games

As I mentioned earlier the level of detail now involved in running any GAA activity is significant.

This places huge responsibility on *county committees, ground committees, event controllers* and *stewards*. Now for all GAA activities, hand sanitisers, signage and online questionnaires were now a significant part of the planning and hosting of any event. Add to this, the use (or not) of dressingrooms, water bottles, choice of venue, access and *egress* points, streaming of games and whether crowds were permitted or not. This places huge responsibility on all event organisers and it certainly causes a lot of angst, especially on restricting who could attend an event.

All those involved in the delivery and hosting of games are to be thanked, it was not an easy task in the middle of a pandemic; however, games were played and ran safely throughout the province. The games played were an outlet to many by they either playing or attending or watching online from their homes, it gave people an anchor to their weekend and another topic of conversation other than Covid 19.

I would like to thank all our major grounds' committees for hosting games our games throughout the year, a special word of thanks to the *event controllers'* and their diligent staff for their cooperation and help throughout the year. We had a quieter year in the province with the limited number of competitions we got to deliver this year with our games sandwiched into a tighter window, post lockdown. The various grounds committees and county boards had their facilities prepared and ready with gatemen and staff to assist in the smooth running of each event.

## Steward Training

The National Health & Safety Committee revised and updated the content of the *Steward Training Course* and were joined by *Europlan* as the accrediting body on the delivery of these courses.

Steward Training was delivered in Galway (2nd Course) and Mayo in January and February this year. The numbers attending on those evenings were:

- Mayo, 63
- Galway, 27

Further courses had been scheduled for Leitrim and Roscommon; however, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, both courses were postponed. In all *two-hundred and eighteen Match Day Stewards* have been trained-up and accredited since December, 2019.

Within the province we have trained-up 3 Tutors to assist in the delivery of these courses. This is a significant boost to us in that we have Connacht tutors who are available to deliver these courses to the counties. With the impact of Covid-19 on indoor gatherings, the National Health & Safety Committee have now put in place an *Online Stewards Training Course*. Further details of this will be communicated to the counties in the next month.

As we plan for the year ahead, the safety of our players, officials and patrons are of paramount importance especially as we live through this pandemic and each county should take the opportunity, early in the year, to review their practices for the match-day set up and further enhance the match-day experience for all involved.

*We must endeavour to take a practical, responsible and common-sense approach to managing risk whilst*





observing existing regulations on Covid-19 and advice all our units on the control measures required to operate safe events for all those that use our facilities.

## National Infrastructure Committee

The National Infrastructure Committee under the chairmanship of **John Murphy** are finalising a *strategic plan* to set out a road map for all counties in relation to Infrastructure development. This plan will be based on the information gathered from the audits carried out, this includes the County Grounds in 2017, the County Training Centres Audits, which was carried out in 2018, and the IT Audit. The plan is divided into three areas:

- (i) Infrastructure
- (ii) Health & Safety
- (iii) Training

The information gathered is currently being reviewed with a detailed report and actions to be submitted for National Congress.

## County Infrastructure Development

There are currently no major Infrastructure developments ongoing by our counties. With the concern over finances due to the impact of Covid-19, most counties are holding off on any major developments until the required finance is in place. Both Roscommon and Mayo are hoping to carry out major work in their counties in the next few years but are currently working on aligning their proposals and their finances.

## Connacht GAA Centre

Amidst all the gloom and worry of 2020 the one beacon (excuse the pun), that shone brightest was the completion of the Indoor Dome at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence. A more detailed outline of the project will be available in the convention booklet; however, suffice to say, that it is a credit to the GAA in Connacht and nationally. It has garnered headlines, locally, nationally and internationally for both its scale and its impact. Pictures do not do it justice, and those that have had the opportunity to visit it have been awestruck. This development is for the future of the GAA in the province and for the benefit of all Gaels throughout the country. The benefits of the facility are well documented, from the ability to play a game indoors, delivery of coaching seminars, the learnings from the research and development that will be carried out, to the hosting of major conferences.

*The Dome in Connacht is something to be immensely proud of and shows the ambition for the GAA in Connacht. Mr Cromwell advised of a trip to Connacht, well he never envisaged a roof on it!*

## National Health & Safety Committee

Under the chairmanship of **Shay Bannon**, this committee are tasked with:

1. To draft Health & Safety Policy proposals
2. Develop and make available H & S documentation
3. Provide Health & Safety support, advice and guidance
4. Site visits and audits
5. Safety capacity in grounds
6. Training Courses

The committee has finalised their Strategic Plan (National Health & Safety), with the main aim of the plan: “to make health and safety an integral consideration for all activities and events undertaken under the auspices of the GAA and to ensure that the GAA is an exemplar organisation in the delivery of health and safety”.

One of the actions will be to ensure that all counties appoint an *Active County Safety Officer* and to place Health & Safety as an agenda item on all county board meetings. Unfortunately a large number of units are completely failing to address control over activities and use of property and their responsibilities in the upkeep of our club and county grounds. There is a need for a central online data base of resources for all units to access, this to include *Health & Safety statements, good practice guidelines, templates towards risk assessments*, etc. A National Health & Safety Conference was scheduled for November, 2020, as well as a Training Day for County Safety Officers in March, 2020; however, Covid-19 restrictions meant that both were cancelled.

The National Health & Safety Committee met regularly (virtually) throughout 2020 and were called upon to assist in making recommendations on the opening of GAA facilities once Government started lifting restrictions. These recommendations were sent onto the National Covid Advisory Group for consideration.

## Pitch Maintenance Committee

This committee, chaired by **Kieran McGann**, has been tasked to raise the standards of playing surfaces across the GAA, particularly at inter-county stadia. The National Pitch Maintenance Committee delivered a number of workshops/conferences on the preparation and maintenance of GAA Grounds in 2019. Once again Covid-19 restrictions hampered the work of this committee. This committee have been active in advising clubs/counties on proper procedures and policies in maintaining GAA grounds. **Hugh Rudden** is our provincial representative on this committee, and has been active in communicating the good work carried out.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the support and assistance of both the National Health & Safety Committee and the National Infrastructure Committee throughout the year, this committee has been loud in their praise of the work carried out in Connacht. **Conor Hayes**, our Connacht representative on the National Infrastructure Committee, has also been excellent in his representation for Connacht on this committee.

## Officer Training – Club

Club Officer Training Workshops were delivered in Connacht during the month of January, 2020. These included:

- Safe Club Presentation – Galway
- Disciplinary Procedures – Galway
- Finance & Good Governance – Sligo & Roscommon
- Good Governance in Your Club – Sligo
- Office 365 – Mayo & Roscommon
- Induction Course for Club Officers – Mayo





With the onset of Covid-19 and the various lockdowns and restrictions, officer training and club information seminars were delivered online. This is a significant new development within officer training and club support, the pandemic forced club officers and volunteers to access information from online platforms and Webinars. It had/has its difficulties for people with available broadband and the skill set involved in accessing these online platforms. Although it is a necessary development it was not something that was embraced by all due to some being wary of technology or lacking the skills to get involved. This is an area that we must be mindful of and we must be available to assist our club officers and volunteers no matter what the medium may be. By and large all clubs adapted and the measure of progress by clubs and their officers was seen in the number of AGM's that were conducted online.

There was a major focus in 2020 on an alignment with LGFA, Camogie Association and the GAA in the delivery of Club Officer Training, this is carrying through to 2021 with the modules on the Club Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and PRO now common across the three organisations, GAA, LGFA and Camogie Club. Club officers from these codes can now access the same content. The *club officer training* for 2021 commences in January for all club officers. Club Officer Training will also offer workshops on specific topics that will help guide all Club officers on their role and the assistance that is available to them.

## County Officer Training

Officer training has also been delivered to our county officers, with workshops being delivered in Croke Park, Connacht GAA Centre and now online. These workshops are again planned for 2021 and I trust that they are of benefit to all officers when they carry out their duties throughout the year.

The efforts and work carried out by club and county officers throughout this whole pandemic must be acknowledged, they have been to the forefront within their own county and communities and have provided leadership and support to many. We must continue to support all our club and county officers and their members in the delivery of information to them and to be able to assist them in these most unusual of times. This pandemic has put pressures on county and club officers that is over and above anything they have ever signed up to. We, National and provincial officers and full-time personnel, need to assist by any means and alleviate the pressures and responsibilities that these officers face.

## Club Planning

The *GAA Strategic Plan*, covering the period 2018 to 2021, mandates the requirement for an improved **club support programme** with a renewed emphasis on club planning.

The National Club & County Planning Committee is responsible for the rollout of the GAA Club Planning Programme. The committee aims to engage at least three clubs per county each year, supporting them through the creation and subsequent implementation of three-year Club Development Plans. Having

reviewed the Club Planning Programme, the following are the main changes:

- Upskilled Club Planners
- An improved Club Planning Pack
- An updated Club Planning Workshop
- Practical implementation guidelines
- On-going monitoring and evaluation
- Better promotion of the programme and support materials available

The facility is available to clubs who are not yet ready to develop a three-year plan but who may develop a one-year Action Plan, that in time this can lead the club into developing a three-year Club Plan. The Club Planning Programme is available to all clubs; however, in advance of undergoing a Club Plan, all clubs should reflect on the following questions:

1. Has your Club currently got a Club Development Plan?
2. If so -
  - A. What stage is it at? (e.g. Year 2 of 5)
  - B. Has the plan been forwarded to your county committee and Croke Park?
  - C. What has worked well for your club regarding club planning?
  - D. What further assistance is required to ensure that your Club Plan is delivered successfully?
3. If not, is this something your club would be interested in?

### What is a Club Plan?

A club development plan is a simple document that outlines the following:

- Where are we now?
- Where are we going?
- How are we going to get there?
- Who is responsible for getting us there?

It is developed when club officers and members undertake an analysis and examination of all club activity. They then decide on actions for their club and outline how these actions can be achieved.

A good club plan is:

- Concise
- Well presented
- Practical
- Achievable

Most importantly, a Club Plan will be developed by the club and for the club.

### Why Plan?

- Planning can help your club to:
- Look objectively and honestly at the current position of the club
- Clarify its purpose and status in the community
- Determine priorities for improvement and to cope with changes
- Agree the best method of delivery
- Monitor progress

Club planning is best achieved by thorough review and honest assessment by the club officers and members.



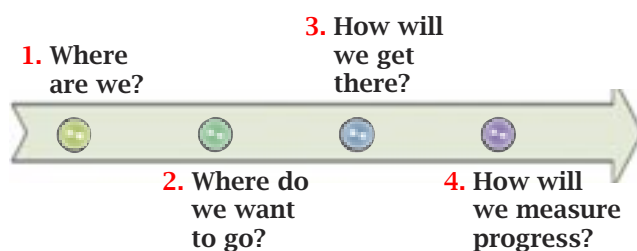


It was highlighted that one of the hindrances to the club planning process was the lack of facilitators to assist clubs in developing their plan. In an effort to assist the Club Planning Programme within the province, a further eight facilitators were trained up to add to twelve existing facilitators. These facilitators have all been allocated clubs to help roll out the Club Planning programme.

## County Planning

The GAA established a County Planning Group chaired by **Ciaran McLaughlin** (Tyrone and Ulster GAA). In its simplest form, the function of the group is to put in place a programme that will assist counties to develop a three-year Strategic Plan.

Each county that engages in the process will successfully address the following questions:



### A County Plan will help a county to:

- Set a direction and priorities for a three-year period
- Ensure that resources are used as best as possible
- Give those with an interest in the growth of the GAA in the county an opportunity to shape its future
- Position the county better in relation to Provincial and National GAA plans

### Suggested timelines:

- January - Appoint County Planning Coordinator
- February - Appoint Steering Group  
Agree on Roles within Groups  
Gather information
- March - Determine Strategic Position  
Review documentation to date.  
Design consultation process
- April - Drafting Plan
- May - Launch Plan

To further assist counties develop a plan the club and *County Planning Committee* revamped the County Planning Programme, this was sent on to all counties last December. The programme provides each county with a *county planning Guide*, toolkit of advice notes and templates, and dedicated mentoring from staff members in the relevant provincial and Central Council. In Connacht, Leitrim launched their three year plan at the its Convention in 2018 with Roscommon currently in draft stage. Mayo are now currently in the process of developing their own plan and London are nearing final draft stage. Galway and Sligo are to undergo this process. The need for a plan by counties is of increasing importance, this has been highlighted within our province over the past two years. The creation of a county plan will not only guide county officers on their roles but serve the

county and its clubs for the better in how it goes about it's business. Assistance is available, just ask.

## Role of County Development Officer

From 2019 onwards the role of the County Development Officer has been redefined. At Congress 2018, it was approved that the County Development Officer would be selected as opposed to elected. The County Development Officer will report to the county committee and be responsible for assisting it to deliver officer development and club planning programmes for the principal club officers in the county, i.e. Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and PRO. The Development Officer will work with the county committee and the Provincial Council in addition to other full-time and voluntary personnel in delivering the goals of the Association as set by the National Officer Development Committee.

It will be a matter for each county committee to select a person to fulfil the functions of Physical Development and Safety, advise on club grants and advise towards club infrastructure development, functions previously carried out by the County Development Officer. The change in the role and responsibilities of the County Development Officer has not impacted on the work carried out by our county development officers who have continued to carry out the duties as they had prior to the role being defined. This is to the credit of each county development officer as they are the person most clubs will contact when seeking advice. A motion to Congress 2020 on whose responsibility it is to Physical Development & Safety, advise on club grants and advise towards club infrastructure development was proposed and was withdrawn on the day. **Pat Teehan** (Leinster), was tasked with outlining the role of the County Development Officer and to establish where the following areas of responsibility rests:

- a) Physical Planning & Development
- b) Health & Safety
- c) Insurance
- d) Club Officer Training

A recommendation was made to Coiste Bainistíochta prior to Christmas and will go forward as a motion to Congress in 2021.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work carried out by the five County Development Officers, **Micheál Geraghty** (Galway), **Declan Bohan** (Leitrim), **Mary Prenty** (Mayo), **Tomás Murray** (Roscommon) and **Richard Brennan** (Sligo), they have been active in assisting and guiding clubs and have been a valuable point of contact in answering the various queries that clubs have posed to them. Declan and Tomás have all departed their roles and will be sadly missed, may I thank you for your efforts and advice these past few years.

I wish to thank our Council Planning & Physical Development Committee for their help and co-operation during the year. We have lost the services of **Anthony Flaherty** and **Gerry O'Connor** from this committee for the year ahead, both men were outstanding ambassadors for their county and were important contributors to the activities of the council. Thank you both.







# Player Injury Benefit Fund & GAA insurance

**T**HE main areas of focus under GAA's Risk & Insurance Committee can be considered under the following headings:

- Monitor, review, and update the GAA Players Injury benefit Fund including all financial and procedural arrangements.

- Evaluate and maintain systems and procedures for the GAA Liability programme.
- Ensure that the GAA Property insurance programme is well maintained and upgraded as required and where possible.
- Promote Risk Management at all levels of the Association including effective administration at club and county level via the County Administrator programme.
- Ensure an effective claims administration process for all aspects of the GAA insurance programme
- Be available to advise all units of the association on GAA Insurance matters.

## Players Injury Benefit Fund

Following the rebranding of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund and updating of all Injury Fund documentation, awareness that cover is provided from GAA resources via a fund has marginally increased. Challenges remain to reinforce, across all level of membership that the Benefits provided are funded solely from GAA resources fund and the fund has finite resources.

Claim numbers have remained consistent at just over 6,000 a year.

Imbalances in claims benefit payments across the country have been a concern for several years which led to the introduction of the Claims Bands/discount program in 2017. Claims loading/discount has been incorporated into the team registration and is continuing for 2021 whereby a discount or loading is applied to annual total team subscriptions depending on a unit's prior three years claims experience.

*The table (below) shows the effect it had on the var.*

Cover provided by the injury fund is provided on a calendar year basis and cover period is **Jan 1 to December 31**, this has changed for 2021 due to the pandemic, see below. To be eligible for cover under the terms of the fund all units must register all teams via the GAA Management System(GMS). All teams are required to be registered annually before training commences for the calendar year. In addition as per

rules of the Official Guide all playing members must be registered annually via the new online platform, Foireann. Details of team registration are submitted to DWF Claims (Injury Fund Administrators) via a feed from GAA Management System. Records are not submitted to DWF Claims until payment has been received by Croke Park and marked off in the system. Counties must enforce compliance in registration and submission of subscriptions.

The GAA centrally have developed a new online platform for member's registrations, which I have referred to above, **Foireann**. Foireann is the new purpose built platform that will become a one-stop-shop for members to interact with their club. The membership and registration functionality of the system went live in December providing club members the opportunity to register and pay for their membership online. One of the exciting things about Foireann is that, for the first time, there is a fully integrated system across GAA, Camogie, and LGFA. It is replacing the old Servasport Games Management System and the existing Servasport Membership data is migrated across on to this platform.

The impact of Covid19 on the GAA saw a four month stop on all games and training, it would have been hoped that this would have seen a reduction on the number of claims on the Player injury Fund for 2020. Despite the reduced playing activity time spent on our fields during 2020 the player injury claim costs have unfortunately remained constant and there is currently €8m in injury fund claims submitted and being processed for the current 2020 playing year. As the Player Injury fund is funded by Team subscriptions and Gate receipts, there has been a shortfall of €2million in the fund due to there being no Gate receipts for 2020. As part of the GAA's club support funding proposal, Central Council will not rebill clubs a supplementary charge to cover this current €2m shortfall accruing but instead Central Council will underwrite this 2020 deficit. This will allow the fund to pay out as normal all the 2020 player injury claims as they fall due.

With no gate receipts expected to be collected in 2021, a few changes were introduced to the fund for the year ahead.

- 2020 registrations extended to the 31st of March 2021- This will see a small additional cashflow benefit accruing to all clubs.
- As of the 1st January, loss of wages cover is

## 20120 - Team Subscriptions

Band	A - 10% discount	B - 10% Loading	C - 50% Loading	D - 100% Loading	Overall position	
Galway	74	9	6	10	Excess - Claims greater than subs	County Panel - D
Leitrim	15	5	5	4	Excess - Claims greater than subs	County Panel - D
Mayo	39	10	3	7	Subs greater than claims	County Panel - D
Roscommon	19	8	1	6	Subs greater than claims	County Panel - D
Sligo	27	3	1	2	- Subs greater than claims	County Panel - D
Overall	174	35	16	2	Subs greater than claims	





- temporarily removed-
- Invitations to register for 2021 Fund will open from the 1st of February 2021.
  - Registration will be on existing GMS Servasport Portal.
  - Payments must be received by the 30th of April 2021- the payment of the majority of club memberships will have been collected by this stage. This will also allow clubs to assess more accurately the exact number of teams they propose to field and register with the injury fund in each season.

The Club officer information and training workshops are important for clubs to obtain an overview of the Player Injury Fund and its cover details. Clubs and members continue to view the Fund as an insurance cover which is in place to cover all expenses. Counties should encourage all clubs to attend these events as they are highly beneficial to clubs and their members. Full details in relation to the Fund are available on the GAA website and the E-learning portal which is available to clubs. It is essential that clubs are providing that information to its players.

### **GAA Liability Programme**

The number and cost of personal injury claims taken against GAA has cost the Association over €13million in the past five years. Annual renewal with existing insurers has been very challenging.

Members will be aware of the extensive media coverage in relation to Insurers who are withdrawing from providing cover in Ireland and to Sports, Community & Leisure activities. Many businesses have ceased operating and community festivals and events have been cancelled due to the unavailability of insurance cover for such events/activities. Affiliated units have so far been largely protected due to the arrangement of the central cover. However, the number of insurers who can offer cover to the Association continues to decrease annually and as the cost of claims continues to increase the challenge to secure continuation of this cover will continue.

The highest number of personal injury claims pursued continue to arise from claims which could have been avoided or minimised if clubs and counties had adopted very basic risk management and controls. Many GAA Units have undertaken a much more proactive approach to risk management and control of activities and proactively report activities and maintain records. Unfortunately, many units are completely failing to address control over activities and use of property. Little or no documentation is in place to assist in investigation and to support defence of claims. Clubs who cannot demonstrate that they took all reasonable precautions to manage activities may be refused indemnity or face a significantly increased claim excess.

The Broker declarations issued to all units have been updated and policy documents for Liability and Property Insurance have been issued. Clubs should read the policy and familiarise themselves with the T&Cs of the cover and for all activities seek best practice guidance and advise from Marsh Ireland or GAA Insurance Department. Clubs who run fundraising events without seeking extension of cover or permit excluded activities to take place will not be provided with an indemnity in the event of a claim.

The continued deterioration of claim trends arising

from the use of GAA properties for non-GAA Associated activities and the provision of use of GAA facilities to Third parties organisations and groups continues to be a concern. It has previously been communicated and acknowledged that there has been huge investment by GAA clubs in their facilities over the last 10-15 years. This is most welcome as we seek to make our facilities as attractive as possible to encourage greater participation. However, to fund the cost of this investment many clubs now make these facilities available for Non GAA Associated use by members and / or non-members.

In addition, resources are not being allocated to maintain and upkeep facilities which may result in them becoming hazardous for use by both members and/or non-members. The GAA plays an important role in the communities of Ireland but this provision of facilities can only be undertaken in the context of a well-managed and well laid out process, operating to a clear set of standards. Unfortunately, the claims trends highlight that this has not been adhered to in recent years and has resulted in the GAA having to pay out more than €8 million in liability claims over the last 5 years solely in respect of claims arising from Non GAA associated use of our facilities.

The situation is now critical and the continued provision of cover for such activities via the central insurance cover is under serious threat of discontinuation. The future viability of provision of our facilities for non-GAA use has been called into question as claims data indicates that units in the absence of seeking proof of other insurance are in default assuming risks that are not ours and are unmanaged. Efforts made to get information from our Clubs and counties in relation to property have at all times proved frustrating. Without the assistance and engagement of all counties the viability of the programme and its continuation for all units cannot be secured.

