

C.L.G. Laoise



Comhdháil Bhliantúil



Monday, 9th December, 2024
7.30 p.m.

Midlands Park Hotel

Laois

shopping centre

At the heart
of your Day!



PENNEYS



Carphone Warehouse

Dealz



The newly extended bigger and better Laois Shopping Centre is NOW OPEN. Now with 1200 FREE covered car parking spaces and a brand new Tesco Extra Store open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Located in Portlaoise town centre with Tesco Extra, Penneys, Dealz, Unicare, Rafter's Café and over 30 stores over 2 levels. Included in the offering is a wide variety of shops and services, sportswear, jewellery & accessories, home interiors, food & drink, health & beauty and much more.

Centre Manager: **Kevin Doyle**
T: **057 8662804**
E: **manager@laoisshoppingcentre.com**

www.laoisshoppingcentre.com



Download our
FREE iPhone App
via iTunes



Standing Orders

In order that the proceedings of the convention be carried out without delay the following Standing Orders will be observed: -

- 1. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment thereto, may speak for 5 minutes but no longer.*
- 2. A Delegate speaking to a Resolution or Amendment shall not exceed 3 minutes.*
- 3. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment, may speak a second time for 5 minutes, before a vote is taken, but no other Delegate may speak a second time to any Resolution or Amendment.*
- 4. The Chairman shall, at any time he considers a matter has been sufficiently discussed, call on the Proposer to reply, after which a vote will 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.*

An Clár

1. Adoption of Standing Orders
2. Minutes of 2023 Convention
3. Secretary & sub-Committee Reports
4. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement
5. Appointment of Tellers
6. Election of Officers
7. Motions
8. Aon Ghnó Eile
9. Votes of Sympathy

The Annual Convention of Laois GAA was held in Midlands Park Hotel on Monday 4th December 2023

Cathaoirleach PS O Ceallaigh presided at County Convention on 04/12/23. The following Coiste Bainistí members were in attendance: Ciaran Mac Eochaidh, Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí, Briain Ó Braoin, Mairtín O'Broin, Tomás O'Cleirigh, Briain O hAllúinn, Risteard O Cinnéide, Briain Ó Coinne, Seán Ó Ceallaigh, Nollaig Mac an Ghaill, Maitiu O Coiléir, Antóin Ó Baimbric, Seosamh O Cuinneagáin agus Niall Mac Laitimh (Runaí).

Clubs were represented as follows:

N. O'Riain, R. Mac Cómhaill & C. Mac Giolla Pdraig, Mainistir Laoise; C. O Dorchaí & M. Mac an Ghaill, Anach; P. Mac Lochlainn, SS Ó Conbhuí & N. O Ceallaigh Ard Lios Cilchrúis; L. O Braonáin & PS O Cinnéide, Ard Lios Cilín; S. Breatnach & L. O Seachnasaigh, Baile na Coille; W. Hovendon, S. Hovendon & E. O Caollaí, Baile Uí Laigheanáin; M. Ní Fhaoláin & P. Ó Dúlaoich, Baile Píocas; P. O Faoláin, P. Geaghagáin & E. Peacóg, Mainistir Beal Atha Róin; A. O Langrúin, S. Daibhís & A. O Braonáin, Teach an Bhearra; M. O Dubhsláinne, C. O Sioráin & R. O Muirí, Buiríos Mór Osraí; S. Ó Beirgin, C. Ó Muineacháin & S. O Ceallaigh, Buiríos Mór Osraí Cill Choitín; T. O Deoráin, S. Ní Fhaoláin & U. Ní Dhonnchaidh, Camros; M. Mac Pheadair & Y. Ní Fhaoláin, Baile an Chaisleáin; C. Ní Chonraoi, D. O Sioráin & P. Goode, Cluain Fada; S.P. Ó hEogháin, Cluain na Slí Naomh Meanmáin; N. Ní Dhubhsláinne & G. Mac Piarais, Cloch Balla Cholla; P. Sionóid, R. Moiféid & L. de Stacaphúil, Coillte; S. Ó Braonáin & A. O Riain, Coillte Seanchua; S. Ó Doinn & R. O Danachair, Coill na Cúirte; S. de Búrca, Crochta Ard; S. O Ciarubháin & M. O Riain, Ioma; T. Ó hAisí & P. O Deá, Eiréil; P. Ó Deargáin, Graig Chuilinn; L. O Longargáin & E. O Conraoi, Cill Cabháin; A. Nic Nhutlaigh & D. Mac Giodaire, Cill Choitín; G. Diring, Gleann Uiseann; C. Paghan & S. Paghan, Mointeach Mílíc; I. Ó Mórdha, R. Mac Thomais & C. O Greacháin, Maighean Rátha; L. Ó Fionnalaigh, L. Mhic Chormaic & P. Ó Laoire, Na Diomasaigh; B. O Rannacháin & C. Ó Fingletáin, Pairc Raithín an Uisce; C. Conléibhe, Cúil an tSudaire; P. Ó Néil & E. O Fionnalaigh, Portlaoise; PS O Reachtair, Rath Domhnaigh; R. O Ceallaigh & M. Ó Cléir, Rathdomhnaigh Eiréil; S. O Dullaing, Ross Fhionnghlaise; M. O Beirgin & T. Ó Garmaile, Seanchua; M. Ó Labhraí, C. Ní Fhearail & R. O'Nualláin, Sliabh Bladhma; D. Ó Duibhir & P. O Braonáin, An Spinc; M. Ó Conaráin, E. Ní Cheallaigh & M. O Mórdha, Naomh Seosamh; R. Ní Lhorcáin, T Ní Bhogaí & R. O Doinn, Sráidbahile; E. O Faoláin & R. Mac Cumascaigh, Ná Clairsigh; P. O'Céin, S. Ó Ceallaigh & T. Mac Seoin, An Fraoch; S. O Murchú & D. Ó Maonaigh, An Charraig; S. O Rannacháin & L. O'Rannacháin, Tigh Mochua; S. Ó Conchuir, P. Mac Spaidín & B. de Breadúin, Tromaire.