We must remind all our units that all Third-Party Users of GAA property must have in place their own valid insurance and proof of this must be requested and retained before use is permitted. When the Third-Party group is an on-going user of the GAA property, annual proof of valid insurance must be requested and obtained. All Fundraising & Health & Wellbeing Activities must be notified, and extension of cover agreed in advance with Marsh Ireland/GAA Insurance department Park. Extension of cover is subject to best practice risk management guidelines being adopted.

Allianz have visited over 300 clubs in the past 3 years and the data gathered will be utilised to update current documentation available to assist clubs in managing their properties and activities.

By utilising all resources available from insurers and brokers the Risk and Insurance Committee aim to assist club officers by providing easier methods to manage record-keeping and the management and control of activities at club properties.

### **GAA Property Insurance Programme**

Weather incidents continue to impact on Property Premiums and the availability of Property cover for both individual households and organisations, with the GAA no exception. The GAA's property Insurance Claims for the past 5 years has seen costs of €5million on about 300 claims with 65% of the total paid out by Insurers in property claims over the last 5 years has been attributed





to storm and weather events. Because of this, Property rates increased across all markets and the trend of weather incidents is expected to continue. Damage caused by Storms, snow and water contributed to a large portion of claims costs. As previously advised the provision of this cover is outside the cover normally afforded under a property policy cover as property in the open is a general policy exclusion. Weather models all indicate an expected increase in severe weather events in the years ahead, the Association is going to face enormous challenges in maintaining the covers it has in place owing to the location and number of properties we cover. Property Insurance is not in place to act as a maintenance programme. Clubs must be proactive in maintaining and replacing equipment as cover cannot be provided for losses occurring because of poor installation and / or wear and tear and/ or lack of maintenance and upkeep of property. Clubs who have invested heavily in developing properties must remain vigilant in protecting property when weather warnings are issued. Freeze prevention guidelines, and flood best practice guideline have been issued to all units and risk management advises and notifications in advance of adverse weather will continue to be issued during the year.

The National GAA Risk and Insurance committee has expressed concerns on a number of occasions and continue to do so that affiliated units are developing property by putting in extensions\renovating current properties or building new builds and amenities, but the Insurance department are not been informed of such developments which is not only a breach of the liability insurance policy which has many areas of concern as noted above but also that these new developments are not insured. Walkways and community users using our property are continuing to be an upward trend resulting in the playing of our national games becoming diluted as the focus is shifting from our games to becoming community centre amenities for one and all. Our Insurers are not been informed of these developments and there is an exposure to the clubs involved that in the event of an incident occurring, they will have no cover.

Going forward as mentioned we need to be more vigilant in protecting our property, actions that would benefit across the association would include;

- GAA H&S Statement reviewed annually- a video on how to complete one is to be made available via GAA's eLearning site.
- Regular maintenance and housekeeping will eliminate risks.
- Regular property checks will minimise Fire risk.
- Before properties re-open we need to check water system -Legionella being a particular risk.
- Notify any property acquisitions in order to extend cover including leasing of premises.
- Development works are required to be notified in advance- non notification may mean the property cannot be added to insurance policy.
- Risk Assessments must be in place for all persons undertaking Ground/Property maintenance
- All contractors to provide evidence of valid insurance before works commence.

The National Health & Safety Committee continue to work closely with the Risk & Insurance committee to educate and promote best practice in the control and management of facilities across all activities and all

units. This is reflected in the 'Creating a safe club' module which has been developed by both committees and has been delivered to counties in 2020.

The GAA has recently secured a three-year fixed price extension to our existing Insurance policies. A small reduction has been secured in the annual premium which will now cost €5.75m per annum for each of the next three years. This three-year deal provides certainty of both insurance cover and price for the Association and its clubs during this period. Any short-term price increases have effectively been removed over this period and this will allow clubs to plan accordingly.

To mitigate the insurance cost in 2021 for all our GAA clubs, it is proposed to use €4.7m of the Club support package to award every club a 5/6 payment/credit note based on their actual 2020 Insurance premium paid. This will be applied against each club's 2021 insurance premium charge, subject to the completion of a Covid-19 financial impact grant application form. On demonstrating a Clubs appropriate financial need and being subsequently approved for the grant, a club will only be requested to pay 1/6 approx. of their Insurance premium charge for 2021. Normal insurance charges will apply again from 2022 and 2023 onwards. To qualify for this payment grant / credit note "All GAA clubs" will be requested to complete an online financial and facilities grant application questionnaire.

Full documentation in relation to the Injury Fund including an updated 2021 Summary document has been issued to all units and likewise a copy of the liability policy document, broker declarations and advices on the Insurance program have been issued to all units.

## Challenges Ahead

1. The GAA Players Injury Fund is funded to meet the current claim trends. However, the fund is not entirely self-sufficient and without the contribution from Central Council for 2020 and 2021, the fund could not and would not operate.
2. The need to improve insurance knowledge and communication of key messages at county and club level.
3. Last year, with a reduced season, the Player injury fund still had costs similar to previous seasons. Is there a need for a 'return to play' document for all players and clubs on how best to assist players in their training when they return to the field? Is there more information required on injury prevention and not overloading players with heavy & intensive training loads?
4. Unless there is a serious improvement in the management of GAA property and activities and the provision of property and facilities for Non GAA Activities we will not be able to continue to secure Insurance cover.
5. Covid19 and the restrictions imposed.
6. Notifications from clubs/units on club infrastructure developments, fundraising ventures and use of property from Third-parties.

On behalf of the Council, I wish to thank the National Insurance & Risk Management Committee for their help and co-operation throughout the year especially Mike O' Donoghue (Chairperson), Sinead Leavy and Ciara Clarke. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the Connacht representative on the workgroup, **Mr PJ Meehan**.





# Coaching and Games Development Report 2020 – Cathal Cregg

**O**UR Coaching Committee under the Chairmanship of **Pádraig McGourty**, consists of our five County Games Managers: **Thomas Keenan** (Leitrim), **Willie Hegarty** (Roscommon), **Liam Og Gormely** (Sligo), **Tom McManus** (Galway) and **Billy McNicholas** (Mayo) along with the County Coaching Officers, **Paul Murphy** (Leitrim), **David McDonald** (Roscommon), **Peadar Niland** (Sligo), **John Tobin** (Galway) and **Declan Reilly** (Mayo), **Cathal Cregg** (Provincial Games Manager) and **Damien Coleman** (Provincial Hurling Director) make up the last two places on the committee.



Coaching & Games (C&G) is based around six key areas: Child Games Opportunities (0-12 year), Youth Games Opportunities (12-18 years), School Initiatives, Camps, Talent Academies & Learning & Development, which feed into the *National & Provincial Coaching & Games Plan*. Each county then has a *county coaching plan* which is tailored to suit the individual counties needs and delivered to club personnel. This is implemented by the County Games Manager, County Coaching Officer and Games Development staff in each of the counties on a day-to-day basis. Governance for the plan is over-seen by the County Steering Committee which consists of the County Chairperson, Secretary, Coaching Officer, Games Manager, Treasurer and PRO who meet six to eight times per year to review how the plan is going.

Like the entire world, the Covid-19 crisis has had a massive impact on C&G and the wider GAA on a scale that nobody could have foreseen. This seriously curtailed our roll out of C&G programmes but we still managed to deliver many projects by adapting to the ever-changing situation the country found itself in.

## Cúl Camps

The Cúl Camps Programme was the highlight of the year from a C&G perspective as it gave everyone the encouragement that we could live with some form of normality through the current pandemic. Although the numbers were down on previous years the Connacht counties delivered a high number of camps and participants comparable to other counties around the country. The table below gives a breakdown of the numbers of camps in each county and the number of participants that attended a camp in each county.

County	No. of Camps	Overall No. of Participants
Galway	35	4,266
Sligo	19	1,928
Roscommon	15	1,534
Leitrim	2 *	203
Mayo	35	3,534

**Note:** Club camps as the County Board Executive made a decision not to run camps during the Covid Pandemic.

In addition to the participation element these camps provided employment for many young people throughout Connacht for the duration of the camps. These coaches have also received coach education, Garda vetting clearance and child safeguarding upskilling to participate in the camp. I would encourage clubs to engage with these young coaches and get them involved in coaching in their clubs.

In any year in order to deliver a project of this size it requires a huge amount of work but this year in particular everybody went above and beyond to make sure our camps, first of all, happened but that all participants had a fun and safe environment to play. I would like to thank **Charles Harrison**, the National Cúl Camp Co-Ordinator; the County Games Managers, all the full-time personnel in the counties, the clubs and all the coaches who worked tirelessly on our camps, helping to deliver such a safe and enjoyable experience for all the children in attendance. We have learned many lessons from this year's camps that will stand us in good stead for the years ahead.

## Go Games

The Go Games programme was seriously curtailed by the pandemic with all counties running a varied level of activity.

Unfortunately, the Connacht GAA Go Games days in Croke Park were due to take place on April 8th and 9th but they too had to be cancelled with plans in place for 48 U-12 teams to play on those dates in Croke Park. Our *Connacht GAA Under-12 skills challenge competition* was also scheduled for October 2nd for football and October 9th for hurling at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence but these too could not go ahead. We hope that both of these initiatives will take place in 2021 if restrictions allow.

## Academy, Tàin Óg & Féile

All Academy, Tàin Óg & Féile activities were cancelled for the year. Quite an amount of preparation work had been completed for all these programmes by March and I would like to thank everyone for their effort.

## Full Time Staff

The full-time C&G staff engaged in thirteen weeks of online projects (listed below) in March when the first lockdown was implemented by the government. During this time all of our normal C&G projects were stopped. These projects have been used in 2020 and will be very useful in the years ahead for all clubs, schools, counties and their coaches.





The projects were allocated over three time lines along with staff upskilling in IT platforms, coaching styles/techniques, project planning/management, communication and mental health in young people. Coaches also engaged extensively online with all their own internal coaches in the county during this period.

While the lockdown was obviously a very difficult time for the whole country and as coaches we would much rather have our boots on and be out on the pitch coaching, I feel that the skills picked up by staff in this period will be hugely beneficial to the C&G programmes we run in the future. The time allowed us to take a step back and forensically analyse each facet of C&G in the province and look at ways to improve. The IT skills picked up by all staff members will be hugely beneficial in 2021 and beyond from an organisational perspective and I look forward to seeing these improvements implemented practically in the future.

## Provincial Projects

- Redevelop the U-12 Skills Test
- Audit of Youth Games Programme by county
- Development of a *Club Support Manual* (<https://connachtgaa.ie/structure-of-coaching-committee/>)
- A bank of 365 forms for all project for use by all counties
- How can we make the 5-star centre project central to the schools' programme
- Guidelines for developing a club school link
- Microsoft Planner Programme - come up with plans for all existing projects
- Update fitness testing protocols for Connacht Centre for use by clubs and academy squads
- C&G Coach Recruitment Model
- Coach Development Manual/Assessment tool to help mentor coaches
- Develop a model of how can we make communities of practice viable for volunteer coaches in GAA
- An 8-12-week schedule of fundamental and skill development progressions for school teachers, club school link coaches and staff
- Updating/refreshing of Award 1 Coach Education material in conjunction with Leinster group
- Bank of interactive games/drills for distribution on social media and in emails to clubs ([Connacht GAA Interactive Coaching Drills](#))
- Development of Physical Fitness Level 2
- Develop a paper/book review club for staff
- Getting engagement from secondary schools (how can we make an even bigger impact in this area?)
- Analysis of all research gathered from each County Youth Forum shared amongst all staff members
- Planning the next Connacht C&G Seminar when the dome is open and Coronavirus is finished.
- Development of running, strength and skills weekly material for return to play at youth and adult level
- Introduction of Connacht GAA Podcast Series with Darragh Cox. Up to episode 18 on a wide range of topics with a different guest in each (<https://connachtgaa.ie/coaching/podcast/>)

## Social Media

Connacht GAA, through the five counties, have a number of C&G activities around the province. This was initially done by each county setting up their own County & Games Coaching twitter pages to share content of all the work that is taking place within their county. For anyone who wants to follow them their twitter handles are [@MayoGAACoaching](#), [@RosCoachingGAA](#), [@CoachingGalway](#), [@LeitrimG](#) and [@SligoGAACandG](#).

These pages have gathered 8,002 followers up 2,238 in the year. Thanks to the work of the full-time coaches who load activities onto the pages for their counties. Again, this was something which we put particular emphasis on during lockdown as everybody was at home and spending their time online. We set up scheduled posts from each account sharing information about all aspects of coaching from new drills and ideas of exercises people could do at home to nutrition information and photos of old matches. I feel this was hugely successful in growing the pages and ultimately increasing the exposure to the public on what our coaches do in the communities on a day to day basis. It is something we will look to expand on further across different platforms in the coming year.

Connacht GAA also set up a new Instagram page in 2020 which contains lots of coaching information and updates. This has been a huge success with over 2,000 followers already. This is something we are going to look at launching in each individual county in future.

I would like to thank **Brían Mangan** from Connacht GAA for overseeing and co-ordinating these projects. He also links this work onto the Connacht GAA Facebook and Twitter pages and Connacht GAA website. The link between Brian, the county PROs, newsletters and the C&G social media pages will maximise exposure of the work currently taking place in each of the counties. There has been a lot of work put into compiling resources and these can be viewed by visiting the provincial and national coaching pages at:

<http://connachtgaa.ie/coaching/>  
and <https://learning.gaa.ie/coach>

We have also launched a new series of podcasts in 2020 with **Darragh Cox**. We have 18 Podcasts created so far on a broad range of subjects with very interesting guests alongside Darragh on each episode. The Podcasts are published on Spotify and Soundcoud and the full library can be accessed on the Connacht website here:

(<https://connachtgaa.ie/coaching/podcast/>)

During the lockdown we also developed a bank of over thirty interactive drills using a very useful piece of Software called *TacticalPad*. The videos are applicable to both codes and illustrate a range of training drills that can be easily understood by all coaches as sometimes it can be difficult to imagine a drill when read out of a coaching manual. We will look to add to this bank of drills in the new year. The drills are currently housed on our Instagram page and will soon be added to the coaching section of [connachtgaa.ie](http://connachtgaa.ie). The can be viewed here:

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CFhP88JlgRN/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CFhP88JlgRN/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)





## Schools

The **National Schools Coaching Programme**, that had started before the lockdown, thankfully was able to restart in the Autumn. All counties delivered coaching to a significant number of schools across the province. I would like to thank the schools and teachers for all their help in assisting in the coaching programme and facilitating sessions in a safe environment.

During this period when primary schools were closed and children were at home, the GAA published a series of daily learning activities and skill challenges to support parents and children in achieving their academic and physical activity needs. These updates can be seen on the following website: <https://learning.gaa.ie/primary-school>. These lesson plans were emailed to teachers by C&G staff in their area and shared across our Coaching & Games pages as already outlined.

The introduction of the Future Leaders Programme has been a very positive development in the secondary school sector for the association. It is a further development of the existing TY Programme that has been running for a number of years. The Future Leaders Transition Year Programme is a joint initiative from the GAA and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). It is a cross-curricular programme consisting of a series of modules designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership abilities in pupils. The programme gives pupils the knowledge and skills to support all roles required for the effective staging of Gaelic Games. As part of the programme pupils are challenged to organise and run a GAA Super Games Blitz or set up a Super Games Centre for younger students and/or support the coaching of younger players in their school or community. The programme consists of eight modules, varying in length but generally lasting between six and ten hours with each module being stand alone and individually certifiable. The modules cover areas such as the Coaching of Hurling/Football, Refereeing, Administration, Sports Journalism, Analysis, Nutrition, Wellbeing and Event Management. There are at present fifty-six secondary schools across the province taking part in the initiative. Given the skills that these students are developing at such a young age, if they are linked in with local clubs it can only be a positive for the association in the future. The level of games activity from this programme will be highlighted in the next edition of the newsletter. The GAA/PDST Future Leaders Group have designed the Solo Challenge to promote positivity, physical activity and wellbeing among young people, while encouraging them to stay at home and follow HSE guidelines at the same time. This is a student and teacher challenge which will run for a number of weeks. There are individual and schools' prizes to be won. For more information visit <https://learning.gaa.ie/gaasolo>

The second levels school's competition went quite well with the completion of the 2019/2020 championships at many grades across both codes. The games that normally take place in the second half of the year unfortunately did not happen. I would like to thank all the clubs who facilitated games in 2020 and

also acknowledge the grounds staff at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Provincial Schools Co-Ordinator **Hugh Rudden** and all the teachers involved for their outstanding work in promoting our Games.

## Coach Education

Our coach education system through our full-time staff and body of Connacht GAA tutors have delivered a total of eighty-six GAA Football and Hurling Coaching Courses throughout Connacht with 1,971 participants involved. Understandably these number are down from 2019 but there are quite a number of courses that have been started but had to be halted due to the restrictions on gatherings. We will look to complete these courses as soon as it is safe to do so.

Our Award 2 course has completed three of the five days but could not be completed as again there is group practical work needed to complete the course. These two days will be completed as soon as we are able to perform practicals with restrictions. There are fifty participants in total from football and hurling and from each of the counties. All modules will be delivered by our Connacht GAA tutors.

The **Provincial Club Support Programme** was in full swing before the restrictions were imposed, with twenty-five selected clubs having started engaging in the programme and all clubs at various stages. The primary purpose of the Club Coaching Support Programme is to build self-sufficiency and self-sustainability within each club in all aspects of coaching/management and player development. There has been a great response from the clubs having benefited from the program over recent years.

Each Club that is accepted on the programme may avail of a grant to the value of €1,000.

Below are the clubs availing of the program in 2020

Galway	Sligo	Mayo	Leitrim	Roscommon
Ahascragh Fohenagh	Coolaney Mullinabreena	Caiseal Gaels	Melvin Gaels	St Aidan's
Tynagh Abbey Duniry	Coolera/ Strandhill	The Neale	Gortletteragh	St Michael's
Barna Furbo	Ballymote	Aghamore	Kiltubrid	Elphin
Meelick Eyrecourt	Castleconnor	Louisburgh		Oran
St Michael's	St John's	Belmullet		
Headford				
Ballinasloe				
Killiererin				

**Séamus Burns**, our Strength & Conditioning Officer, has also rolled out 4 Strength & Conditioning Courses across the five provincial counties. A total of fifty-three coaches took part in the courses and will now work with club and county teams across the province. The course covers many aspects surrounding the physical preparation of our teams with modules including Physical Demands of Gaelic Games, Basic Science Theory, Fitness Testing, Warm Ups, Recovery, Conditioning for Gaelic Games and Supervision of a Resistance Training Programme. This course is designed and delivered so that coaches can carry out training in a safe and effective manner in





their own particular club/county setting with the assistance of Séamus. The idea behind such a course is to build a volunteer led module for clubs so that they can implement a safe and cost-effective physical fitness programme in place within their own club. This course will again be offered out to all clubs around the province in 2021.

During 2020 a follow-on course to this course has been developed and will be rolled out as a pilot during 2021. This is a welcome development to further upskill the volunteer in the clubs. This will include three additional modules in the area of Speed Development, Conditioning through Small Sided Games and advanced body weight resistance training.

For a more detailed account of Coach Education please see the report from the Coach Education Committee.

### Third Level

I would like to acknowledge the work being done in the third level institutions in the province and to thank the Games Promotion Officers, **Damien Curley** (GMT), **Michael O'Connor** (NUIG) and **Michael Harte** (Sligo IT).

### Acknowledgements

- Our Coach Education Committee under the chairmanship of **Denis O'Boyle**.
- Our Hurling Director, **Damien Coleman**, who works tirelessly with Coiste Iomaná to develop hurling in the province.
- To our Games Managers, **Tom McManus**, **Thomas Keenan**, **Willie Hegarty**, **Billy Mc Nicholas** and

**Liam Óg Gormley**. Also, to all the GPOs and GDAs working in the counties we are very grateful for all the work you to delivering our projects on the ground.

- A particular mention to **Tom McManus**, who retired during the year. Tom has worked for Connacht GAA for fifteen year. We thank Tom for everything he has done over his tenure and wish him all the best in retirement.
- Our Provincial Coaching Officer **Padraig McGourty**; our County Coaching Officers: **Paul Murphy** (Leitrim), **David McDonald** (Roscommon), **Peadar Neiland** (Sligo), **John Tobin** (Galway) and **Declan Reilly** (Mayo) who, in conjunction with the Games Managers, are responsible for the design and implementation of project in the six key areas.
- Also, to our third level officers, **Michael Harte** (SIT), **Damien Curley** (GMT) **Michael O'Connor** (NUIG) for all of their efforts throughout the year.
- To our six third level students, **Cormac Haslam** (Leitrim), **Emma Judge** (Mayo), **David McManus** (Roscommon), **Cian O'Connor** (Sligo), **Ronan Donovan** (Galway Hurling) and **Daniel Forde** (Galway Football) who worked for six months from March to August in their assigned county and I would like to thank them for all their hard work and we wish them well in the future.
- I would like to thank our secretaries, **Amanda Diskin** and **Attracta Hunt**; **Adrian Hassett** (Operations Manager), **Séamus Burns** (Strength & Conditioning Officer), **Brian Mangan** (Communications), and our Secretary, **John Prenty**, for all their assistance with C&G throughout the year.





# Connacht PRO Report 2020

I commenced my duties as PRO in January, 2020, little did we know at that time what was out ahead of us all. It has been a difficult year for us all with Covid-19 causing such destruction to us all as individuals, and to Ireland as a whole. As we know this affected all our GAA games, at all levels, causing delays and cancellations and, of course, closure of facilities to the public. We were all thrown by this especially the thousands of spectators who were prevented from attending our games.



John Joe Holleran

with Mayo winning 5-20, Tipperary 3-13.

As a result of that win, Connacht were lucky to have representation in what can only be called a historic Covid 2020 All-Ireland Senior Football Final when Mayo faced Dublin in Croke Park on December 19th, again behind closed doors. Unfortunately, Mayo were beaten in this final, but it must be said they showed great passion, persistence and commitment through what was a very difficult year.

## Connacht U-20s

Prior to Covid, the under-20s commenced prelim rounds under what can only be described as monsoon conditions in Castlebar on the 8th February.

**Mayo v. Galway** - Finishing in a drawn game at ten points apiece after extra time. Galway took the win on penalties ending in Galway 3 goals, Mayo 2 goals

The first of semi-finals on 15th February, was supposed to be a home game for Leitrim v. Galway, in Ballinamore, after travelling to Leitrim, due to a waterlogged pitch the game was not played on that date, but instead it was took place at Elfin, Roscommon, a week later! Thanks to Elfin for allowing the use of their facilities on the day.

**Galway (1-12) V Leitrim (0-2)** - the second semi-final on the same day, saw Sligo take on Roscommon in Sligo, resulting in a win for Roscommon, 1-08, 1-11.

The Connacht final was held on 7th March at Tuam Stadium Galway with Galway v Roscommon finishing in a win for Galway 4-13 to 0-5.

## Covid Lockdown in March

After an ease in covid restrictions and additional HSE Covid Guidelines, Galway went on to beat Kerry in one of the semi-finals in an exciting game, held on the 17th of October.

**All-Ireland Final, Galway v. Dublin:** which was played as a curtain raiser to the All-Ireland Senior Final. Galway were unfortunate to lose a few players to injuries in the first-half but powered through to take Dublin by storm, emerging one point victors to take the All-Ireland U-21 Championship title.

## Connacht Senior Championship

The preliminary round saw the meeting of Mayo and Leitrim on 1st November at Carrick-on-Shannon when Mayo defeated Leitrim 2-15 to 10 points.

The first of the semi-finals took place on 7th November which gave Galway a walk-over, because of Covid difficulties affecting the Sligo team.

As a result, the Connacht Senior Football Final was played in Pearse Stadium where Mayo defeated Galway by one point, 0-14 to 0-13.

The All-Ireland semi-final on the 6th December gave Mayo a great win over Tipperary at Croke Park

## Connacht Minor Championship

The preliminary round saw Galway v Leitrim on 12th December, resulting in a win for Galway 2-17 to 12 points.

The first of the semi-finals took place in Centre of Excellence at Began, on 18th December where Roscommon had a well-deserved victory over Galway, 2-13, 0-11.

The second semi-final was played two days later in the same venue. A spectacular win for Sligo (1 -9) after a great start from Mayo (1-7).

The minor final took place in Centre of Excellence at Began on a stormy night, on the 20th December, a close game resulting in a win for Roscommon 1-5, 1-2.

## Personal Note

I would like to thank and congratulate **Gerry McGovern** on his term as Uachtarán of Connacht GAA Council over the last three years as one of the delegates to the council I had the privilege of knowing him, his wisdom and experience was not only a value to us in Connacht but on a national level. We took many a trip to NY for championship games under his reign. One such trip we took we met Séamus Dooly, a previous Uachtarán of NY GAA, who died during this difficult year, I would like to extend our sympathies to his extended family and friends and especially his daughter, Dr. Amanda Dooley-Atkinson whom he was so very proud of; her husband, Mike, and to her young family.

I would like at this point to wish **John Murphy** the absolute best of luck, commencing his term in office as Uachtarán. I look forward to working with him in the coming years.

On a personal level I would like to say 'thank you' to **Rúnaí, John Prenty**, and the staff at the Centre of Excellence at Began for all their help and support during the last twelve months.

To **Brían Mangan** for his assistance and support regarding publications during the year. Thank you to each of the county PROs for your co-operation and hard work.

My predecessor **John Hopkins** helped me during covid restrictions when I was unable to attend my







appointed games as my sister-in-law was dying and I had to restrict my movement so Mary, my wife, could be with her, in her final days.

I am incredibly grateful for that assistance and **John Prenty** for facilitating same.

## Covid-19

This has been, for all of us, an exceedingly difficult time, between cocooning and keeping our distance from each other, not alone from each other but we had to keep our distance from our games. For many the “behind doors” games caused a lot of sadness and disappointment but with the help of our broadcasting, live steaming, tv stations, radios, and social media we were able to see our counties play, as strange as it was, in silence. This was not only a great help for us to be able to participate by viewing but it also was financially beneficial to the GAA which was needed after the effect Covid-19 had on our finances for 2020.

I remember when the lockdown started, I began to get back walking again, thinking to myself, ‘this too shall pass’. I have walked to date almost 2,000 km, thinking about all the supportive people I have met over my lifetime in the GAA. With God’s help we will all be back enjoying the GAA, together, to its fullest potential again soon.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very hopeful New Year for 2021 and with any luck a successful one on the fields of sport.

I have added this poem, which for me, sums up what the GAA is all about and I feel this year it is most important as it expresses the passion and pride that comes from the GAA ... “The beautiful Game”

## The Beautiful Game

*Less than a minute remains on the clock  
As I tighten my lace and roll down my sock  
One last chance and it's all up to me,  
It must be a goal, for we need all three.*

*I stand up to the ball and look at the posts,  
Is that the crowd I hear, of the ghosts of men,  
Who before me faced the same test.  
That never once failed to give it their best.*

*My Father, he gave me the love for it all,  
When he guided my arms to strike that first ball.  
A Sliothar, a Football - it's the same thing to me,  
It's playing the game that matters you see.*

*From the boys in the field, to the big crowd roar  
There's never been anything to excite me more  
From the day I could run, to the day I can't walk  
And even then, the game I'll still talk.*

*The few steps to the ball, it seems like a mile  
But a well placed shot and I'll be carried in style,  
On the shoulders of team mates expressing their joy  
It's a dream that's consumed me since I was a boy.*

*My feet pound the ground as I strike the ball,  
It sails through the air, over men who are tall.  
Then dipping and curling, it finds the goal  
And just for a moment, I'm in touch with my soul.*

*A whistle blows hard and I wake from my dream,  
I'm watching my own son play for the team  
And maybe one day, they'll announce his name,  
As he steps out to play, the most Beautiful Game.*



**The Caiseal Gaels U12 Hurling side who were runners-up in the U-12C final. Over the past two months, the Mayo GAA scene has played its part on getting the lives and activity levels of young people in Mayo back to normal, and the Mayo GAA U-12 hurling league has been at the forefront in helping young hurlers and mentors get back to playing and promoting the game they love.**





## PR & Media – Brian Mangan

While 2020 was obviously an extremely challenging year for everybody not just in the GAA but across the world in general, every cloud has a silver lining and it did provide opportunities to develop the online presence of Connacht GAA and allowed time to improve on certain elements of our website and social media channels. While, regrettably, we didn't have as many matches to cover, the match day experience was changed drastically for our championship games with no spectators permitted to attend. Score updates and videos were more important than ever on Social Media and this was an area we put particular emphasis on for our senior championship. 2020 was also the year every club and county had to quickly learn how to effectively stream games and Connacht GAA were no different as our entire minor championship was streamed on our website. This was a case of being thrown in at the deep end for many but across the board the productions were excellent and the efforts made by everyone involved to ensure the games were shown live was a huge boost to everyone in the GAA community. The skills learned in these areas in this most difficult of years will stand to the association massively going forward.

## Streaming

This was our first venture into the world of streaming with four Connacht Minor Championship games exclusively live on our website. Huge thanks to producer **Rory O'Brien** for a very professional overall package as well as camera-man, **Séamus Burns**, and commentators **John Lynch**, **Cathal Cregg**, **David Kelly**, **Kevin O'Dwyer** and **Martin McGowan**. The streaming was hugely successful with 1,500 people **buying** the stream for the final between Roscommon and Sligo and 4,000 people overall watching the streams from all over the world. Huge benefits will be gleaned from this project and implemented in the streaming of various competitions in the future.

## Website

ConnachtGAA.ie was a very useful tool this year, as we posted all Covid public health updates relevant to the GAA as the situation developed so it was a "one-

stop-shop" for people who wanted to keep up with the ever changing guidelines and rules. We also improved the website by adding new sections for the Connacht GAA Podcast with **Darragh Cox**, a section for online match programmes and the publication in PDF format of the Connacht GAA Coaching Manual which contains information and advice on every facet of coaching imaginable. This was put together by a group of staff headed by Sligo Games Manager, **Liam Óg Gormley**, as a project during the first lockdown and is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in coaching. We also added a section to house all streaming information and one with information about the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence and the Dome Project. It was also good to be able to get our popular **"Into the West"** Bi-Monthly magazine published on the site as a downloadable PDF.

## Social Media

Social Media is an extremely powerful resource we have for the promotion of our games and this was never more evident than it was in 2020. We have made steady progress to 34k Twitter followers and 10k Facebook followers. We also launched an Instagram page which has been very successful and already has 2,010 followers. During the lockdown we used the time well to create new content relevant to coaching which was shared across the platforms and which there a great response was to. We used the TacticalPad software to make interactive videos of coaching drills and these were widely shared and very well received by coaches all over the country and beyond. As well as @ConnachtGAA we also have individual coaching and games pages for each county which we use to promote the work going on at a local level. Without this promotion a lot of the hard work which goes on at grass roots would go unrecognised by the public so I feel it's important to utilise the tools at our disposal and be as visible as possible.

I'd like to thank the managers of these pages for their excellent work as well as the county PROs for their continued support and co-operation. I'd also like to acknowledge **Paul Cunnane** and **Hugh Lynn** who have served their terms as the PRO's for Mayo and Roscommon and to thank them for all their help during my time working here.



**NUI Galway Intermediate football finalists, back row: James Kyne, Evan O'Brien, Shane O'Loughlin, Michael McNeive, Niall McManamon, Pdraic Halpin, John McHugh, Kevin Dunne, Gavin Durcan, Callum Fahey, Conan Marren, Dylan Buckley, Jim Sugrue, Sea Henry, Paul Gorman, Donal Shanley. Front Row: Conor Harnan, Donovan Cosgrave, Ross Mahon, Donnacha Gately, Conor O'Donoghue, Callum Kyne, Conor Jamieson, John Cooke, Paddy Culhane, Tony O'Kelly-Lynch, Alan Dignam, Willie Finnerty, Niall Carney.**





# Connacht GAA Coach Education Convention Report 2020

By Denis O'Boyle

**T**HE outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic had a major effect on the delivery of Coach Education Courses during 2020. However, some activities took place within the strict Croke Park and Government protocols and guidelines. The use of terms like *Webinars*, *Zoom* and *Microsoft Team* meetings and other such words became very familiar and necessary in trying to continue the work undertaken by our Connacht Coach Education Committee during 2020.

Our meeting were limited over this unprecedented year and the Connacht GAA Coach Education Committee were fortunate to have met on 22nd January and then virtually on the 3rd and again on 18th December, 2020. In the intervening times, 'phone calls and emails replaced what were once considered our normal meetings.

The main role of the Connacht Coach Education Committee is essentially to oversee the training and development of GAA Coaches and GAA Tutors/Coach Developers in Connacht and to ensure the smooth delivery of the GAA Coach Education Programme to our GAA Coaches throughout Connacht under the stewardship of **Cathal Cregg**, Connacht GAA Games Manger.

The members of the Connacht Coach Education Committee 2020, representing all five counties in Connacht, were as follows: Chairperson, **Denis O'Boyle**, Mayo; Secretary, **Adrian Hassett**, Galway; **Damien Coleman**, Galway; **Damian Curley**, Galway;



**Liam Óg Gormley**, Sligo; **Martin Connolly**, Mayo; **Matt Gaffey**, Leitrim; **Seán Silke**, Galway; **Willie Hegarty**, Roscommon; **Cathal Cregg**, Connacht GAA Games Manger, and **John Tobin**, former Connacht Games Manager.

Each member of the Connacht Coach Education Committee has a wide range of experiences and expertise within the GAA and is also a qualified GAA Tutor Trainer/Coach Developer, having undertaken a number of intensive training courses facilitated by the GAA in association with Sport Ireland. Each year members of this committee have attended the National GAA Games Development Conference's in Croke Park and take part regularly in GAA Tutor/Coach Development Training.



A new way of holding our meetings, a virtual Connacht Coach Education Committee Webinar meeting, which took place on the 3rd December 2020.



Pre Covid 19 meeting of the Connacht Coach Education Committee. (L-R) **Damien Coleman**, Galway, **Matt Gaffey**, Leitrim, **Sean Silke**, Galway, **Martin Connolly**, Mayo, **Denis O'Boyle**, Chairperson, Mayo, **Adrian Hassett**, Secretary, Galway, **John Tobin**, former Connacht Games Manager and Galway, **Willie Hegarty**, Roscommon, **Cathal Cregg**, Connacht GAA Games Manager and **Dr Peter Horgan**, GAA Education Officer, Croke Park. (Missing from photograph are **Liam Óg Gormley**, Sligo and **Damian Curley**, Galway)





		Galway		Sligo		Roscommon		Leitrim		Mayo		Connacht	
		No of C	No of P	No of C	No of P	No of C	No of P	No of C	No of P	No of C	No of P	No of C	No of P
Foundation	Football	5	127	8	219	1	23	8	115	9	189		
Award 1 Youth	Football	2	36	1	9	1	8	1	27	3	39		
Award 1 Adult	Football	2	35			1	8	1	27				
Award 1 Child	Football	2	18	1	8			1	14				
Transition Year	Lifeskills	13	452			1	36	1	24	4	204		
Transition Year	Lifeskills(Hurling)												
Foundation	Hurling	4	75							2	27		
Award 1 Youth	Hurling	2	32										
Award 1 Adult	Hurling	2	32										
Award 1 Child	Hurling	2	26										
Foundation	Dual	2	80	2	45								
Award 2 Adult	Football											1	13
Award 2 Youth	Football											1	13
Award 2 Adult	Hurling											1	5
Award 2 Youth	Hurling											1	5
Totals		36	913	12	281	4	75	12	207	18	459	4	36

TABLE 1

## Football and Hurling Courses delivered in Connacht during 2020

In what was a most challenging year, a total of eighty-six GAA Football & Hurling Coaching Courses were delivered during 2020 throughout Connacht with 1971 coaches taking part, as can be seen from the table below collated by **Attract Hunt** in Connacht GAA. It is important to state that many other coaches successfully completed their Foundation Course but did not as yet complete their Safeguarding 1 Course and therefore are not included in these figures for 2020.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work of all the GAA Tutors/Coach Developers throughout Connacht who facilitated the provision of these courses, in association with their respective Games Mangers, especially during this unprecedented year. I congratulate all of the coaches, who took part and received their GAA Coaching Certification. I wish them continued success and enjoyment in their coaching careers and thank them for their ongoing promotion of our Gaelic Games in Connacht.

## The GAA Coaching Development Framework

On the 3rd December, 2020, **Dr Peter Horgan**, GAA Education Officer, Croke Park, gave a comprehensive *Power Point* presentation virtually to the members of the Connacht Coach Education Committee outlining the proposed GAA Coaching Development Framework.

During the presentation Dr. Horgan explained that the structure of the new Coach Development Framework involves the recognition of learning from a variety of sources, and opportunities. While traditionally the GAA coach education system has been structured around courses with additional learning opportunities provided in a broadly *ad hoc*



Screenshot of the Zoom PowerPoint presentation on new Coach Development, given by **Dr Peter Horgan**, GAA Education Officer, Croke Park, on the 3rd December 2020, to the Connacht Coach Education Committee.

manner, the coach development framework attempts to systematise this process, such that coaches will be offered a broad range of learning opportunities, and various pieces of evidence for that learning will be used to verify that learning. This reflects a significant change from all previous programmes and places a considerable level of responsibility on the individual coach to take ownership of their own learning journey.

A Coach Development Framework Workgroup has been meeting since summer, 2020, with a view to progressing the framework. The group is composed of members from across the Association, led by Tuam native, **Liam Moggan**, the group membership is:

- **Damian Curley**, Connacht
- **Ger O'Connor**, Dublin
- **Colm Clear**, Leinster
- **James Devane**, Leinster
- **Noel Hartigan**, Munster
- **Roger Keenan**, Ulster
- **Niall Williams**, Camogie Association
- **William Harmon**, Ladies' Gaelic Football Association





- Dr Peter Horgan, Croke Park
- Shane Flanagan, Croke Par

On behalf of the Connacht Coach Education Committee I take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous commitment, expertise and time which **Damien Curley** has given on behalf of Connacht GAA; to **Dr Peter Horgan** for updating us on the work of the National Coach Development Framework and to each of the members of the workgroup and to wish them well in their work in the ongoing development of the new structures.

## Coach Development in 2020

According to **Dr Peter Horgan**, GAA Education Officer, Croke Park, clubs are the primary location for Gaelic Games activity across the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations. They play a key role in the provision of games, non-games and community development opportunities within urban, rural and new communities throughout the island of Ireland. Involvement in local club's span age cohorts from 4-80 years-old and, importantly, afford playing and social membership opportunities to a wide demographic.

As a result of Covid-19 and the impact of a restricted and compacted programme of formal competitive and informal games activity at club, county and schools level in recent months, we focused on identifying methods and platforms through which clubs can be restarted, sustained and supported over the short, medium and long-term to facilitate games activity and club development.

The GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association partnered to provide a *Covid-19 Club Education Programme* to help those involved in clubs return safely to Gaelic Games activities. The programme aimed to protect the health and welfare of all those involved in Gaelic Games and minimise the risk of transmission of Covid-19 in local communities. It was especially aimed at:

- Covid Supervisors and club officers
- Players and parents/guardians of underage players
- Team personnel such as managers, coaches and medical personnel

The programme involved the development of learning content, the training of tutors, the creation of eLearning materials, the delivery of sessions, and the review of programmes for players, parents, coaches, match officials, and administrators from across the full spectrum of Gaelic Games - child, teenage, adult, participation, performance, Hurling/Camogie, Gaelic Football/Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, and Rounders and GAA for All.

The impact of the educational programme has been seen in an increased awareness by Gaelic Games members of the COVID-19 return to play guidelines, and in total, more than 11,000,000 engagements with the programme were recorded, including:

- COVID Supervisors and club officers
- Team Management/Coaches/Medial Personnel: more than 100,000 engagements
- Guidance documents, user guides, role descriptions and posters which were downloaded almost 750,000 times in total

- A 20-minute eLearning module which attracted almost 600,000 unique visitors
- Three Club Briefings which were watched 65,000 times on YouTube

As a result of the education programme, the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Associations were able to proceed with their roll out of a return to play protocol, which resulted in:

- Players and parents guardians of underage players: more than 340,000 profiles were created by players, or parents of underage players, representing over 700,000 participants.
- Over 10,000,000 return to play questionnaires have been completed. The roll out of such programmes has been maintained during 2020, and will be continued for 2021 dependent upon the prevailing public health guidance at the time.

## Introduction to Gaelic Games Coaching Award - A new Coaching Award

The GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations have developed a new Introductory Coaching Programme. This programme will be common across each of the Associations and will for the first time ensure that beginner coaches of any of our codes will come together and engage in a common programme within our separate coach education frameworks. It is intended that this new introduction to Gaelic Games Programme will replace the existing Foundation Award (GAA), Fundamentals Course (LGFA) and the Caman Get a Grip Foundation course (Camogie). The programme will be rolled out as:

1. Hurling/Camogie courses
2. Gaelic Football/Ladies Gaelic Football courses, or
3. Dual courses (covering Hurling/Camogie and Gaelic Football/Ladies Gaelic Football)

Participants will be certified coaches in whichever of the codes that they attend. This will also mean that beginner coaches can now achieve all the requirements to coach any of our teams on a common basis - Coaching Qualification, Garda/Access NI Vetting, and Child Safeguarding. It is also more appropriate for coaches operating in clubs that have several different codes that they are not required to undertake separate coaching qualifications depending on the code that they are coaching. Having a common introductory programme does not change the broader Coach Education framework in any of the Associations involved.



**Pre Covid 19 in December 2019, when Dr Peter Horgan, GAA Education Officer, addresses the Connacht GAA Tutors/Coach Developers on the new Introduction to Gaelic Games Coaching Award in the Connacht Centre of Excellence.**





The National Coach Education Workgroup have developed a syllabus document for this programme, as there are changes to each of the GAA Foundation Award, Camogie 'Camán Get a Grip' or the LGFA Fundamentals Award. Furthermore, the National Coach Education Workgroup are currently at the stage of developing resources to support the programme, and of training tutors in the roll out of the new programme. A small group of GAA Tutor Trainers took responsibility for this training and included Connacht's Provincial nominee, *Damian Curley*.

## Award 2 Youth and Adult Course was deferred during 2020

Little did we know when the first day of the Award 2 Youth and Adult Course took place on Saturday, 14th December, 2019, in the Connacht GAA Centre in Began that we would only get to come together twice more in 2020, i.e. 25th January and on the 22nd February, 2020. The *County Coaching & Games Committees* in Connacht nominated a total of fifty coaches to undertake this particular Connacht GAA Award 2 Coach Education Course. The Award 2 Coach Education course is the third award on the coaching pathway of Gaelic games and is aimed at coaches that have progressed through the Foundation Award and Award 1 programmes and have extensive experience as a Coach.



**Pre Covid-19 Award 2 Course with Tutors Damien Colman and Damian Curley with participants in the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence, on the following dates: 14th December, 2019; 25th January, and on the 22nd February, 2020.**

This Award 2 Youth Course, is twenty-seven hours in duration with an add on of four and a half hours (minimum) to complete the Award 2 Adult part of the course. The course covers a number of key modules, as well as introductory and conclusion modules and are as follows:

- Role of the Coach
- Technical Proficiency
- Tactical Prowess
- Team Play
- Physical Fitness
- Participant Feedback/Playing Facts
- Psychological Focus
- Talent Identification
- Nutrition and Hydration
- Communication
- Lifestyle
- Rules

The focus of this Award 2 Course is to further develop ones coaching skills by placing the participant

coaches in situations that they will encounter in their respective clubs and or counties and will involve the organisation of games activities, activities to develop skill and activities to develop the various physical fitness attributes. This course was due to run until the 4th April 2020.