S. Laibheartaigh (Childrens Officer); L. Ní Chonraoi (Health and Wellbeing); U. Ó Dullaing (Referee Administrator) & M. Ó Cearbhúill (Uachtaráin CLG Laoise).

Leithscéil: L. O Rannacháin (Tigh Mochua).

1. **Standing Orders** adopted on the proposition of Tomas Mac Seoin, seconded by Briain Ó Rannacháin.
2. **Minutes of 2022 Convention** adopted on the proposition of Pilib Ó Céin, seconded by Ursuile Ní Dhonnchaidh.
3. **Secretary's Report** adopted on the proposition of Liam Ó Braonáin, seconded by Caoimhín Ó Greacháin.
4. **Treasurer's Report** showing an operating surplus of €231,755 in County Committee A/c and a deficit of €11,607 in O'Moore Park A/c were adopted on the proposition of Máirc Mac Pheadair, seconded by Daithí Ó Duibhir. An Cisteoir gave a detailed explanation of our financial accounts, explaining both Income and Expenditure Accounts and Schedules to accounts. He stated that the decrease in Gate Receipts was perhaps a truer reflection of our operating income, and that the previous year's Gate Receipts were distorted due to a large proportion of 2022 Championship games being delayed due to Covid. He informed delegates that this was an exceptional year on our finances and that we must continue to be prudent with the management of our finances. He noted particular caution to the area of our Inter-county team administration expenses, which he continued to increase with expenditure this year of €860k, which he believed is not sustainable. He acknowledged the co-operation and support of our Clubs in our main fundraiser, €130 All Club County Members Draw and appealed for their support again in 2023. He thanked our main sponsor Laois Hire for their dedicated support also thanked our other sponsors Magni Group, O'Neills, LOETB, Laois Shopping Centre, Midlands Park Hotel, ENVA, LSM, Glanbia, Tom Brennan for their continued support. He thanked Mairtín Ó Broin, Niall Mac Laitimh & Briain Ó Braoin for their co-operation in updating and preparation of accounts and his fellow Executive members for their dedication and support, while also acknowledging our Clubs for their co-operation with gate collections and our O'Moore Park stewards and gate staff, without whose availability we would be unable to function.

Matters arising from Treasurer's Report:

- o P. Ó Néil Portlaoise complimented An Runaí and An Cisteoir on comprehensive reports to Convention and expressed his concern on increase to intercountry team administration to €860k, stating that if caution is not exercised we will soon be exceeding €1million, which he believed not to be sustainable to a county like Laois;
- o C. Ó Greacháin Maighean Rátha queried as to where our intercountry team administration was in comparable to other counties and his belief was that cutting back was not the way forward and outlined business men who have recently located in Laois he approached about additional sponsorship;
- o P. Ó Céin An Fraoch asked as to whether GPA demands had any significance on increasing our intercountry team administration expense. An Cathaoirleach informed delegates that the Players Charter is agreed annually with Croke Park representatives

and that the GPA do have a significant input, particularly in relation to mileage and meal allowance;

- o L. Ó Rannacháin Tigh Mochua stated that in his opinion that there is no chance of current figures coming down in the current economic climate and encouraged Clubs to support Laois GAA fundraisers with particular reference to Punchestown Race Day in April;
- o T. Mac Seoin An Fraoch reference expense for stewarding outlined in Treasurers Report, stating that all stewards participated in this discipline on a voluntary basis. An Runáí stated that this expense referred to steward training which had been carried out last spring.

5. Chairperson's Address:

Ba mhaith lion fáilte mór a chur roimh gach duine go dtí an comhdháil bhliantúil. I would like to extend a warm welcome to everyone here tonight to our Annual Convention.

Tonight we close another year in the history of the Gaelic Athletic Association in our County. In doing so, it is right and customary that we begin by remembering all those who have gone before us, and those who have gone to their eternal rest in the last twelve months. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

The past year has been busy, containing some highs, some lows and everything in between as detailed in the reports contained in our Convention booklet. Our County secretary Niall Handy has compiled our annual report for 2023 convention and if you haven't read it already, I suggest you do as it gives a detailed account of all activities that took place throughout the year. I want to thank Niall for his work and commitment during the year and his attention to detail in all aspects of his role as County Secretary, he has been a great help to me. Really appreciated Niall, and likewise to my Vice-Chairperson Kieran Kehoe for his continued support and advice, thank you Kieran.