However, as Covid-19 took its toll during 2020, it was decided in the interest of all involved to deferred this Award 2 Course until a time when it is once again safe for all to do so during 2021 and dependent upon the prevailing public health guidance at the time.

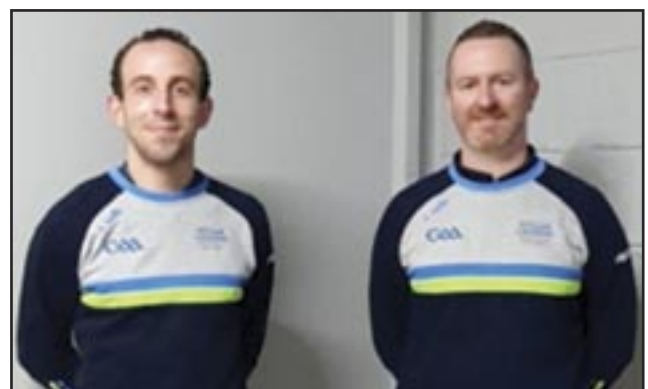
## Post Primary Schools in Connacht are delivering the GAA Future Leaders Transition Year Programme

Tremendous credit must be given to *Eoghan Hanley*, a teacher in Gort Community School for originally developing the concept of the *Future Leaders Transition Year Programme* in his school and for sharing this programme with post primary schools throughout Ireland. Eoghan is the GAA/PDST Future Leaders National Coordinator. This programme has been widely acknowledged as a having been a major success story in the ongoing promotion of Gaelic Games in our post primary schools throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

The *Future Leaders Transition Year Programme* is a joint initiative from the GAA and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). It is a cross-curricular programme comprising of eight modules, each designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership skills in pupils. The programme gives pupils the knowledge and skills to support all roles required in the effective staging of Gaelic Games. As part of the programme pupils are challenged to organise and run both on-field and off-field events which are linked to the programmes modules.

There has been huge interest in the programme in Connacht with a total of fifty-six schools participating in the programme presently. We look forward to working with these schools over the years to come, helping them with the delivery of the modules and the running of their GAA events.

There are seven PDST Future Leaders Associates based in Connacht. Normally they visit the schools and provide training to the schools future leaders



**Left to right: Colm Madden, Connacht Regional Future Leaders Coordinator and Gort Community School Teacher and Eoghan Hanley, GAA/PDST Future Leaders National Coordinator.**





coordinators and the teachers involved in the delivery of the programme. This year due to the Covid-19 pandemic they are providing support to the schools through online webinars tailored to the individual schools needs.

The Associates in Connacht are as follows: Connacht Future Leaders Regional Coordinator, **Colm Madden**; Gort Community School, **Carmel Cruise**; St. Colman's College, Claremorris, **Pádraig Hernon**; Holy Rosary Mountbellew, **Pádraig Brennan**; St. Brigid's Loughrea, **Joe McCabe** and **Daniel Forde**; St. Gerald's College, Castlebar and **Martina Finneran** - Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown.

## 2019/20 GAA Future Leaders Competitions

There were a number of pupils from Connacht who were successful in our modules competitions in the last academic year:

Sports Journalism: **Louise Cox**, Ballyhaunis CS, Mayo

Event Management: **Hannah Moloney**, Gort CS, Galway

Sports Photography: **Norbert Papuga**, Roscommon CC, Roscommon

Nutrition: **Hannah Singh**, Davitt College, Castlebar, Mayo

There were also some #GAASolo Competition winners:

Skills Challenge winners:

**Tiernan Bierne**, St. Gerald's, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

**Dylan Walsh**, St. Nathy's College, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon

Coaching Challenge Winner:

**Niall Flanagan**, Gort Community School, Co. Galway

Overall Schools weekly winner, most active / involved school:

**St. Nathy's College**, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon.

## What is the GAA/ PDST Future Leaders Programme?

The Future Leaders is a cross-curricular programme for Transition Year students comprising of eight modules, each designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership skills in students. The programme also gives pupils the knowledge and skills to support all roles required in the effective staging of events where students are challenged to organise and run both on-field and off-field events for younger students.

### Course Structure:

The programme is comprised of the following eight modules as well as an *Overview/Introduction to Leadership Module*:

- Future Leaders FMS & Coaching Module
- Future Leaders Refereeing Module
- Future Leaders Event Management & Sports Administration Module
- Future Leaders Sports Journalism Module
- Future Leaders Performance Analysis Module

- Future Leaders Wellbeing Module
- Future Leaders Nutrition Module
- Future Leaders History Module

All modules are stand alone, are between six to ten hours long and individually certifiable. When registered, each pupil is set up with an e-Portfolio to store and share documentation before submitting as part of the assessment process. Pupils receive certification for each module when the module task is completed. A school can choose to deliver one or more modules. Delivering four modules, the organisation of at least one Future Leaders event by the students, and documenting their experience in their e-Portfolio, results in the student being awarded the "GAA/PDST Future Leaders Award".

## Ongoing review and improvement

It has been an extremely busy and challenging year but a very interesting one at the same time according to **Eoghan Hanley**, National Coordinator of the Future Leaders programme: *"As is the case with all other GAA programmes, the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the Future Leaders Programme. During the 2019/20 academic year, up until March 2020, the numbers of pupils who were active through events which were organised by GAA Future Leader Transition Year pupils was huge. There was Super Games Blitzes, Go Games Blitzes, Rounders events, Wall Ball Tournaments, Poc Fada Events, Wellbeing and Healthy Eating Initiatives being organised nationwide. It was fantastic to see and was a direct result of changes we made to the programme which were based on feedback from both students and teachers and designed to make the programme as practical as possible. We wanted to see young people actively organising and partaking in events all over the country and that is what happened.*

*"Unfortunately, this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic many of these events are not possible. We drafted a list of 'Covid Safe' events which allows pupils to use what they are learning in the Future Leaders Programme in a safe way and the response has been unbelievable. It started in March when we came up with the #GAASolo initiative, which was a series of weekly online skills and healthy eating challenges, and has continued into this academic year where schools are organising lots of events from our 'Covid Safe' list. Students are organising and participating in Wall Ball Tournaments, Poc and Cic Fada competitions, Rounders blitzes, Podcasts and Webinars on GAA Future Leaders related content, linking in with County Games Development personnel for coaching and refereeing courses and much much more.*

*"For many schools the only GAA activity taking place are the activities which are being organised through the GAA Future Leaders Programme. It is great for these schools that the GAA flag is still flying throughout this pandemic and it is been driven to a large extent by the students themselves".*

## Practical Application of Skills Acquired

According to Eoghan Hanley: *"During our review process and as we collated the vast amount of feedback received, it became very obvious to us that the students really enjoyed organising Future Leaders events and*





On - Field Events	Off - Field Events
GAA Super Games	5 km Runs
GAA Go Games	Colour Runs
GAA Fun & Run	Organised Walks / Cycles
Handball Event	Wellbeing Initiatives
Rounders Event	Healthy Eating Initiatives
7 a sides	Whole School / Club Fun Days
Wall Ball Events	Podcasts
Poc / Cic Fada Events	Webinars



practically applying what they had learned in the various modules. The intention is to provide each student to contribute personally but also to support them in establishing and leading groups to coordinate the event and the various functions. In order to be as inclusive as possible of all student's interests and skill sets, students can organise both on and off-field events". (See left)

The Future Leaders programme is also officially linked to Gaisce the President's Award, and students can do their Bronze Award through the Future Leaders Programme, once they are registered for both.

### Benefits of the Programme:

Through the various modules the students develop in many ways;

- Responsibility
- Wellbeing
- Inclusivity
- Sense of Belonging
- Initiative
- Maturity

These students are developing skills and capacities which are vital to fulfil all of the necessary roles in the running of a club or organisation. There are wider benefits to the student, the school, to local clubs and communities, and the country as a whole.

### Connacht Schools currently taking part in the Future Leaders

The following is a list of the Connacht Schools currently taking part in the Future Leaders Programme for the 2020/21 academic year:

#### Galway: (20 schools)

- Galway, Scoil Phobail Mhic Dara, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Mercy College, Woodford, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, St Cuan's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, St Joseph's College, The Bish Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Dunmore Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Colaiste na bPiarsach, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Youthreach Tuam, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Dominican College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Ardscoil Mhuire, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiarain, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Holy Rosary College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Presentation College, Headford, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Merlin College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, St Brigid's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Gort Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021
- Galway, Colaiste Bhaile Chlair, Claregalway, College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021







Galway, Scoil Bhríde Mercy Secondary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Galway, Colaiste Ghobnait Future, Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Galway, Portumna Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Galway, St Jarlath's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

**Leitrim: (5 Schools)**

Leitrim, St Clare's Comprehensive School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Leitrim, Carrigallen Vocational School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Leitrim, Mohill Community College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Leitrim, Lough Allen College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Leitrim, Ballinamore Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

**Mayo: (17 schools)**

Mayo, St Joseph's Secondary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Colaiste Bhreandain Naofa, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Ballinrobe Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, St Louis Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, St Colman's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, St Muredach's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Rice College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Gaelcholaiste Chomain, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Scoil Muire agus Pádraig, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, St Gerald's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Mount St Michael, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Ballyhaunis Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, St Joseph's, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

Mayo, St Mary's Secondary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Our Lady's Secondary School, Belmullet, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Balla Secondary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Mayo, Davitt College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

**Roscommon (8 Schools)**

Roscommon, Elphin Community College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, Castlerea Community School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, Scoil Mhuire Future, Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, Convent of Mercy Secondary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, Abbey Community College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, CBS Roscommon, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, St Nathy's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Roscommon, Roscommon Community College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

**Sligo (6 Schools)**

Sligo, Summerhill College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Sligo, Coola Post Primary School, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Sligo, Grange Post Primary, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Sligo, Mercy College Sligo, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Sligo, Colaiste Muire, Ballymote, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021  
 Sligo, St Mary's College, Future Leaders School Zone, 2021

For further information on Future Leaders Programme you can contact the following:  
 Website: [learning.gaa.ie/futureleaders](http://learning.gaa.ie/futureleaders)  
 Email: [futureleaders@gaa.ie](mailto:futureleaders@gaa.ie)  
 Twitter: @gaafutureleader  
 Instagram: gaafutureleader  
 Facebook: GAA Future Leaders



The Westport U-12 Hurling side who were runners-up in the U-12A final.





2020 Scelig Cup finalists, Presentation College Athenry.

Photo: ©INPHO/Tom O'Hanlon.

## Information on the recruitment of GAA Coaches

All coaches working with young people and children are required to be suitable for their chosen role(s), and should be appropriately trained, qualified and supported to fulfil such roles.

All persons working or volunteering for such roles are required to:

- Undertake agreed vetting and background Garda checks within the jurisdiction(s) in which they operate
- Attend relevant Gaelic Games Child Safeguarding training
- Possess a coaching qualification relevant to their role as recognised by their Association

Coaches of adult teams, which include any player under 18 years of age, must also undertake the vetting, child safeguarding training and coaching requirements as outlined above.

## Virtual Safeguarding 1 Workshop

The new *Safeguarding 1 Virtual Workshop* is a live interactive programme, delivered by a tutor via a virtual classroom platform. Clubs are asked to draw up a list of those who require Child Safeguarding 1 training and particularly new coaches. Virtual Safeguarding 1 Workshops are available and organised via a club or county and are booked at national level to agree an available time slot and date for delivering the workshop. All queries should be forwarded to [safeguardingonline@gaa.ie](mailto:safeguardingonline@gaa.ie)

## Child Safeguarding 1 online refresher programme

The *Online Child Safeguarding 1 Programme* was launched in October, 2019. The refresher is aimed at those who have in the last five years attended our own Gaelic Games Safeguarding Workshop or an externally

recognised workshop delivered by another Sports NGB or a Local Sports Partnership.

The three-year condition, within which a person was permitted to renew their Child Safeguarding Training, by either attending another face-to-face workshop or undertake the online safeguarding refresher has been temporarily extended to five years. This three to five-year extension is valid until the June, 2021.

## Maintaining Appropriate Levels of Behaviour in our Work with Children and Young People

All GAA coaches should ensure that young people and children benefit significantly from our games by promoting a positive, healthy and participatory approach in our work with underage players. In developing the skills levels of every player, coaches should always encourage enjoyment and fun while ensuring meaningful participation in our games and activities. *Coaches should always remember that they are role models for the players in their care.*

The booklet 'Maintaining Appropriate Levels of Behaviour in our Work with Children and young People' addresses the minimum levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our Young players, coaches, supporters, parents/guardians, referees and clubs and from those who work with them on our behalf.

## The Dome, Coach Education Personnel, Courses and Resources

One of the main highlights of 2020 in Connacht GAA has to be the completion of the Air Dome which houses a full-size indoor playing field, a running track and gym to accommodate thirty people at one time; the Dome enables Connacht GAA to become an





all-weather, fully adaptable facility suitable for year-round club, school, county and community sports and events. Congratulations to Connacht Council and especially to **John Prenty** for ensuring that his vision became a reality and for putting in place a wonderful resource and unique venue that will greatly benefit the delivery of Connacht GAA's Coach Education Courses into the future, where inclement weather will no longer be a problem.

In regard to personnel, Connacht has a GAA Games Manager in each of the five counties who is responsible for the promotion of all aspects of Gaelic Games within that county and manage the staff working for the county board and provincial council within each county.

**Cathal Cregg** is the Connacht Provincial Games Manager and promotes and oversees the objectives and policies of the GAA nationally and provincially and ensures that they are carried out to the betterment of the association as a whole.

All our GAA coaches in Connacht can now readily avail of the many and varied opportunities available to them to expand their coaching knowledge, skills and expertise for the benefit of themselves and their players.

Should you require further information on any aspect of coach education you can google <http://learning.gaa.ie/> This is the GAA Learning & Development Portal Site, which has been specially developed to provide better access to key resources for all GAA members and those actively promoting Gaelic Games. You now have every opportunity to keep up to date with the most up to date developments in coaching.

At local level, it is important to highlight the fact that each county in Connacht advertises its coaching courses online in their county website and also via the Connacht GAA Coach Education website <http://connachtgaa.ie/coaching> which includes the timetable of all our Coach Education Courses in Connacht.

This website is updated regularly and now includes a wonderful reservoir of up-to-date information and resources including a Coaching Calendar, Coaching Manual, Committees & Personnel, Cúl Camps, Nursery, Player Capacities, Resources and a Connacht GAA Podcast with *Darragh Cox*.

All coaches are encouraged to visit and register with this site, view upcoming courses and reserve a place at an upcoming course.

All those wishing to organise a GAA coaching course within their club or school during 2021, should contact their local county games Managers as outlined below:

## Acknowledgement

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken in Croke Park during 2020 especially the cooperation and communications received from **Dr Peter Horgan**, Education Officer, together with **Shane Flanagan**, GAA Director of Coaching & Games Development; **Jimmy D'Arcy**, GAA Youth Leadership & Sustainability Manager, and **David Sweeney**, GAA eLearning Manage. I take this opportunity to thank each of them for their continued support for the Connacht GAA Coach Education Committee.

I wish to thank all our Connacht GAA Tutors, all our GAA Coaches, our Committee Secretary Adrian Hassett, Connacht Games Manager, Cathal Cregg and Connacht GAA Secretary, **John Prenty**. We are most fortunate to have their calibre, experience, ongoing support and encouragement.

A special thanks also to **Attracta Hunt** and **Amanda Diskin**, for their continued help and co-operation at all times. **John Clancy**, caretaker, ensures that the facilities are always in order for our courses, for which we are most grateful.

I wish to thank the Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon County Boards and their dedicated Games Managers for their continued support, co-operation and development of GAA Coach Education Programmes. I take this opportunity to wish **Tom McManus** all the very best on his recent retirement and thank him for all the work he has undertaken over the years as Galway GAA Games Manager.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to each of the members of the Connacht Coach Education Committee for their ongoing commitment, expertise and encouragement over the years and especially throughout this remarkable year of 2020



## County Games Managers

<b>Mayo</b>	<b>Billy McNicholas</b>	<b><a href="mailto:billy.mcnicholas.gm.mayo@gaa.ie">billy.mcnicholas.gm.mayo@gaa.ie</a></b>	<b>087-2497407</b>
<b>Leitrim</b>	<b>Thomas Keenan</b>	<b><a href="mailto:thomas.keenan.gm.leitrim@gaa.ie">thomas.keenan.gm.leitrim@gaa.ie</a></b>	<b>087-6591049</b>
<b>Roscommon</b>	<b>Willie Hegarty</b>	<b><a href="mailto:willie.hegarty.gm.roscommon@gaa.ie">willie.hegarty.gm.roscommon@gaa.ie</a></b>	<b>086-8356227</b>
<b>Sligo</b>	<b>Liam Óg Gormley</b>	<b><a href="mailto:liamog.gormley.gm.sligo@gaa.ie">liamog.gormley.gm.sligo@gaa.ie</a></b>	<b>086-8254420</b>
<b>Galway</b>	<b>Damien Coleman (Acting)</b>	<b><a href="mailto:damien.coleman.connacht@gaa.ie">damien.coleman.connacht@gaa.ie</a></b>	<b>087-2661695</b>





# Tuarascáil Coiste Éisteachta Connacht CLG 2020

## Déaglán Ó Buacháin (Rúnaí)

COISTE Éisteachta Connacht CLG has, as its brief in accordance with Rule 3.32 TO 2020, to adjudicate on all disciplinary matters where a hearing is prescribed and requested, relating to the enforcement of rules arising from matters under the jurisdiction of the provincial council including the activities of the Provincial Schools Committee. It also hears appeals against decisions of the various county committees under its jurisdiction.

2020 was, indeed, a year like no other in living memory, given the disruption that was visited on all walks of life, and in this regard, the GAA season was effectively shut down for the majority of the optimum playing season. Covid-19 led to an almost chaotic playing out of the season as activity resumed in July for a three-month club season, throughout the province and a number of competitions have remained unfinished as we head into 2021. This cramming of the club calendar, which was a necessity, resulted in a busy period for the Connacht Hearings Committee once the various club competitions began to unfold at a pace that left little time for breath. With restrictions we had to find new ways of doing things as technology was pressed into action. Thankfully we got the majority of our work done over the calendar year, with a couple of issues remaining outstanding, heading into 2021.

## Decisions

A breakdown of the various matters that came before the committee is shown below. It should be noted that in all cases brought before the committee, whether by individual or by club, they have been chronicled below in accordance with the county from which they originated. It should also be noted that any disciplinary case that occurs at inter county senior level, whether at Allianz Leagues or championship, these case are dealt with by the Central Hearings Committee.

Included among the appeal cases considered were three which ultimately came from clubs regarding decisions of the relevant Coiste Chontae regarding transfers. While one was dealt with purely on a procedural technicality and was upheld and referred back to the Coiste Chontae for reprocessing, it should be noted that in accordance with Rule 7.11(e) (2) to 2018 there shall be no appeal outside the county against a decision of a county committee, or one of its sub-committees with regards to transfers within a county. As such any such case may only be taken to the Disputes Resolutions Authority.

In dealing with the various cases as outlined above, members of Coiste Éisteachta Connacht who were from any county that was represented at any hearing, stood aside from adjudicating on such a given case. While this may have put a strain at times on the human resources of the committee, all cases were met with and dealt with in satisfactory manner. For this we are greatly appreciative of the efforts and sacrifices made by all members of the committee to ensure that our business was completed. On occasions this duty had to be met at short notice and we are indebted to all.

## Hearings

Contae	Submitted	Penalty set aside	Penalty Imposed	Penalty Imposed but less serious than alleged
Gaillimh	1	0	1	0
Liatroim	0	0	0	0
Maigh Eo	0	0	0	0
Roscomáin	0	0	0	0
Sligeach	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Hearings</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

## Appeals

Contae	Submitted	Appeal Upheld	Appeal Lost	Appeal Ruled out of Order or Not Allowed
Gaillimh	6	3	3	0
Liatroim	0	0	0	0
Maigh Eo	2	1	1	0
Roscomáin	1	1	0	0
Sligeach	1	1	0	0
<b>Total Appeals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

Of the above cases, one decision was appealed successfully to the CAC and ultimately was the subject of DRA 03/2020. Another decision has been challenged and at this moment remains unresolved as DRA 17/2020.

In dealing with the various cases as outlined above, members of Coiste Éisteachta Connacht, who were from any county that was represented at any hearing, stood aside from adjudicating on such a given case. While this may have put a strain at times on the human resources of the committee, all cases were met with and dealt with in a satisfactory manner. For this we are greatly appreciative of the efforts and sacrifices made by all members of the committee to ensure that our business was completed. On occasions this duty had to be met at short notice and we are indebted to all.

I wish to thank the various members listed below for their cooperation and courtesy with me as Rúnaí to the committee over the past year. It was a pleasure dealing with you all. I also wish to thank the officers of the various clubs and county committees across the province that I have had dealings with in carrying out this duty. The gratitude of the committee is also extended to **John Prenty**, Rúnaí, Comhairle Connacht CLG, for all his help and assistance over 2020. To the staff of Áras Connacht I wish to acknowledge your cooperation at all times. On behalf of Coiste Éisteachta Connacht I wish all parties associated with Connacht CLG and throughout the province a successful 2021 in whatever shape activity may unfold.

## Baill Coiste Éisteachta Connacht 2020

The following assisted with the various cases in 2020: **Seán Ó Fiannaí**, Cathaoirleach (Maigheo), **Tod Ó Mathúna** (Maigheo), **Breandán Ó Broin** (Maigheo), **Micheál Ó hUigin** (Maigheo), **Aodh Ó Rudáin** (Maigheo), **Eamon Ó Campion** (Roscomáin), **Micheál Ó Holláin** (Roscomáin), **Séamus Ó Meachair** (Roscomáin), **Eamonn Ó Maoláin** (Sligeach), **Seán Mac Samhráin** (Liatroim), **Déaglán Ó Buacháin**, Rúnaí, (Liatroim).





# Post-Primary Schools Report 2020

By Aodh Ó Rodáin

2019/'20 will be forever known as the COVID-19 year. Into the future stories will be told of the great shutdown. Like all other activities post-primary schools games came to an abrupt halt on March 12th, 2020. Because of the cooperation of schools and the availability of the Connacht GAA Centre we managed to get eighteen competitions completed.



to the 2020/21 school year with optimism. We wish everyone well and stay safe.

## Connacht GAA Championship Finals

### Hurling

Senior 'A': Presentation, Athenry, 0-9, St. Raphael's 1-10

Senior 'B': Calasactius, St. Cuan's

Senior 'C': Holy Rosary, 1-9 St. Killian's 0-8

Junior 'A': Presentation, Athenry, 3-23 Gort C.S. 0-11

Junior 'A' Shield: St. Raphael's, 2-14, Claregalway 1-06

### Football

Senior 'A': St. Gerald's 1-13, Summerhill 0-10

Senior 'B': St. Joseph's, Galway 2-11, Ballaghaderreen 1-05

Senior 'C': St. Joseph's, Foxford 1-13, Balla 0-13

Senior 'D': Dunmore C.S., Belmullet

Junior 'A': Claregalway College 0-16, St. Gerald's 2-04

## Connacht GAA League results to date

### Football

1st year 'A': Rice College 5-9, Claregalway 0-6

1st year 'B': Calasactius 2-11, Kiltimagh 6-13

Junior 'A': St. Jarlath's 0-7, Claregalway 0-6

Junior 'B': St. Joseph's Galway 2-12, Garbally 4-2

Juvenile 'A': Summerhill 6-7, St. Colman's 2-6

Juvenile 'B': Carrick-on-Shannon 1-6, St. Joseph's Galway 9-7

Senior 'A': St. Gerald's 0-12, Summerhill 1-9 (extra-time)

Senior 'B': Roscommon CBS 2-18, Claregalway College 1-10

## All-Ireland positions to date

### Hurling

Junior 'A': Presentation, Athenry 1-17, St. Kieran's 0-17

Senior 'A': Presentation, Athenry 1-18, Christian Brothers Cork 1-9

All-Ireland semi-finals: Coláiste Eoin v Presentation Athenry

St. Raphael's v St. Flannan's

Senior 'B': Calasactius 1-11, Cashel C.S. 4-22

Senior 'C': Holy Rosary 3-12, Coláiste Treasa Kanturk 2-23

### Football

Junior 'A': Claregalway 1-05 St. Brendan's Killarney 0-12 (All-Ireland S/F)

Senior 'A': Semi-Finals - St. Gerald's V Tralee CBS; Leinster V Ulster

Senior 'B': Semi-Finals - St. Joseph's Galway V Patrician Academy Mallow; Leinster V Ulster

## Connacht Schools Fixtures outstanding 17/06/2020

### Football Championship

Junior 'B', quarter-finals

Juvenile 'B' quarter-finals

Juvenile 'A' quarter-finals

1st Year 'A' quarter-finals

1st Year 'B' quarter-finals

### League

Juvenile 'C', semi-finals

Junior 'C', semi-finals

Junior 'D', semi-finals

1st Year C, quarter-finals

### Hurling

Senior 'C' Shield, semi-finals

Junior 'C' Championship, semi-finals

1st & 2nd combined very little of the rounds played

We have to thank the office staff here, and all referees who made themselves available at difficult times. Grateful appreciation to the clubs who made their pitches available in what was a rather wet and dreary autumn and winter.

A list of completed competitions and results are attached, and also the position as it stands regarding All-Ireland series and progress of the Connacht representatives. It is difficult to say at this time if the All-Ireland series can be completed. Indeed it looks doubtful if our outstanding domestic competitions can be completed for 2019/20.

Congratulations to all our winners for 2019/20. A special word of congratulations to Presentation, Athenry, on their All-Ireland Junior Hurling success. Two teams await decisions at Senior 'A' Hurling: Presentation, Athenry, and St. Raphael's, Loughrea, who are Connacht Champions. In 'B' Hurling Calasactius, Oranmore, lost out to Cashel Community School in the All-Ireland semi-final. In 'C' Hurling Holy Rosary, Mountbellew, lost out to Coláiste Treasa, Kanturk.

## Football

Junior 'A': Claregalway lost out to St. Brendan's, Killarney.

Senior 'A', 'B' & 'D' to be decided.

Senior 'C': St. Joseph's, Foxford, are in the All-Ireland final.

Disappointments all round for a crop of senior players, no Leaving Cert, no conclusion to football competitions, no proper graduations, etc. However, safety of all individuals is paramount and we hope that whatever decisions are made will work out for the best.

The present situation has given an opportunity to sporting organisations to reflect on the overall future situation. Maybe it is time to review all competitions with a view to providing a more workable schedule of games for all. I feel leagues and championships need to be looked at at all levels. Some groups and grades are rather unwieldy number wise.

The window available to post-primary schools is becoming quite small. If 2020/21 can get up and running it will be a major challenge. Schools will have serious discussions to make regarding participation in sport. Their timetables may restrict their extra-curricular activities, especially in 2020/21. It will be important for us to provide a more streamlined set of competitions that will be workable.

Thanks again to all who help in any way with the organising and playing of our games. We look forward





# Connacht Cumann na mBunscol Report



By Aodán Ó Caoimh, Rúnaí

## Officers:

Chairperson: **Gerry O’Gara** (Ros Comáin)  
 Vice-Chairman: **Micheál Mac Thiarnáin** (Liatroim)  
 Secretary: **Aodán Ó Caoimh** (Maigh Eo)  
 Treasurer: **David Dillon** (Sligeach )  
 PRO: **Mick Maye** (Sligeach)  
 Dev. Officer: **Cyril Mannion** (Gaillimh)  
 Handball Officer: **Fearghas MacLochlainn** (Gaillimh)  
 Committee Members: **Declan Kirrane** (Maigh Eo),  
**Ciarán Kennedy** (Liatroim), **Gerry Hussey** (Gaillimh)

## Coaching & Games Development

Coaching in all counties did not go ahead in 2020 due to concerns surrounding the ongoing global pandemic. Cumann na mBunscol Náisiúnta will soon (January 2021) issue guidance to all counties in relation to how we move forward with our programme of events in 2021.

## Mini-exhibition Games

In 2020 exhibition games did not go ahead at Connacht SFC match venues. Normally these games are a huge success and, in many ways, the highlight of the Allianz Cumann na mBunscol Chonnacht year in terms of promoting involvement and positive

participation in Gaelic Games.

## Allianz Cumann na mBunscol Poster Campaign

The unique connection between primary school children and the Connacht SFC was not forgotten about this year. This was primarily because of the very successful Allianz Cumann na mBunscol Poster Campaign initiative organised during November, 2020. Posters supporting the teams taking part were designed by primary school children for display at Connacht SFC games in Hyde Park and Pearse Stadium. Credit for this must go to pupils, supported by teachers and staff in our primary schools and especially to **Hugh Lynn** (Ros Comáin), **Danny Charlton** (Maigheo), **Cyril Mannion** (Gaillimh) and Comhairle Chonnacht CLG for coordinating this project.

## Connacht GAA

We are very fortunate in having an excellent working relationship with Comhairle Chonnacht CLG. This is due mainly to the great support of **Gerry McGovern**, **John Prenty**, **Adrian Hassett**, **Cathal Cregg**, **Damien Coleman** and the Games Managers in each county. The Cumann na mBunscol delegate to Connacht Council, our Cathaoirleach, **Gerry O’Gara**, keeps us informed of all issues pertaining to our organisation.



St Nathy's LGFC and Coolaney/Mullinabreena GAA Club ran a successful Pre-Season Running Programme 2020 as part of the GAA's Healthy Club Initiative.





## Buaiteoirí:

	Sa chéad áit	Sa dara háit	Sa tríú háit
Girls' U-11 Singles	Tamia Kelly Athenry GNS, Co Galway	Ciara Hallinan Clogher NS, Co Mayo	Grace Corrigan Lisacul NS, Co Roscommon
Girls' U-11 Doubles	Éabha Ní Neachtain & Niamh Ní Ghionnáin SN Sailearna, Indreabhán, Co na Gaillimhe	Holly Donovan & Saoirse Mannion Carnacon NS, Co Mayo	Aoibinn Doherty & Rachel Jones Collooney NS, Co Sligo
Boys' U-11 Singles	Oisín Ó Neachtain SN Sailearna, Indreabhán,, Co na Gaillimhe	Séamie Carthy GS de híde, Co Roscommon	Adam Jones Collooney NS, Co Sligo
Boys' U-11 Doubles	Bertie Ó Donnchadha & Diarmuid Ó Díoráin SN Rónáin, Árainn, Co na Gaillimhe	Finian Brady & Cian Brady Errew NS, Co Mayo	Micheál Greene & Seán Regan Lisacul NS, Co Roscommon
Girls' U-13 Singles	Cara Hanley SN Cholmáin, Tuairíní, Co na Gaillimhe	Shóna Kennedy Roxboro NS, Co Roscommon	Shauna Hallinan Clogher NS, Co Mayo
Girls' U-13 Doubles	Aoibhe Ní Chadhain & Síle Ní Chonghaile SN Chaomháin, Inis Oírr, Co na Gaillimhe	Eva Mitchell & Caoimhe Coleman Belcarra NS, Co Mayo	Sarah Boyle & Aoife Cattigan Lisacul NS, Co Roscommon
Boys' U-13 Singles	Mark Gillespie SN Cholmáin, Tuairíní, Co na Gaillimhe	Seán Corrigan Lisacul NS, Co Roscommon	Colin Finn Ballymote NS, Co Sligo
Boys' U-13 Doubles	Cian Ó Duilleáin & Eoin Ó Díoráin SN Rónáin, Árainn, Co na Gaillimhe	T.J. Foody & Brian Donegan Stokane NS, Co Sligo	Keith Malone & Liam Glynn Mountpleasant NS, Co Mayo

## Handball

This year's Allianz Cumann na mBunscol Chonnacht Handball Finals were held on February 22nd in Salthill, Galway. A special word of thanks to Salthill Handball Club for use of their fine facilities. Many thanks to all who gave freely of their time and refereed the games on the day. Mention must also go to Connacht Handball Council who sponsored T-shirts for all the young players. Children from schools across the province participated with all five counties being represented. A fun day was had by all and the standard of handball was very high.

## Rounders

It was decided a number of years ago that we would endeavour to better promote the game of rounders,

which at the time seemed to have been somewhat forgotten about in our primary schools. Our former Cathaoirleach, Danny Charlton (Maigh Eo), was instrumental in organising three rounders days in the Connacht Centre of Excellence with the help of Joe O'Donoghue from the National Rounders Federation. It is hoped that a Rounders Participation Day for primary school children from all Connacht counties will be held by the end of the year in the Connacht COE in Bekan.

Ár seacht míle buíochas do Chomhairle Chonnacht CLG for all their help and support in the past and Allianz Cumann na mBunscol looks forward to working together in promoting our games in a safe and enjoyable way for all primary children in the near future, le cúnadh Dé.



Castlebar, winners Mayo GAA U-12 'A' hurling league final against Westport.





# Comhairle Ardoideachais Connacht Annual Report

## Introduction

The start of the 2019/2020 academic year saw the continued promotion of Gaelic Games throughout all higher education institutions in Connacht. Teams from NUI, Galway, GMIT, IT Sligo, GMIT Mayo, GMIT Letterfrack and a number of Colleges of Further Education and ETBs across the province competed in all grades within the Comhairle Ardoideachais Electric Ireland Leagues and Championships. The institutions continue to receive extensive support from the provincial council and county executive committees in their promotion of Gaelic Games.

In March, 2020, the arrival of COVID-19 and ensuing restrictions, brought an abrupt end to third level competitions and this has not resumed since the initial lockdown was put in place. All third level institutions have moved the majority of their teaching online with only a minority of practical workshops and laboratories taking place on campus.

## Participation

As stated earlier all higher education institutions in the province actively participated in Comhairle Ardoideachais competitions in both Gaelic Football and Hurling in the 2019/2020 academic year up to the lockdown measures been put in place. Prior to Christmas the higher education leagues take place and during this period NUIG reached the final of the Senior Football League Division where they lost out narrowly to Ulster University. NUIG and GMIT Letterfrack also reached the quarter finals of Division IV of the Football League but both exited the competition at this stage. NUIG also reached the final of the Intermediate football league where they lost out to DCU.

Both NUIG and GMIT reached the semi-finals of the Freshers Division I football league but unfortunately exited the competition at this stage. NUIG won the Fresher Football League Division III title for the second year in-a-row and congratulations to them on this achievement.

In the hurling leagues, congratulations go to GMIT who captured the Division II hurling title. NUIG has teams competing in both Division I and Division III Senior hurling leagues and reached the semi-finals in Division III. IT Sligo competed in Division II of the hurling league and GMIT Letterfrack in Division III but neither progressed past the group stages. GMIT reached the final of the intermediate hurling league where they lost out to University of Limerick.

Congrats again go to GMIT who captured the Fresher Hurling Division II league defeating Trinity College in the final

In the football championships, IT Sligo took advantage of a first home draw since 2019 to record a victory over University of Limerick in the opening round of the Sigerson Cup. They faced neighbours, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, in the quarter-final with the Donegal-men coming out on top. NUIG faced reigning champions UCC in the opening round of

the Sigerson Cup and lost out narrowly by the minimum margin in an entertaining encounter in Dangan.

GMIT lost out to favourites and eventual winners, Cork Institute of Technology, in the opening round of the Trench Cup. GMIT Mayo and GMIT Letterfrack competed in the Corn na MacLeinn but did not progress past the group stages of the competition. NUIG and GMIT took part in the intermediate football championship with NUIG progressing to the final where they lost out to DCU. In the Connacht Junior Football Championship NUIG beat IT Sligo in the final and progressed to the All-Ireland semi-final where they lost out to UCD. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 restrictions the All-Ireland Final in this competition did not take place.

In Freshers Football the competitions both GMIT and NUIG competed in the Fresher 1 Championship with GMIT exiting at the group stages and NUIG progressing to the quarter-final where they lost out by the narrowest of margins to UCC. Again, this competition was cancelled at the semi-final stage due to the Covid-19 restrictions. IT Sligo participated in the Fresher 2 Championship and had progressed to the semi-finals of the competition where they were due to play IT Tralee, but the competition was cancelled due to the Covid-19 restrictions that came into force in March. NUIG also participated in the Fresher 'B' Championship and made it to the final of this competition where they lost out to UCD. GMIT also participated in this competition but did not progress past the group stages. IT Sligo also participated in the Fresher 'C' Championship where they lost out in the first round to Ulster University.

In hurling, GMIT and NUIG were both in the Fitzgibbon Cup for 2020. GMIT did not progress past the group stage of the competition following a loss to IT Carlow and a UCD. NUIG progressed to the quarter-final following a win over CIT in the group stages. In the quarter-final they lost out to eventual winner's IT Carlow in a high scoring encounter.

IT Sligo and GMIT Letterfrack took part in the Fergal Maher Cup with IT Sligo coming out on top in a clash between the two sides in the group stages. Unfortunately, were defeat against the Cadets in the group stages that end both sides involvement in this competition.

NUIG also participated in the Intermediate Hurling Championship and progressed to the quarter-final courtesy of a 17-point win over DCU. Defeat to UCD in Belfield ended their involvement in this competition.

NUIG and GMIT took part in the Fresher 1 Hurling Championship with GMIT exiting at the group stage. NUIG progressed to the semi-final of this competition where they were defeated by University of Limerick. Again, this competition was not completed due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

GMIT and NUIG competed in the Fresher 'B' Championship with GMIT coming out on top in the group match between the two local rivals.







Unfortunately defeat to DCU ended both colleges participation in this competition at the group stage.

As can be seen in this section of the report our colleges play a huge number of games over the course of an academic year. This involves a large volume of organisation, training and logistics to ensure this happens smoothly. Great credit must go to all the coaches, club officers and GPOs in the colleges for their efforts in organising and preparing teams. Congratulations to all who were successful in their respective competitions.

## College Bursaries

The bursary scheme has been in place for twelve years and awards members of the association who are active members in their higher education club. In all forty-four promising young Connacht GAA players and administrators have been included in the province's annual bursary scheme for 2020. All five Connacht counties are represented in the initiative which provides financial assistance to students who have displayed potential and commitment on the Gaelic Games front. The provincial council are to be commended for their continued support of this scheme. A full list of recipients for 2020 can be found at the following link:

<https://connachtgaa.ie/news/connacht-gaa-student-bursary-awards-2020/>

## Games Promotion Officers (GPOs)

The ongoing efforts of the three GPO's working in the higher education institutions in the province must be acknowledged ... **Damien Curley** (GMIT), **Michael Harte** (IT Sligo) and **Michael O'Connor** (NUI, Galway) provide crucial support and guidance to the GAA clubs in each of their institutions. Credit should also go to **Nigel Jennings**, Sports Officer in GMIT Mayo, for his efforts in promoting Gaelic Games there. They ensure maximum effort is put into the promotion of Gaelic Games within the institutions and ensure the smooth running of the clubs. The institutions and the provincial Council are to be commended for their past and ongoing support of the GPOs initiative.

## Challenges/The Future

There are still significant challenges facing our constituent institutions many of which I addressed in last year's report but are still relevant now. Covid-19 has provided the biggest challenge to our institutions in how they conduct their daily business of educating students. Many institutions have moved the majority of their teaching activities online with students only attending campus at a minimal level for mandatory workshops and practical laboratories. Many first year students have never attended campus. This has created significant issues for our GAA clubs in the institutions with no training or matches taking place since March, 2020, and with the incidence rate for the virus on the increase, it is highly unlikely that any competition will take place for the 2020/2021 academic year. This will lead to difficulties going forward with engagement and participation of students in GAA activities in subsequent academic years.

The continued linking of championship status to league positions in the Sigerson Cup is challenging for some of our smaller units as the higher education

league starts while county and provincial club championships are ongoing and can result in teams been without key playing members for what can be crucial league fixtures. The move to play the relegation fixtures as part of the Sigerson fixtures in January has alleviated this somewhat and is to be welcomed.

The condensing of the Sigerson Cup fixtures to the month of January is also a challenge as the competition is now starting prior to the return of students to colleges following Semester 1 exams and this makes preparation of teams difficult for some units. The move of the under-20 inter-county football competitions back to the January/February/March window at the same time as Fresher competitions are taking place, means than a number of players will be required to play two games per week and will leave minimum time for the preparation of Fresher teams.

With regards to eligibility to play in higher education competitions, debate continues to take place. The changing landscape around the types of courses been delivered by our institutions has raised a number of interesting and challenging scenarios over the last few years. Institutions are continually offering new avenues of learning to students with online learning programmes, new type apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes increasing in popularity. A fresh look may need to take place at the eligibility rules for Comhairle Ardoideachais competitions in the near future to reflect this changing landscape.

Recruitment of players continues to be a challenge. Increased competitiveness in the CAO system has seen reduced student numbers in several of our constituent colleges. Comhairle Ardoideachais Connacht would ask counties in the province to highlight the advantages for their elite players to study locally. It cuts down on their travel time for training and matches and should increase their ability to ensure both academic and sporting success. Our constituent colleges offer as wide and varied a range of courses as institutions outside of the province. These courses stand up to scrutiny in terms of their quality and relevance when compared to any others and the graduates are highly regarded in terms of employability by the top employers in our region. The institutions continue to support academic and sporting achievement by offering generous scholarships. Comhairle Ardoideachais Connacht asks the provincial council delegates to promote our local institutions as much as possible.

In summary, while challenges exist on an ongoing basis, Gaelic Games were alive and well and prospering in higher education institutions in the province pre-Covid and with the dedication of many officers, volunteers and GPOs, will be again once it is safe to do so for all concerned. 'Thank you' to the provincial council for their ongoing support. Special thanks go to provincial secretary, **John Prenty** and to **Adrian Hassett** for their, advice and support to our clubs over the last year. Thanks to all the hard-working volunteers and officers in all our clubs for the trojan work they do in promoting and ensuring Gaelic Games continue to be to the fore in our third level institutions.

On behalf of Comhairle Ardoideachais Connacht I wish you all a safe, healthy and successful 2021.

**Pádraig Mac Dhorcai**  
Comhairle Ardoideachais Connacht





# Pitch Maintenance Work Group Report, 2020/'21

By Hugh Rudden

**T**HE National Pitch Maintenance Work Group continue with the work of advising clubs and counties on the care and maintenance of their pitches. It has been a difficult time trying to hold meetings and devise ways of getting the message of the need for care and maintenance out to counties and clubs. Our meetings are all video meetings held via *Microsoft Teams*. While we are wondering what we would do without all this modern technology, some of us are wondering what to do with it!

A document was produced on essential maintenance during Covid-19 and circulated to counties and clubs via county secretaries and provincial council secretaries. A copy of this document is attached to this report. New synthetic standards were completed after a couple of year's research. These new standards are currently in Croke Park awaiting permission for publication. At the moment a *webinar* is being produced on the care and maintenance of pitches. It is expected that this *webinar* will be available to clubs and counties shortly. Pitch construction is a major investment for counties and clubs. It is important that proposed new sites and existing sites be thoroughly investigated and surveyed before any work is undertaken.

All club and county grounds should be of a good standard and well presented for the hosting of our games. Teams are prepared to the highest standards and a good surface will help them perform to the highest standard. Too often pitches are abused in training and warm-ups before games which makes them unsuitable and dangerous for the playing of a game. Respect for grounds and the work of the groundsman will have to start somewhere. I am sure it is in the interest of all stakeholders, players, managers, club and county officials that their playing field is the best it can be.

## Natural turf surfaces for Gaelic games - essential maintenance during COVID-19

In line with the GAA's return to action protocol it is recommended that clubs continue to adhere to the current government advice and refrain from organising on-field activity which is likely to remain in place until 20th July at the earliest. Taking this in to consideration the maintenance of our pitches remains important so that they are of the highest standard when required for play. This also represents a potential opportunity to improve the quality of our fields. It is appreciated that many clubs are facing financial challenges but the pitch is the club's biggest asset and should not be neglected as to do so can result in a significant deterioration which would demand greater investment in the future.

During maintenance it is important that both clubs and contractors involved are fully aware of their obligations for the health, safety, and welfare of those involved during the current crisis.

Clubs are therefore encouraged to consult the latest advice from the Health Service Executive (Republic of Ireland) and from the Public Health authority (Northern Ireland).

April has been very dry, mild, and sunny, with rainfall below average across all parts of the country. Whilst air temperatures have been above average, there have been ground frosts recorded at a significant number of weather stations which has impacted upon spring growth. Sheltered, frost free sites will have seen more growth than those exposed to the harsher north to north easterlies that have been a prominent feature of the month. All of this will impact upon maintenance.

### 1. Grass Cutting

The resumption of natural growth will be site dependant, but all sites should have seen some growth by now. The sward should be kept topped to maintain good density (i.e. not allowed to grow excessively long). When cutting plan to remove no more than one third of the leaf area with each successive cut.

Mowing frequency will vary from site to site and depend upon growth rates, there is some agronomic benefit to reduce the mowing frequency or to allow the grass to grow a little longer than usual when the surface is not being prepared for play, striping for presentation is not a prerequisite when not in use.





Longer grass is less susceptible to drought stress and will develop a deeper root system. If allowed to grow too long it will set seed and become thin which will make it more difficult to bring the surface back in to a playable condition.

To return the surface to a playable condition, increase mowing frequency and gradually reduce the height of cut over a couple of weeks or three to four cuts.

Waste facilities may be closed so clipping disposal needs to be considered, if clippings are allowed fly, ensure that they are evenly dispersed, and clumping avoided.

## **2. Fertiliser**

Grass will grow without the application of fertiliser, clay soils have a natural abundance of nutrient, sandy soils, or sand carpet pitches less so. Applications of nutrient will promote more growth which may be unnecessary as fields do not have to recover from wear when not in use. Only consider an application of nutrient when natural growth resumes and in showery conditions to avoid waste. Applied in dry conditions there is a risk of scorch. If rainfall does not occur within 24 hours of application, then it should be watered in.

Consider the amount of nitrogen applied to avoid excessive growth as this will increase the mowing demand.

## **3. Scarification**

The requirement for scarification will be site specific depending upon the amount of organic matter and debris that exists at the turf base. Removing this helps to stimulate growth from the base of the sward and improve surface drainage rates.

Whilst many sportsground contractors have appropriate tractor mounted scarifiers, sweepers and collectors designed specifically for this task, spring tine rakes and a chain harrow can also be used to good effect on a limited budget. The objective is to pull out as much of the debris or weakly rooted plants at the base of the sward as possible and to stimulate sward regeneration.

## **4. Repairs**

If there are thin or weak areas, they could be repaired with seed or turf. If seeding, form a seedbed by lightly loosening/ raking the surface. Seed can be broadcast and worked in to the surface by forking. Keep the surface damp to encourage germination and establishment. There will be enough nutrient within the seed for initial germination but thereafter some nutrient may be applied, taking care to avoid scorching the seedlings.

Turf may or may not be available from local suppliers and may have to be sourced on site. Any turfed areas will require regular (daily) irrigation/ rainfall until the turf develops a decent root system.

A more general overseeding should be considered given the timeframe currently available, this presents a great opportunity to improve the density of the existing sward and its botanical composition. Use a seed mixture of two or three cultivars of perennial

ryegrass only. The cultivars chosen should be highly rated in Table S1 of Turfgrass Seed Seeding rates will be dependent upon existing density but apply at a minimum of kg/ha through a suitable mechanical seeder in two directions. If the ground is devoid of grass then the rate should be increased to kg/ha.

## **5. Top Dressing**

With the resumption of growth top dressing is useful particularly following scarification to improve surface levels and surface drainage. Often undertaken as part of a renovation programme, a lighter application of a sand dressing in the spring/early summer can be extremely valuable and should be made if finances allow.

A quality SportsTurf sand should be used, as a guide the following table provides some guidance on the depth of sand that would be expected to be achieved given the rate of application. Rate of application Approximate depth (mm) 10 tonnes/ha 0.6 mm 50 tonnes/ha 3.0 mm 100 tonnes/ha 6.0 mm.

## **6. Aeration**

The purpose of aeration is to relieve compaction that accrues due to usage. Compaction has a negative impact on pitch performance, it adversely affects the pitch's ability to drain effectively by inhibiting the movement of water as well as having a negative impact on the grass plants ability to function properly by hampering the movement of grass roots through the soil.

Localised hand forking to areas of high wear could be undertaken to help sward recovery from damage due to pitch activity or wear.

Overall deep aeration in the form of Verti-Draining is one of the most effective aeration techniques and more soil loosening may be possible when the field is out of play for a prolonged period. If soil conditions permit, then deep aeration should be completed.

## **7. Weed Control**

This would only be contemplated when the sward is actively growing, normally during the period of May to September and when the grass is not subject to drought. Avoid herbicide applications when there are young seedlings within the sward as these will be more susceptible to damage from the herbicide. Occasional weeds can be tolerated or removed by hand, otherwise spot treatment or an overall application of herbicide might have to be planned for.

## **8. Machinery and Equipment Maintenance**

This should be completed as required to ensure that essential equipment is kept safe and operational. Given the ever-changing situation there may be a requirement to review, update and reissue this guidance. This guidance is of a general nature but should any club wish to discuss their requirements and site-specific approach in more detail then please contact the National Pitch Maintenance Workgroup.

*Version 2. National Pitch Maintenance Workgroup 11th May 2020 - email: [nationalpitchmaintenanceworkgroup@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalpitchmaintenanceworkgroup@gaa.ie)*





# Tuairisc Coiste Scór Chonnacht, 2020

**I**S cúis mór áthais domsa an tuairisc seo ar imeachtaí Scór sa chúige a chur faoi bhráid na comhdhála. Gabhann Coiste Scór Chonnacht buíochas leis na h-Oifigigh Cultúir & Teanga, Coistí Scór na gContaetha agus go háirithe Oifigigh na gContaetha agus an Cúige a chabhraigh linn i rith na bliana.

2020 saw just one All-Ireland title come to the province with a win at Scór na nÓg level by Mainistir Chnoc Muaidhe, Co. na Gaillimhe (sa chomórtas Rince Seit). Great credit is due to all our representatives at All-Ireland level who performed with distinction in the INEC, Killarney, Co. Kerry.

The Connacht Finals of Scór na nÓg were, once again, held in a packed Town Hall, Claremorris. The standard in all competitions was extremely high. Coiste Scór, Chonnacht, would like to thank everyone who helped make the event such a success: the venue organisers, the stewards, the ticket sellers and to all others involved on the day.

The Connacht Finals of Scór Sinsir were scheduled to take place in Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, on March 21st, 2020. However, the day fell victim to the effects of Covid-19. It is still intended to run the Connacht Finals and indeed the All-Ireland Scór Sinsir Final when public health advice allows.

‘Virtual Scór’ has been a source of tremendous entertainment, distraction and fun since last March. **Aodán Ó Braonáin**, Chairman of the National Scór Committee, and **Rúnaí**, **Jamie Ó Tuama** (Páirc an Chrócaigh), worked tirelessly in keeping Scór to the fore in this novel way.

The absence of our native field sports and club activities earlier in the year had left an indelible void in the lives of many and presented an obstacle to the natural expression of our Irishness offered through Cumann Luthchleas Gael. ‘Virtual Scór’ has hugely helped to counteract this void for many Gaels all over the country and beyond, and so Connacht Scór decided to celebrate Scór participation in Connacht during these unprecedented times and represent the

## Buaiteoirí na bliana 2020 ag Scór Chonnacht

Comórtas	Scór na nÓg
Rince Foirne	Cluain Cearbháin Co. Mhaigh Eo.
Amhránaíocht Aonair	Eibhlín Ní Chatháin, Mainistir Cnoic Muaidhe, Co. na Gaillimhe.
Aithriseoireacht / Scéalaíocht	Éimhín Mac Giolla Dhuinn, Ail Finn, Co. Ros Comáin.
Ceol Uirlise	Baile an Tobair, Co. Mhaigh Eo.
Nuachleas	Naomh Dominic, Co. Ros Comáin.
Bailéad Ghrúpa	Mainistir Cnoic Muaidhe, Co. na Gaillimhe.
Rince Seit	Mainistir Cnoic Muaidhe, Co. na Gaillimhe.

province in Virtual Scór through a rendition of “The West’s Awake.” It was launched on May 15th 2020 on the Connacht G.A.A. Facebook page. This memorable rendition of a song synonymous with wonderful sporting days for western teams, features over thirty musicians and singers from fourteen clubs across the province.

In addition to the above, Scór Chonnacht held online quizzes for almost three months which had a National audience and also contributed many songs, recitations and tunes to the national call for online talent. Huge appreciation must be given to our quiz masters and all virtual participants.

Tá súil agam go rachaidh Scór agus ár dteanga i láidreacht sna blianta amuigh romhainn.

**Tomás O Muiri**  
Rúnaí



16 February 2019; Connacht team from Corofin, Galway, Caoimhe Kelly, Patrick Egan, Ryan Buckley, Eimhín Mulligan and Katie Harte competing in the Ceol Uirlise category during the Cream of The Crop at Scór na nÓg All Ireland Finals at St Gerards De La Salle Secondary School in Castlebar, Co Mayo.

Photo by Eóin Noonan/Sportsfile





# Coiste na Reiteoiri

“Good people and deserve every reward”

Chairman: **Marty Duffy**  
 Director of Refereeing: **Seán Martin**  
 (Roscommon)  
 Secretary: **Adrian Hassett** (Operations  
 Manager, Connacht GAA)  
 Tutor Co-ordinator: **Francis Finan** (Sligo)  
 County Referee Administrators:  
**Eamon O’Grady** (Leitrim)  
**John Gilmartin** (Sligo)  
**Haulie Beirne** (Roscommon) outgoing  
**Stephen Cahalan** (Galway)  
**Denis Harrington** (Mayo)



well ahead of the other provinces.

## Connacht Academy Referees

The strain on our refereeing numbers is always high in normal times. Many of the academy referees from 2019 have stepped up and are now a valuable part of our panel. 2020 has put a hold on our academy progression with no opportunity been afforded to us to complete our three-year plan. The positive to be taken from this is that the new referees that entered

our academy programme have now an extra year’s experience under their belts at club level that should hold them in good stead. Once they are in our system, they will receive constant monitoring and mentoring to ensure they reach the level to reflect their abilities. We have a brilliant team of mentors in the province that invest huge time in developing these up-and-coming referees.

## 2020 Review

It was a year like no other. We started the year with great enthusiasm with goals to achieve for the final year of our three-year plan. The best laid plans . . . we completed our in-service courses in February in all five counties and in London. We ran off our u-20 championship in February and then all came to a halt. Adrian kept in touch with the provincial referees throughout the lockdown. We supplied them with fitness programmes and information to keep them going through the lean months. They were also getting output from **Donal Smyth** from Croke Park. All our lads were heavily involved in their respective club championships and myself, **Seán Martin** and **Adrian** took the opportunity to go and see the lads in action in the later end of their club championships.

Many were involved in the remaining rounds of the AFL and AHL in various roles when things got moving again. We selected our panel for the minor championship and brought them together in the COE for training and a fitness test. To their great credit, every one of the lads selected came back to us in great shape and with high fitness levels.

After another break we got to run off the minor championships in very unusual circumstances. Again, great credit goes to the referees involved for the high standard of effort and readiness, to play their part to a high standard.

## Referee Mentoring

We have a brilliant team of mentors in Connacht that invest huge time in developing our up-and-coming referees. At national level, **John Horan** has expressed a strong desire to form a National Mentoring Programme for referees at all levels. A blueprint has been submitted for approval which has been stalled because of the current circumstances. It will be based broadly on the mentoring system Connacht has in place for many years. It is proposed it will be trialled with the National Referees Panel members at first, then being rolled out to the provinces and county level in time. Mentoring and Academies are some of the areas that Connacht are

## Referee In-Service & Recruitment

In January and February Referee In-service Courses were held in all five counties and also with the London referees. The in-service course for the New York referees was done over Zoom. A big ‘thank you’ to **Micky Quigg** for his help and interest in everything refereeing in NY.

The first modules of the New Referee Courses took place in February and March, but events overtook us, and we were unable to finish the courses under instruction from Croke Park.

Hopefully, our recruitment officers in each county will be working throughout the province in the months to come to maximise recruitment numbers and retention of our recently trained referees. This is a huge task and probably one of most challenging issues that the Association as a whole faces. It is a task that I would ask all county officers to get behind and drive forward in their respective counties.

## National Referees

We have three referees on the National Football Championship Panel, unfortunately both **Paddy Neilan** and **James Molloy** had long-term injuries and were not available for appointment, with one, **Barry Judge**, on the National Linesman panel. In Hurling we had two referees on the championship panel. Again, **Alan Kelly** had an injury that kept him out of action; while **Liam Gordon** cemented his position on the championship panel with some very solid displays throughout the championship. **Shane Hynes** also had a long-term injury that required surgery, I wish him a speedy recovery and I have no doubt he will continue his steady progression on his return later in 2021.





We will continue to support all our national level referees within the province and provide them with the backup, support and appointments to give them the best chance of achieving their goals.

### National Referee Development Plan

This document is the blueprint for the future of refereeing over the next five years. It is an ambitious document launched in late 2019 but its rollout has been stalled by the events of the year. There are some interesting proposals, when and if they are implemented, they will streamline the pathway for referees from club to provincial to national level. I do think that Croke Park need to commit more resources, and in-particular, manpower, to drive this forward. One man in HQ with an already huge workload cannot make this happen with the speed and enthusiasm required.

### Acknowledgement

As I finish up my three-year term, I would like to thank Provincial President, **Gerry McGovern**, for his help and support during my term and for giving me the opportunity to experience this role. His first-hand experience of refereeing has made him a valuable asset in the overall process and his knowledge and experience is appreciated.

On behalf of our committee, all our provincial referees, and myself, I would like to thank our Provincial Secretary, **John Prenty**. He has been most supportive in everything I have done throughout my term. With that support our overall refereeing setup is as good as any in the organisation. He is a great sounding board for ideas and his insight and experience is invaluable.

I would like to say a special ‘thank you’ to **Seán Martin**, our Director of Refereeing. We have worked extremely well together over the past three years and it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work alone side him.

I would like to thank the five County Referee Administrators within the province who have worked closely with me over the past three year. I have thrown a lot of extra work their way with many new structures put in place. To a man, they have responded in the most positive fashion and all transitions made seamlessly. I also want to acknowledge the huge workload that each does within his own county, it should be remembered and acknowledged.

My thanks also to **Adrian Hassett**, Provincial Operations Manager, who is a very efficient secretary of our various committees and undertakes a huge amount of work on our behalf.

‘Thank you’ also to Séamus Burns who is a valuable asset to all the referees in the province. He has done huge work around fitness, training programmes and video analysis.

My appreciation to each and every member of Connacht Council for the courtesy and support they have given me over my three year term.

My final acknowledgement is for the referees themselves. I have demanded much from them in many different ways, fitness and training, education and a general demands to be the best panel of referees they can possibly be. They have risen to the challenge at every juncture. I wish each and every one the absolute best for the years to come.

**Marty Duffy**  
Connacht Referees Chairman



Referee John Niland with team captains Tracey Leonard of Galway, left, and Niamh Kelly of Mayo during the 2019 TG4 Connacht Ladies Senior Football Final replay between Galway and Mayo at the LIT Gaelic Grounds in Limerick.

Photo by Brendan Moran/Sportsfile





# Connacht Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee Report 2020

By Denis O'Boyle

ROSCOMMON: Oliver Donagher, Noel Collins, Barry Lowe, Sharon McManus and Frank Egan.  
Rounders: Peter Lyons.

**T**HE year 2020 was a year like no other with the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. As a result no actual or virtual meeting took place for the Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee. However, Webinars and Zoom became the norm and many such meetings at national level took place. Throughout the year the members of the Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and Games for All Committee were kept updated on a regular basis through webinars and by communications from **Ger McTavish**, GAA Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

The Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee was formed in 2019 arising from the amalgamation of the Connacht Games for All Committee and the Connacht Health and Wellbeing Committee.

## Membership of the Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee

The membership of the Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee 2020 is as follows:

Chairperson: **Mattie Kilroy**

Secretary: **Denis O'Boyle**

Connacht: GAA President: **Gerry McGovern**,

Connacht Secretary: **John Prenty** and  
Connacht Games Manager, **Cathal Cregg**.

GALWAY: **Christy Tyrrell, Iggy Clarke, Ruth Mulkerrins** and **Justin Campbell**.

LEITRIM: **Terence Boyle, Barbara Loughlin-Byrne, Pat Feely** and **Michelle Fanning**.

MAYO: **Niall Dunne, Mary Prenty** and **Ray McNamara**

SLIGO: **Tim Hynes** and **Trevor Coen**.

## Rationale for the establishment of the Connacht GAA Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee

A Provincial Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee in Connacht and Munster only, has been formed to reflect the inclusion of Games for All programme within the remit of the Community and Health Department in Croke Park.

The move is intended to facilitate greater collaboration between two growing and closely related fields of work in the Association. The amalgamated committee incorporates the membership of the previously stand-alone Provincial Health and Wellbeing Committee and Provincial GAA for All committee. It will operate until the end of the national presidency of An Uachtarán **John Horan** in 2021. Ulster and Leinster will continue with stand-alone committees for the same period, with a report then made to Coiste Bainistíochta with a recommendation as to the preferred future model. In this regard, all of Connacht's five County GAA for All Coordinators, namely, **Christy Tyrrell**, Galway, **Pat Feely**, Leitrim **Ray McNamara**, Mayo, **Barry Lowe**, Roscommon and **Tim Hynes**, Sligo, were requested to forward their opinions and recommendations, outlining the many pros and cons of our amalgamated committee in Connacht, to the National GAA for All Committee for their consideration.

While 2020 was an unprecedented year for all GAA activities, the following report will look at some of the actions and events which took place in association with the Connacht Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee during 2020.



Students from the third level sector were acknowledged by Connacht GAA in the annual student bursary awards at a ceremony which took place in the Connacht GAA Centre on 3rd January.





# Health & Well Being Report

By Mattie Kilroy

**T**HE year 2020 has been a very strange year with few meetings to report on but it is noteworthy to record the fantastic work of many volunteers towards their elderly neighbours during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Shopping for groceries and visits to the pharmacy for medicines was common practice by clubs and their members in the towns and in the country. Helping the elderly to keep in touch with family members at home and abroad by Zoom was a vital service provided by club members. Helping elderly to tune in on Zoom to a local Mass was indeed commendable and gave our house bound something to look forward to on a weekly and some cases a daily basis. Helping elderly to get to medical appointments when family or relatives were unable to travel was appreciated by all.

Most notably the provinces healthy clubs were to the fore, once again, encouraging members to stay exercised by organising virtual events, walks, runs and challenges of all sorts. Many clubs organised virtual runs from Malin Head to Mizzen Head or Croke Park to their county town and went on line with their weekly lotto to keep things ticking over and the involvement of membership.

We must commend the Croke Park team and personnel on their many Webinars and training programmes on zoom and teams which helped those interested to tune-in on a weekly basis. Compliments to our Secretary, *Denis O'Boyle*, who circulated information with precision. Our thanks to the county



representatives for their reports to their county conventions and helping to keep to the fore the ideas and ideals of Health & Well Being. We all hope for the Vaccine in early 2021 to help us get back on stream in the promotion of such work.

## What is GAA for All?

The first line of the GAA official guide spells out how the GAA reaches into every corner of Ireland and many communities around the globe. In doing this, the GAA is fully committed to the principles of inclusion and diversity at all levels. The aim of the GAA is to offer an inclusive, diverse and welcoming environment for everyone. Inclusion means people having a sense of belonging, of being comfortable in being part of something they value. Inclusion is a choice. Diversity means being aware of accommodating and celebrating difference. Inclusion and Diversity in many ways go together. Real inclusion reflects diversity, i.e., it aims to offer that sense of belonging to everyone, irrespective of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race or minority community and/or disability.

## National Inclusion Fitness Day 2020

The GAA proudly took part in the National Inclusion Fitness Day on Wednesday, 23rd September, 2020, which was the flagship event for Sport Ireland and European Week of Sport. More than 120 GAA clubs from across Ireland, Britain, Europe, Canada, USA and the Middle East took part.



Mayo GAA celebrate National Inclusion Fitness Day - included in the photograph are Co. Mayo GAA's Billy Mc Nicholas, Martin Costello, and Eoin Sweeney and Ray McNamara, Co. Mayo GAA for All Coordinator.







Whether they were events that were held online, or in pods due to restrictions or in events that have been in part held back until later in the year, the goal and the message was the same – *that a true GAA club is an inclusive GAA club with a place for everyone and embodies the manifesto that the GAA is Where We All Belong.*

On Wednesday, 23rd September, 2020, Mayo GAA and Mayo Sports Partnership teamed with participants from the National Learning Network and Rehab Care to celebrate National Inclusion Fitness Day at the Astro Turf in Castlebar Mitchels GAA Club in the shadow of MacHale Park.

## GAA for All National Inclusion Training Series

To help all our GAA members keep up-to-date, a GAA for All National Inclusion Training Series consisting of five webinars took place during 2020 and provided lots of useful information and advice.

These five webinars were as follows:

1. GAA for All explained, with **Aoife Reilly**, GAA Healthy Club Coordinator; **Ger McTavish**, GAA Diversity & Inclusion Officer; **Shane McCann**, Ulster Safeguarding Manager; **Paul Callaghan**, Ulster Regional Development Officer, and **Seán O'Brien**, GAA Aspire Student and this webinar took place on Tuesday, 3rd November.
2. Autism Friendly Workshop, with **Shane McCann** took place on Tuesday, 10th November.
3. Adapted Session Planning, with **Aoife Reilly** and took place on Tuesday, 17th November.
4. Programmes & Initiatives, with **Paul Callaghan** took place on Tuesday, 24th November.
5. GAA Inclusion Fitness Day case studies and communication, with **Ger McTavish** and took place on Tuesday, 1st December.

Series two of the GAA for All National Inclusion Training will commence in February, 2021. In the meantime if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact **Ger McTavish** in Croke Park.

## Wheelchair Hurling 2020

As Galway was selected as the 2020 European Capital of Culture, Co. Galway GAA agreed to host the first round of the *M. Donnelly Interprovincial Wheelchair Hurling League* and arrangements were put in place by the Co. Galway GAA for All Coordinator, **Christy Tyrrell**, in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Claregalway, for Saturday, 18th April 2020. However, this was not to be due to the Covid-19 pandemic and while no Wheelchair Hurling competition took place in 2020 it is hoped that Round 1 of the *M. Donnelly Interprovincial Wheelchair Hurling League* will take place in IT Sligo on Saturday, 10th July 2021.

Wheelchair hurling was first developed by GAA member by school principal, **Tim Maher**, in 1994, in order for the game of hurling to be enjoyed by everyone regardless of their physical ability. Tim created the game to better enable those with disabilities in his school to fully participate in the GAA games and open our games to people of all abilities. Wheelchair hurling required the adaptation of the rules of standard hurling. In wheelchair hurling each team is made up of six players and operates with similar rules to field hurling. Both men and women of all ages can take part on the one team and it is a game for everybody. The competition also selects an All-Star team at the end of each season. The organisation of wheelchair hurling consists of into four provincial teams namely: Connacht, Ulster, Leinster, and Munster. Two major competitions takes place each year namely, a League and an All Ireland Championship Final.

## An International dimension for Wheelchair Hurling

Furthermore, an International dimension to wheelchair hurling took place last year, when the first ever GAA team was selected to represent Ireland in a Floorball competition against teams from Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United



Connacht GAA Wheelchair Hurling Team and their Coaches, front row, left to right: Peter Egan (Kilmovee - Mayo); Tom Fleming (Charlestown - Mayo); Shane Curran (Moycullen - Galway); Stephen Melvin (Owenmore Gaels - Sligo); Aidan Hynes (Calry - Sligo); Sarah Cregg (Western Gaels - Roscommon), and Pat Carty (Tourlestrane - Sligo). Missing from photograph is Niall Dempsey (Athenry, Galway). Back row, left to right: Cathal Cregg, Connacht GAA Games Manager, Connacht Wheelchair Hurling Coaches, Adrian Hession, Tim Hynes and Thaigh Morley and Connacht GAA for All Coordinator, Denis O'Boyle.





**Launch of the first ever International Wheelchair Hurling squad in Croke Park, front row, left to right: Munster’s James McCarthy, Vice-captain and Connacht’s Pat Carty who was appointed Captain. Back row, left to right: Denis O’Boyle, Connacht GAA for All Representative; Thaigh Morley, Assistant Team Coach, John Horan, GAA President; Martin Donnelly, sponsor; Mattie Kilroy, Chairman Connacht GAA Health & Wellbeing, and Games for All Committee, Edel Carty, Colin Regan, GAA Community & Health Manager.**

States of America. The team was sponsored by MyClubShop.ie, owned by long-standing wheelchair hurling sponsor Martin Donnelly. The game of Floorball is a game that is being considered for addition to the list of sports in the Paralympics and differs chiefly from wheelchair hurling in that players cannot rise the ball. As well as representing Ireland in the Floorball international, the GAA team also hosted

a wheelchair hurling demonstration during their stay in Breda, The Netherlands.

Our own Connacht GAA player, **Pat Carty**, was named as captain of the first ever International Wheelchair Hurling team. Connacht GAA was represented by Captain of the team, **Pat Carty**, (team captain), **Stephen Melvin**, **Aidan Hynes** all from Co. Sligo.



**Front, left to right: Connacht GAA are represented on the first Irish Wheelchair Hurling/ Floorball team by Stephen Melvin (Owenmore Gaels), Captain of the team, Pat Carty (Tourlestarne) and Aidan Hynes (Calry St Josephs) all from Co. Sligo. Back, left to right: Denis O’Boyle, Edel Carty and Coach, Thaigh Morley**

### Responding to Racism Workshop

On Thursday, 27th February, a pilot workshop presented by **Ger McTavish**, Diversity & Inclusion Officer for the GAA entitled Responding to Racism for club executives, officials and members to highlight this issue of racism on and off the field of play in our GAA clubs and how best to handle complaints going forward. The GAA have compiled a suggested response to racism and the pilot workshop included both an education piece and procedures to follow should any future incidents arise. This Workshop took place in the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence and both **Mattie Kilroy** and **Denis O’Boyle** were in attendance representing Connacht GAA.

GAA Diversity & Inclusion officer **Ger McTavish** explained that “Inclusion is about making a difference. Inclusivity is a movement, a move to include. Being truly inclusive is living our GAA motto, ‘Where we all belong’. Ger continued by stating that: “This work takes many forms. It ranges from ensuring that our policies and practices support the cultural integration and social inclusion of people from across Ireland’s diverse ethnic population, to making sure that all





**Connacht Boys and Girls teams and their team officials in Croke Park last year for the Football for All Competition. The GAA President, John Horan, was present to meet and greet all the players, mentors and supporters, and complimented all who helped out, for their time, enthusiasm and passion.**

Gaelic games are adapted for people with different abilities.”

The workshop was filmed by Poolbeg Production Company and they conducted an interview with Mayo and Ballaghadereen’s *Shairoze’s Akram*, who also took part in the workshop and told his unique story of his involvement and love for Gaelic Games. RTÉ later showed this television documentary called *New Gaels* on the 9th September, 2020.

### **Football for All**

*M. Donnelly GAA Football for ALL Interprovincial Finals* takes place normally in September, delivered in partnership with Leitrim native, **Richie Doran**, and the Irish Special Schools Sports Council (ISSSC). The ISSSC is a voluntary organisation that provides sporting and cultural activities in special schools, as designated by the Department of Education & Science.

Children with mild-general learning disabilities compete in this 9-a-side Gaelic Football tournament. The players represent the regions of Connacht, Dublin, Munster, North Leinster, South Leinster and Ulster and are drawn from fifteen different special schools.

Each squad comprises twelve boys and twelve girls who have been selected from regional trials to play on the hallowed turf of Croke Park. The GAA’s support for the *M. Donnelly GAA Football for All Interprovincial Finals* reflects the Association’s ongoing commitment to engaging with special schools, as set out in the new GAA Strategic Plan, *Fís Shoiléir 2018-2021*.

Increase participation in GAA games offer a fun, healthy, social outlet for all abilities to the games and connect or re-connect people with their local GAA club. It also allows opportunities for everyone in the

community to get involved with the games. To allow all participants the opportunity to develop their skills and team play in a safe and control environment.

Sligo GAA for All coordinator, **Tim Hynes**, explains that this initiative is providing “Football for All” for pupils from St Joseph’s School, Ballytivnan, Sligo, with meaningful and enjoyable football through the local Calry St Joseph’s coaches, **Pat Stenson**, **Gerry Tuohy** and **Tim Hynes** and the participation in the ‘Martin Donnelly GAA Football for All’ Interprovincial Finals in Croke Park. Tim adds that Covid-19 has curtailed these sporting events in 2020, but hopefully in 2021 players will have the opportunity to resume all their sporting activities.

### **Connacht GAA Rounders 2020**

*Peter Lyons provided the following report on Rounders:*

2020 has been an unprecedented year in all of our lives as we live through a Covid -19 Pandemic. The pandemic has had a significant impact on our Rounders community and the impact on the GAA club cannot be underestimated. As we were all in this together we became stronger as a community and grateful that we had an opportunity to play.

It was great to have new teams with great enthusiasm including: Athenry (Galway), Fenagh (Carlow) and Kevin’s (Dublin) added to the intermediate championship. We also gained two new clubs through the healthy clubs initiative in St Finian’s (Dublin) and Shamrock Gaels (Sligo).

GAA Rounders now have thirty affiliated clubs with over 1,100 registered members which excludes a lot of underage players as juvenile competitions were cancelled due to Covid.





**Breaffy Senior Ladies Rounders Team**

## 2020 GAA Rounders Championship

GAA Rounders had 10 teams in the Senior Men Championship, 8 in our Senior Ladies, 8 in our Senior Mixed, 10 in the Intermediate Mixed and 5 in the Intermediate Ladies. 41 teams playing in the All-Ireland Championships.

The intermediate grades were new for 2020 and led



**Aileen Treacy, Athenry in action against Dublin side the Little Lambs**

to well contested matches that were enjoyable to watch and play in. The addition of the intermediate grades have been a huge success and with more clubs hopefully joining over the next few years we would hope to get to the point of having three grades in our championships with the introduction of a junior grade.

The long-awaited news of the *GAA Return to Play* was greeted with much anticipation, hope and excitement. The GAA at county, provincial and national level are to be congratulated on the way they organised the *Return to Play* with very clear guidelines for a safe return issued to all clubs. The GAA Rounders Championship commenced on the first weekend in August and ran until the 4th October when Croke Park advised that all club games cease with immediate effect, at that stage our GAA Rounders Championship had reached the All-Ireland Final stage, so for ten teams they are on hold and will have to wait for the new year to complete their championship, three Connacht teams will contest these All-Ireland Finals: Breaffy (Mayo) will take on Glynn-Barnstown (Wexford) in the senior ladies; Athenry will take on Skryne (Meath) in the intermediate ladies' and Michael Glavey's will take on Na Fianna in the intermediate mixed - we wish all three clubs the very best of luck in their All-Ireland Finals.

With such a short amount of playing time in 2020, the GAA Rounders Ard Comhairle could not fit in the underage competitions. There just wasn't the time or resources to complete them successfully. We look forward to 2021 where we will have both championships and Féiles for underage and a real programme that will develop these grades and start us on a path to continued growth over the next twenty years, with eight underage championships and four National Féile days it will mean that GAA Rounders





will be running seventeen national competitions in 2021.

On behalf of GAA Rounders in Connacht I would like to thank **Gerry McGovern** for his commitment to Rounders both at provincial and national level; he has been a good friend to GAA Rounders. His experience and GAA knowledge has helped us structure and manage GAA Rounders in a very positive way, offering ideas and setting us on paths that will only strengthen Rounders not just in Connacht but nationally over the coming years. I would also like to thank **John Prenty** and all the staff at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence for allowing Connacht Rounders to hold our meetings in the Centre. We are fortunate to be part of a GAA community which binds us all together, we now look forward to a time when we can return to enjoying our games and activities as we once knew them.

### Connacht Club and County facilities and disability access survey

Last April twelve months, the President of the Connacht Council, **Gerry McGovern**, undertook a survey into disability access with a response of approximately 50%. Overall the survey highlighted the fact that GAA clubs did not have appropriate facilities for those attending with disabilities. Carrick-on-Shannon is the only ground in Connacht where adequate shelter is provided for wheelchair users.

Gerry expressed his satisfaction with the great work that is currently taking place in all five counties in Connacht. He stated that it was his intention to bring this issue of disability access to the attention of the relevant committee in Croke Park. However, due to the outbreak of Covid-19, he said that little progress has taken place but he is hopeful that it will be revisited especially when grant aid becomes available whenever we get back to some form of normality.

### Give Respect Get Respect Signage in all of Connacht's County GAA Grounds

It is GAA policy that all GAA Clubs have "Give Respect Get Respect" signs erected and visible in their club grounds in English or Irish or both. Clubs should continue to develop the "Give Respect - Get Respect" initiative promoting respect between coaches, players, referees, and spectators. The essence of Give Respect Get Respect philosophy is that we respect each other on and off the playing fields, we operate with integrity at all levels, and we listen and respect the views of all.

While great strides have taken place in regard to the promotion of the Give Respect -Get Respect initiative, it is still one of the key aims of the Connacht Health & Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee, that all GAA county grounds and clubs in Connacht should have a "Give Respect - Get Respect" sign displayed at the entrance to their ground. You can see examples of the signage on display at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence in Began and in the photograph below.

Give Respect - Get Respect signs are available in Irish and in English, to help remind everyone that our Gaelic Games should be promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner and where

players, coaches, spectators and referees Give Respect - Get Respect from each other. The cost per sign is approx €30/€40. For further information contact **Mattie Kilroy** at 087 6335479.



**John Prenty and Mattie Kilroy with an example of the "Give Respect - Get Respect" Sign at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence.**

### Acknowledgement

In conclusion, it has been a most unusual and unprecedented year for the Connacht GAA Health & Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee, some limited activities took place during 2020 within the Croke Park and Government protocols and guidelines, and in line with the prevailing public health guidance at the time. At national level, GAA for All Zoom meetings continued to take place and it is important to thank **Brian Armitage**, Chairperson of the National GAA for All Committee; **Tony Watene**, National GAA Project Co-Ordinator; **Ger McTavish**, GAA Diversity and Inclusion Officer; **Aoife Reilly**, GAA Healthy Club Coordinator, and **Colin Regan**, GAA Community and Health Manager, for their tremendous co-operation and encouragement given throughout this unprecedented year.

At Connacht level it is important to acknowledge the ongoing support, encouragement and commitment given by the President of the Connacht GAA Council, Gerry McGovern, Connacht Council Secretary, John Prenty and the Connacht Council, Adrian Hassett and all the Connacht Council staff for their continued support and encouragement in these very difficult times.

Finally, I take this opportunity to especially acknowledge the wonderful leadership of our Chairperson **Mattie Kilroy** and the ongoing dedication, enthusiasm, commitment, collaboration given by each member of the Connacht Health and Wellbeing and GAA for All Committee.

We will look forward to a better year ahead in 2021 when we hope to get back to some form of normality and relish the many events and activities we possibly took very much for granted.

**Mattie Kilroy**





# Fixture Analyst Report 2020

By Adrian Hassett



**T**HE role of the Central Fixtures Analysis Committee is:

- Identify and Train Fixture Analysts at both County & Provincial Level
- Analyse the Fixture Programs with the help of the County Fixture Analysts to see if Counties are maximising the time available for their club.
- Gather relevant Data from Counties to establish a clearer picture with regard to club issues and to guide the Association at all levels in understanding how policy decisions may impact on the club game.
- Establishing broad principles of Best Practice for Counties in terms of fixture making and planning generally
- Make proposals to CCC regarding Master Fixture Plan based on the evidence collected.

The Central Fixture Analyst Committee redefined the role of the County Fixture Analyst to monitor the Fixtures within the County and report these observations/findings to the County Board, CCC and to the Provincial Fixture Analyst.

When monitoring the fixture programme within the County the Analyst should be focusing on:

- Fixtures played versus the master fixture plan
- Postponements and re-fixture arrangements
- Notification of fixtures to clubs (Rolling/Weekly)
- Identifying periods of no club activity
- Identifying busy periods of club activity

If the Fixture Analyst is not a member of the CCC, they should have a working relationship with the CCC within the County.

At the end of the playing season the Fixture Analyst will be required to carry out the following tasks:

- Measure the County Fixture Program against a set of Quality Statements
- Hold a Fixtures Forum with Players/Club Officials/County Officials
- Make recommendations to CCC on the Fixture Program for the following year

The Central Fixture Analyst Committee held a seminar in January 2020 and invited the County Fixture Analyst along with the Chairman and/or Secretary of the County CCC. The seminar discussed the following

- Report of the Fixture Calendar Review Task Force
- Fixture Analysts feedback
- Presentation on the 2020 GAA Master Fixture Plan

With the significant rule changes that had been introduced at Congress' to assist Counties in scheduling a Club Fixtures programme, and the additions which were added to with the changes made by National CCC, the two major questions to be asked of each county would be:

- How can your County get full benefit out of the club weekends?
- Does your county need to adjust the structure of your competitions?

Following the seminar, each county CCC were asked to review their games programme with these two questions in mind. Plans were put in place for the year ahead!

## Covid19

The Association is about the playing of games and the playing of games was never as important as it was in the year gone. With the lockdown that was called in March and the restrictions that have been placed on the country due to the impact of Covid19, the GAA and the playing, attending, viewing, or talking about games gave so many people a release from their daily existence. While I appreciate it does not apply to all people on our island, for those that it does, it was something that gave people an outlet, it was a new topic of discussion, it was something to do.

For that we must acknowledge the various fixture makers throughout the Association, from National CCCC who outlined the calendar and provided structure, the Provincial CCC's that advised and guided the Counties, and the County CCC's who put in place a fixture schedule across all grades and codes to best maximise the time made available to them.

## County Fixture plans 2020

County Fixture schedules for 2020 can be divided into pre and post Covid19. As per Rule 3.31(OT) all counties had submitted their respective County Fixture programmes to the Provincial council for review earlier this year. The lockdown in the country last March laid waste to these plans.

From May onwards, National CCCC worked with the counties during the period of lockdown and taking advice from HSE, an eventual plan was put in place for the return of games. The biggest impact from Covid19 was the introduction of a 'split season'. Two windows were created for the playing of games, firstly the clubs received a 9-week uninterrupted window to play off their club competitions, which was followed by the Intercounty season that commenced from the 17th October. Uninterrupted for the club meant that they had full access to all their players for a full 9- week period, Intercounty teams were not permitted to train in this period.

Once the window had been created for the playing of the club competitions, the CCC in each county set about redrawing their schedule of games to best suit the needs of their clubs in the timeframe allowed. All Counties drew up a revised schedule that involved round robin championships. There was a desire to provide clubs with a minimum of 2 games prior to them exiting any championship. See below the details for each competition provided.





## County Championships - Football (Adult)

### GALWAY

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior Cship	5	18	31 Jul	4 Oct	6	3
Inter Cship	4	16	31 Jul	4 Oct	6	3
Junior	4 (North & West)	16	31 Jul	3 Oct	6	3
Junior A*	4 (North & West)	16	14 Aug	n/a	6	3
Junior B*	4 (North & West)	15	11 Sep	n/a	6	3
Junior C*	2 (West)	7	11 Sep	n/a	5	2
	4 (North)	13	11 Sep	n/a	5	2

\*These Competitions not yet completed.

### LEITRIM

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior Cship	2	10	18 Jul	27 Sep	7	4
Inter Cship	2	10	18 Jul	27 Sep	7	4
Jun A Cship	2	10	26 Jul	11 Oct	7	4
Jun B Cship*	3	9	9 Aug	11 Oct	4	2
Jun C Cship*	2	6	9 Aug	3- Oct	4	2

\*These competitions were not completed.

### MAYO

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior Cship	4	4	31 Jul	20 Sep	6	3
Inter Cship	4	4	31 Jul	20 Sep	6	3
Exclusive Jnr A	4	15	1 Aug	20 Sep	5	2
Exclusive Jnr B	2	7	1 Aug	26 Sep	4	2
Junior A*	2	8	3 Oct	01-Nov		3
Junior B*	4	12	3 Oct	n/a		2
Junior C*	4	13	3 Oct	n/a		2
Ml Walsh Lge-Div 1*	4	16	18 Jul	31 Oct	6	3
Ml Walsh Lge-Div 2*	4	15	18 Jul	31 Oct	6	3
Ml Walsh Lge-Div 3*	4	17	18 Jul	31 Oct	6	3

\*Competition not completed.

Michael Walsh League- This competition provided each club with 2 games prior to the commencement of their championship.

### ROSCOMMON

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior Cship	3	12	25 Jul	20 Sep	6	3
Inter Cship	3	12	25 Jul	19 Sep	6	3
Junior A	3	13	25 Jul	11 Oct	6	3
Junior B*	4	17	26 Sept	n/a	6	3

\*Competition not completed

### SLIGO

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior Cship	2	10	25-Jul	20-Sep	7	4
Inter Cship	2	10	25-Jul	20-Sep	7	4
Junior A	2	8	01-Aug	19-Sep	6	3
Junior B*	4	12	02-Aug	26-Sept	6	3

\*Final went to a replay and game has yet to be played.

## County Championships - Hurling (Adult)

### GALWAY

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Senior A	3	12	24 Jul	4 Oct	7	3
Senior B	3	12	24 Jul		7	3
Inter*	4	15	26 Jul	11 Oct	6	3
Junior A*	4	17	1 Aug	n/a	7	4
Junior B*	5	20	1 Aug	n/a	7	3
Junior C*	4	14	3 Aug	10 Oct	6	3
Junior C1*	4	19	9 Aug	n/a	7	3

\*Competitions not completed.

### LEITRIM

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Championship	2	Final		3 Oct	1	1

### MAYO

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Championship		4	25 Jul	12 Sep	3	2
League*	1	5	19 Sep	n/a	5	4

\*Competition not completed.

### ROSCOMMON

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
Championship	2	8	13 Sep	27 Sep	5	3

### SLIGO

	No of Groups	No of Teams	Start Date	Finish Date	Max	Min
League*		8	17 Jul	n/a	4	1
Championship	1	6	3 Aug	27 Sep	4	2

\*Competition not completed

- The two teams in Leitrim entered the Sligo League.

## Overall Observations

- All Counties maximized the time available in the window that was provided to them.
- No County rushed the completion of their championships to have them completed for the 13th September, (when County squads were permitted to return to training).
- All Club Players received a minimum of 2 games.
- County leagues across all counties were dispensed with, except Sligo Hurling and Mayo Hurling (post championship).
- Mayo scheduled 2 Rounds of Michael Walsh Cup Games to provide all clubs with two rounds of games prior to playing their first championship game.
- As can be seen from the competitions listed, some counties did not get to complete their full schedule of games. This was due to the cessation of all games at club level from the 5th October, imposed by the GAA nationally due to spread of Covid19.





- All Counties included relegation in their competitions.
- Anecdotally there was positive feedback to the split season format.
- All players enjoyed the timing of the competitions and the very defined season.
- County players being available fully to the club without being demanded by County commitments was a new departure that was appreciated by both the club and the player.
- Clubs saw an increase in the numbers that attended training and were available for games. This could be explained by (1) more people living at home, (2) the need for an outlet, (3) the defined season.
- All players/clubs enjoyed the club taking centre stage in the months of July, August, and September.
- All counties operated a 'winner on the day' format which assisted in getting their programme of games completed.
- The club season commencing prior to the County season ensured that as many players as possible got an opportunity to play.
- Club U20/21 competitions could not be scheduled due to the reduced timeframe.
- Although not detailed above, all counties delivered a full programme of games for their Juvenile sector, with all counties adopting some form of a round robin competition within their competitions to guarantee their clubs and players a minimum number of games. Most competitions were completed within the timeframe provided. Some competitions did not get completed due to the cessation of all games at club level from the 5th October, imposed by the GAA nationally due to spread of Covid19.

## Connacht GAA Fixture Monitoring Committee

In accordance with Rule 3.31 (TO) Connacht GAA Fixture Monitoring Committee reviewed the Masters Fixtures Plan as submitted by each County, twice (pre Covid19 schedule and the post Covid19 schedule).

## Connacht GAA Fixture schedule for 2020

Connacht GAA have responsibility for Competitions at both Adult & Juvenile in Hurling and Football for all units across the province, this includes Academy & Development squad tournaments and the Post Primary Schools Programme.

Excluding the Post Primary Schools Competitions and the Academy & Development Squad tournaments and the Tain Leagues, the province organise and schedule nineteen competitions in both Football & Hurling (this involves 80 fixtures). The table below details how our Fixture schedule played out during the year. That was part of our initial fixture schedule. The impact of Covid19 severely restricted the province on the number of competitions we could deliver.

### INTER-COUNTY

Competition	Code	Originally Scheduled	Scheduled post COVID-19	Played	Game not played
Senior C'ship	Football	6	4	3	1
Senior League	Football	4	n/a	4	0
Junior	Football	4	0	0	n/a
U20	Football	4	n/a	4	0
Minor Cship	Football	13	4	4	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>



**DETERMINATION:** Éanna Burke of St Thomas', after losing his hurl, runs to the loose ball alongside his marker Paddy Stapleton of Borris-Ileigh.

Photo: Piaras Ó Mídheach / SPORTSFILE







## CLUB

Competition	Code	Originally Scheduled	Scheduled post COVID-19	Played	Game not played
Minor	Football	8	0	0	0
Senior C'ship	Football	5	0	0	0
Leo Kenny Cup	Football	19	0	0	0
Intermediate	Football	4	0	0	0
Junior	Football	4	0	0	0
U-16	Hurling	4	0	0	0
Junior C'ship	Hurling	2	0	0	0
Intermediate	Hurling	3	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>42</b>		

### Notes:

1. Due to the Covid19 restrictions, New York and London could not be accommodated in the Senior Football championship in the rescheduled competition.
2. Sligo were unable to participate in the Senior Football Championship due to Covid19.
3. The Junior Football Championship was not played as it could not be scheduled in the Inter County Window.
4. The U-20 Football Championship and the FBD Insurance League were played as originally scheduled. Both competitions were subject to the 'winner on the regulations' which resulted in 2 games being decided on penalty kicks.
5. The Minor Football Championship went from being a *Round Robin* competition to straight knockout competition.
6. The entire programme of games in the provincial club competitions were cancelled.

### Additional points

1. There were no Academy/Development squad competitions scheduled for the year.
  2. The National Tain League competitions which involved Club hurling teams, in Adult and juvenile from across Connacht, had commenced in March, however this too was cancelled.
  3. The proposed Cúchulainn league for Club Juvenile teams was also cancelled.
- All the above fell foul to Covid19 restrictions.

## Post Primary Schools

A more detailed report will be provided by **Hugh Rudden** elsewhere within the Convention booklet however from the 30 competitions scheduled for this sector for the 2019/'20 academic year, 19 of the competitions were fully completed, with the 11 competitions not finished. These competitions were down to either semi-finals or finals and did not get finished due to the National lockdown imposed in March.

The Post Primary school fixture schedule for the 2020/'21 season was initially sent out to schools in September and had proposed a reduced number of competitions. The league and championship competitions were combined at each school were to be guaranteed a minimum of 3 games at the various grades. With the restrictions posed by Covid19, this schedule had to be revised in November with competitions now straight knockout and to not commence until late January. As I write this report, it

may be that we will have to review our proposed plan. It may be that for the current academic year that there will be no games played in the post primary school sector. Let's hope this does not come to pass.

## Games Programme 2020

In other years, the National & Provincial games programme for the year ahead would be with all counties since November, the uncertainty that Covid19 has created, has meant that best made plans have had to be revised, continuously. The broad proposal is that the Inter-county season would commence in February and be completed by July, with the club having an uninterrupted window of activity from the weekend of the 24/25 July onwards. The implications of the current Covid19 restrictions may impact on these plans. County Fixture making bodies will have to hold off on making their own County fixture schedules until they have a definite set of dates to work from.

## Calendar Review Task Force

In my report to last year's convention, I made reference to the following reports

- *Fixtures Calendar Review Taskforce*
- *Talent Academy & Player Development Review*

These reports contained many well thought out proposals and recommendations that would serve the Association well into the future. A presentation was made at Congress 2020 and from that the Fixture Calendar Review Taskforce were to review the status of all their proposals and finalise ahead of special Congress 2020. Covid19 scuppered these plans. When the Taskforce did get an opportunity to meet and review, they reviewed their report to take the following into account;

- Feedback received at Congress Workshop
- Feedback received from Fixture Analysts
- Further written submissions
- Impact of pandemic

Their updated report which was presented to all counties and provinces via online meetings dealt with

- Split Season
- Tweaks to the 2 new Football Championship proposals
- Status update on each of original proposals

The report and its recommendations are now being finalised for Congress 2021.

One of the major recommendations from the *Talent Academy & Player Development Review* was that all counties prioritise competitions at the following age grades: U-13, U-15 and U-17 levels for their Juvenile competitions. This is now policy across the Association for 2021 and is to be adopted by all Counties.

The impact of Covid19 lockdown and restrictions has had a major impact on Fixture scheduling and planning. The recommendations of the reports listed above, if adopted, may not see fruition until 2022 at the earliest. One must always remember at the heart of these recommendations is the objective of striking a better balance and degree of certainty to the playing of club fixtures alongside the inter-county fixture programme. Current lockdown and restrictions may now give an opportunity to reflect on how best to achieve this.





# Coiste Iomana Report 2020

By Damien Coleman

**I**N what can only be described as a different year, the activities of the coiste were seriously curtailed with no fixture activities to report on across planned competitions throughout the year. While the planning process in all competitions was at an advanced level, unfortunately none came to fruition. Below listed competitions will be again rolled out to clubs, schools and counties in 2021:

- An Táin óg Club Development Leagues, for our provincial developing hurling counties (u13/15/17)
- Academy Hibernia Cup (u15) and Celtic Challenge Cup (u17)
- Provincial u13 academy start up blitz development days
- Cuchulainn Adult National Club Leagues, for our developing hurling counties in the province
- Provincial club u15, adult Junior and intermediate championships
- Post-primary schools fixtures (note: these competitions are fixed for February, 2021)
- Connacht clubs Go Games child blitzs

The Cúl Camp Programme following extensive planning and adherence to government guidelines, took place in our five Connacht counties, with participation levels not matching other years, but adequately holding their own in clubs who committed to the project. Hurling camps were hosted in four of our counties with Leitrim opting out for 2020.

In challenging times, *thinking outside the box* often brings projects to new levels, where once were unimaginable. Our learning and development on line hurling webinars (national + provincial) proved to be a huge learning opportunity with massive numbers attending nightly, and our five Connacht counties very well represented by our volunteer coaches throughout.

Below are accurate attendance numbers over the course of the webinar series, which are delivered by **Martin Fogarty** (National Hurling Manager), and myself, as the provincial hurling support -

## Spring 2020

- 22,300 total attendance / views on series of Hurling specific workshops.
- Attendees from 32 counties, Plus international attendances from - Africa, Argentina, Asia, Britain, Canada, Europe, Middle East, New Zealand & USA. (See table below)

Following the success of the summer webinar series, we again scheduled a number of on line workshops in the autumn / winter months, for clubs with workshop offerings listed below -

Autumn / Winter 2020

Workshops offered pre-Christmas to Clubs, post-Christmas to individual coaches

1. The Club Coach - an overview
2. Coaching Children - Key elements.
3. Coaching Youths / Adults - Key elements.
4. Managing a Hurling Team
5. Improving your team
6. Hurling in School for Primary Teachers.

**Pre-Christmas** - primarily confined to clubs from developing hurling counties -

**Attendance** - 43 Clubs Nationally with 10 Connacht clubs taking part in this learning and educational process.

**Post-Christmas** - open to individual coaches from all thirty-two counties (preference given to developing hurling counties again to include our Connacht counties here). Numbers will be limited to allow for ample interaction, for all our coach volunteers who book on.

Twenty-five Workshops are scheduled / planned throughout Jan/Feb/March 2021, which were booked out in 1 week. It's positive to note that 300 + primary school teachers have registered for child and nursery workshop offerings.

Total bookings 2,250 so far, with waiting lists in place. It is possible that we will have to schedule extra workshops and/or increase the participants allowed on per night on current planned on line workshops.

Our Coiste Iomana chairperson, **Anthony Flaherty** (Roscommon), would sincerely like to thank all committee members and volunteers for their enormous contributions to community throughout

Workshop - Webinar		Live Attendance	Online Views	Total Views
Mon. May 4th.	Coaching & Managing a Hurling Team Part 1	904	4289	5193
Mon. May 11th.	Nursery Hurling Values & Guidelines Part 1	894	1652	2546
Mon. May 18th.	Goalie - No. 1 on every team	1701	2205	3906
Mon. June 1st.	Interview with Slaughtneil -	1147	1594	2741
Mon. June 8th.	Nursery Hurling Values & Guidelines Part 2	1048	689	1737
Mon. June 15th.	Coaching & Managing a Hurling Team Part 2	1163	1613	2776
Mon. June 22nd.	Developing a Coaching Eye	984	1191	2175
Mon. June 29th.	Hurling Around the World	723	503	1226
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>8,564</b>	<b>13,736</b>	<b>22,300</b>





the year. The chairman and committee would like to congratulate Sligo on winning their division in the national league, which they won after a lengthy lay off, and wish all Connacht counties and management teams the very best in 2021 on resumption of the national leagues leading in to the Ring, Rackard, Maher competitions.

It would be remiss not to mention in this report, the support of the provincial staff in our Connacht Centre in administering the game of hurling at all levels through child, youth and adult cohorts. Sincere thanks to **Cathal Cregg** (Provincial Games Manager), **Adrian Hassett** (Operations Manager), **Séamus Burns** (S+C officer), **Brian Mangan** (IT supports), **Amanda** and **Attracta** (provincial secretaries), and **John Clancy** (pitches facilities). The coiste also wish **Kurt Reinhart** all the best in his role as Connacht GAA facilities manager.

A huge thanks and congratulations to **John Prenty**, (Provincial Secretary) for his proactivity and vision in completing the Dome project, as part of the envious facilities that Connacht GAA now boast.

This concludes my report, and we wish all Gaels a belated happy Christmas, and Peaceful New year, and also wish **Larry McCarthy** (NY), the very best in his appointment as Uachtarán CLG. Connacht GAA's alignment with New York over the years has been hugely successful and we know we have a friend in Larry and sincerely wish him well. Our staff (Hurling GPO's), namely **Darragh Cox** (Sligo/Leitrim), **Adrian Hession** (Mayo), **Prionsias Killion** (Roscommon), **Liam Gordon** (Galway), **David Huban** (Galway) who contribute so much in our counties, in a co-operative professional manner. During the year both **Gerry Spelman** and **Brian Hanley** (Galway), both moved onto other roles outside of the GAA, and their contributions have been eminent to further develop Connacht hurling over the years



The Rice College (Westport) senior Hurlers at the Connacht GAA Astropark.

### Recommendations for consideration for future committee

If I may suggest – that the appointed committee would have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, embrace provincial and national policy, and actively sell same in their own counties, as models of best practice to further develop hurling in the province. We should look at our provincial hurling strategy, structure, systems that are in place and combine our skills (what culture exists, or needs to exist?), how the staff sell our product in games development throughout the counties, supported by the committee representatives, with shared values at the center to achieve our Connacht hurling development goals, in collaboration going forward.

**Damien Coleman**  
(Coiste Iomana Secretary)



Pictured are the Ballyhaunis CS Senior Hurlers who beat Rice College.





# COUNTY ANALYSIS 2018

## MAYO COUNTY BOARD (52 Clubs)

Income	€2,158,176
Expenditure	€2,093,624
Excess Income/ Expenditure	€216,847



## GALWAY COUNTY BOARD

(81 Clubs)	
Income	€2,317,630
Expenditure	€2,314,197
Surplus	€3,435
Revaluation	(€117,954)
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	(€332,336)
Overall Deficit after Depreciation	(€336,488)

## ROSCOMMON COUNTY BOARD

(33 Clubs)	
Income	€979,443
Expenditure	€1,098,579
Deficit	(€119,136)
Depreciation	(€144,551)
Overall Deficit after Depreciation	(€336,488)

## SLIGO COUNTY BOARD (26 Clubs)

Income	€1,018,194
Expenditure	€818,581
Surplus	€198,613
Depreciation	(€128,331)
Overall Surplus	€70,282

## LEITRIM COUNTY BOARD

(33 Clubs)	
Income	€746,951
Expenditure	€757,619
Deficit	(€10,668)

# 2021 Connacht GAA Fixtures

**NB: ALL DATES ARE SUGGESTED DATES ONLY  
EXTRA TIME & FINISH ON THE DAY, IN ALL GAMES**

## Connacht GAA Senior Football Championship 2021

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter-Final 'A'	Saturday, 17th April	London	Mayo	McGovern Park, Ruislip
Quarter-Final 'B'	Sunday, 18th April			
Semi-Final 1	Sat/Sun, 24/25th April			
Semi-Final 2	Sat/Sun, 1st/2nd May			
Final	Sat/Sun, 22nd/23rd May	Winner of Semi-Final 1	Winner of Semi-Final 2	tbc

## Connacht GAA U-20 Football Championship 2021

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter-Final 'A'	Saturday, 3rd April	Roscommon	Leitrim	Centre of Excellence
Semi-Final (1)	Saturday, 10th April	Sligo	Quarter-Final 'A' winner	Centre of Excellence
Semi-Final (2)	Saturday, 10th April	Galway	Mayo	Centre of Excellence
Final	16th/17th/18th April	Winner of Semi-Final 1	Winner of Semi-Final 2	Centre of Excellence
AISF	24/25th April			
AIF	1st/2nd May			

## Connacht GAA U-17 Football Championship 2021

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2
Quarter-Final 'A'	Friday, 2nd April	Mayo	Roscommon
Semi-Final 1	Friday, 9th April	Galway	Quarter-Final 'A' winner
Semi-Final 2	Friday, 9th April	Sligo	Leitrim
Final	Friday, 30th April	Winner of Semi-Final 1	Winner of Semi-Final 2
AISF	16th/17th May		
AIF	22nd/23rd May		





# 2020 Connacht GAA Inter-County Results

## Connacht GAA Senior Football Championship 2020

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter-Final 1		London	Roscommon W/O	
Quarter-Final 2		New York	Galway W/O	
Quarter Final 3	Saturday 1st November	Mayo 2-15	Leitrim 0-10	Avantcard Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada
Semi-Final 1	7th November	Galway W/O	Sligo	
Semi-Final 2	8th November	Mayo 1-16	Roscommon 0-13	Dr Hyde Park
Final	15th November	Galway 0-13	Mayo 0-14	Pearse Stadium

## Connacht GAA U20 Football Championship 2020

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter Finals	Saturday 8th February	Mayo 0-10 (2 Penalties)	Galway 0-10 (3 Penalties) AET	Elverys MacHale Park
Semi-Final(1)	Saturday 15th February	Roscommon 1-11	Sligo 1-8	Markievicz Park
Semi-Final(2)	Saturday 22nd February	Leitrim 0-2	Galway 1-12	Elphin
Final	Saturday 7th March	Roscommon 0-5	Galway 4-13	Tuam Stadium

## Electric Ireland Connacht GAA Minor Football Championship 2020

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter Final	12th December	Galway 2-17	Leitrim 0-12	COE
Semi-Final(1)	18th December	Galway 0-11	Roscommon 2-13	COE
Semi-Final(2)	20th December	Sligo 1-9	Mayo 1-7	COE
Final	Saturday 26th December	Roscommon 1-5	Sligo 1-2	COE

## FBD Insurance Connacht GAA Senior Football Competition 2020

Round	Date	Team 1	Team 2	Venue
Quarter Final	Sunday 5th January	Sligo 0-14	Roscommon 1-15	Markievicz Park
Semi-Final 1	Sunday 12th January	Mayo 1-17 (2 penalties)	Galway 1-17 (3 Penalties)	Elverys MacHale Park
Semi-Final 2	Sunday 12th January	Leitrim 0-7	Roscommon 7-16	Avantcard Páirc Seán Mac Diarmuida
Final	Sunday 19th January	Galway 1-14	Roscommon 0-11	Dr Hyde Park

Connacht GAA Ted Webb Football Competition 2020 NOT PLAYED

# 2020 Connacht GAA Club Results

**THE FOLLOWING CLUB COMPETITIONS WERE CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19**

AIB Connacht GAA Club Senior Football Championship 2020

AIB Connacht GAA Club Intermediate Football Championship 2020

AIB Connacht GAA Club Junior Football Championship 2020

Connacht GAA Club Minor(U-17) 'A' Football Championship 2020

Connacht GAA Club Minor(U-17) 'B' Football Championship 2020

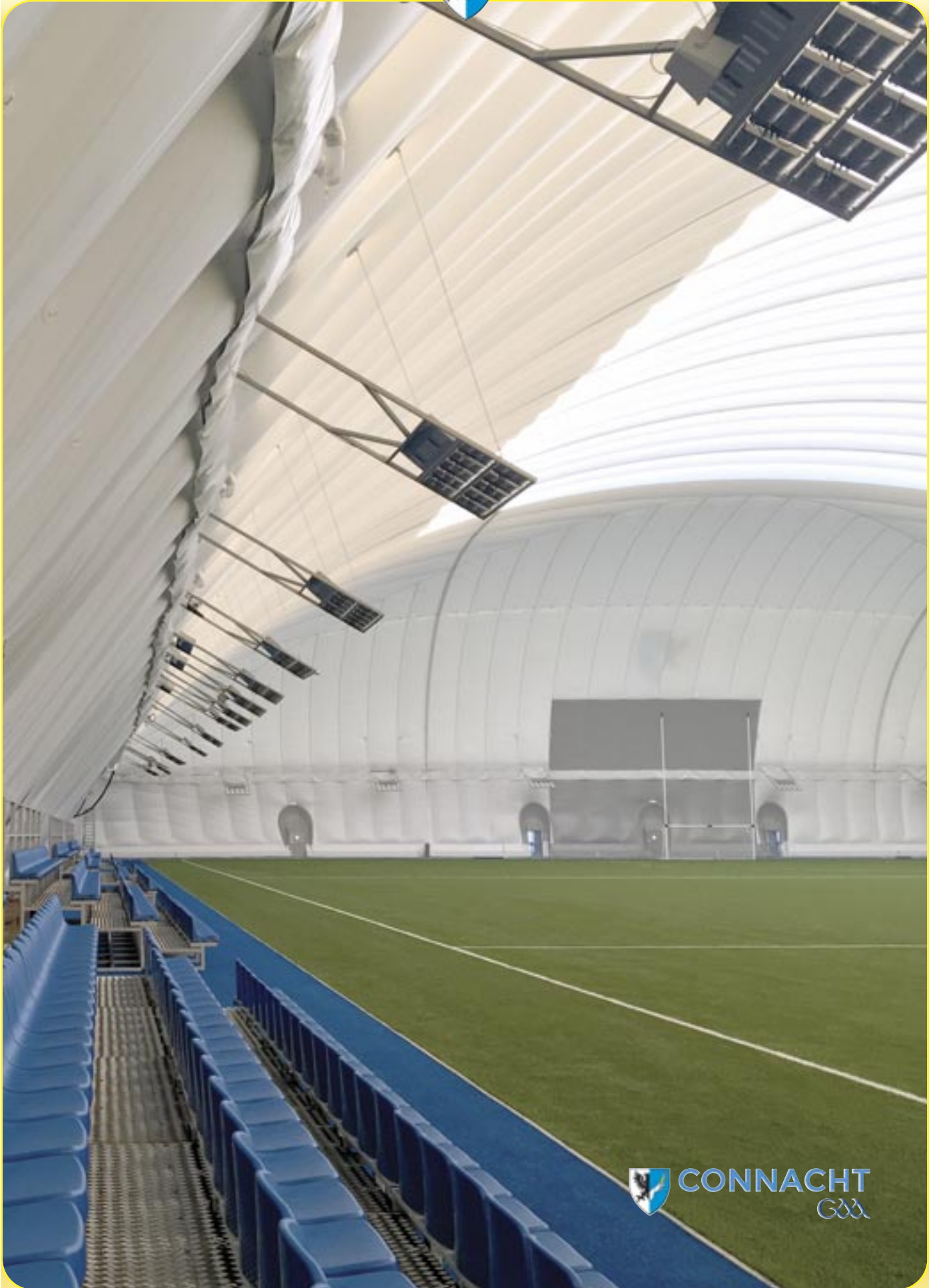
AIB Connacht GAA Club Intermediate Hurling Championship 2020

AIB Connacht GAA Club Junior Hurling Championship 2020

Connacht GAA Club U-16 Hurling Championship 2020









# CONNACHT

# GAA