As per last year, I don't propose to revisit all aspects of Laois GAA in my address but rather share my perspective on some of the year's events with an eye to the future."

Discipline

Discipline has once again been a huge topic within our County this year and unfortunately during the 2023 fixture calendar, individual and sporadic instances of unsporting and downright thuggish behaviour presented, and in my view, these are unacceptable and indeed a major threat to what we stand for as a people.

We all have responsibility when it comes to discipline be it from the stands on our side-lines or the players that take the field. Notwithstanding the successful recruitment of referees this year, we are still on a similar number to last year post retirements etc. and who can blame someone for not wanting to take up the whistle if the threat of abuse is so probable. I implore all our members to think before you react to a decision during a game as all our attitudes must change or we simply won't have anyone to referee our games in the future. We cannot stand back, however, and ignore instances

where match officials and players, and indeed volunteers are abused, either verbally or physically.

Likewise, referees need to be exemplars of respect, be it on the field or when dealing with representatives of our Referees appointment committee or staff of Laois GAA. Accordingly, I would like to thank our Referee's Administrator Vincent Dowling, Secretary, Danny Gorman, and all other committee members for their time and expertise afforded to Laois GAA and for their assistance in appointing, educating and assisting referees on match days during the year.

I want to urge everyone to reflect on this ahead of the 2024 season, particularly at underage games where impressionable children are present. For this to happen we need to instill a culture of respect, and we have a responsibility as a collective Organisation to ensure that we control the culture at our games.

Accordingly, I want to thank all the referees and other match officials who have made our games possible over the season just gone. It's a cliché at this point but without them, there would be no games. We have some of the leading officials in Laois, and it is vital that we utilise their experience in bringing forward a new generation of officials. However, we need a culture of respect for this to be as successful as it needs to be.

Laois Hire O'Moore Park & the LOETB Centre of Excellence.

Our LOETB COE here in Portlaoise has become a massive social hub of positivity within our County. As a Unit, it has enhanced not only our asset wealth but also our player participation and retention, it's a state-of-the-art training facility that can and has been utilised to its capacity, and perhaps beyond at times.

I firmly believe that the LOETB COE along with Laois Hire OMP has become a conduit of unity within our County. The very strong sense of pride and satisfaction is palpable amongst our patrons and players alike that have attended games, training sessions or even practice matches this season. These are always seen as an extension to our own local club facilities.

A lot of decisions have been made around this facility over the past few years and we have tried earnestly to be as pragmatic as possible with every decision taken, none more so than the recent irrigation project, and the provision of new stand seats. Both projects jointly costing in the region of half a million euros. This newly refurbished stand can hopefully add to match day comfort for our spectators. Unlike others, we have not asked any of our units for extra monies towards upgrade works/new projects during 2023 as clearly outlined in our Safety & Facilities report.

Looking forward to 2024, I would envisage a greater focus regards a needs assessment for the construction of a 4 G pitch and upgrading our stand facilities to ensure that those with disabilities, can enjoy an unrivalled event day experience. The guiding principle for this is that visitors with disabilities are accommodated and have the necessary facilities available to meet their needs. Furthermore, the provision of a new electronic scoreboard is imminent. All positive when brought to fruition.

I want to thank everyone involved with maintaining these grounds and for offering their continued hard work, especially: John Kelly, Colm McEvoy & his fellow workers, including Mick Glynn and Willie Stackpool.

County Teams & County Representation

Delegates, except for our U20 Football B Championship Final, we have concluded our on-field activities for 2023 and tonight I had intended to give my own brief synopsis on team performances during 2023. However, instead I want to share with you instead some alarming sentiments brought to my attention in recent weeks from certain quarters.

It appears to be the view of some, may I say the ‘minority folk’, whether speaking on their own behalf or on behalf of their respective club(s), that they will not be encouraging any of their players to go into the Laois set up as the County seemingly don’t care about player welfare.

I as County Chairperson, strongly refute this and see this as totally inaccurate and a blatant mistruth.

In support of my argument, Laois GAA see’s the player as central to all its activities and one of our key objectives every year is to enhance the experience of all our players within Laois GAA. Among the key areas of player welfare focused on in Laois GAA include:

- Support for injured players through the Player Injury Scheme
- Our bespoke contract commitment with UPMC which includes:
 - o Priority access to diagnostics (MRI, Dexa, X-Ray, CT-Scan)
 - o Priority access to a specialist orthopaedic consultant.
 - o Priority access to additional medical services within our hospital network.
 - o Access to Sports Science supports.
 - o FREE Baseline Concussion Assessments and priority access to specialist consultant
 - o Priority access to Sports Physician and Physiotherapy team
 - o Specialist equipment access to minimise recovery times.

And finally Counselling supports in areas such as:

Anxiety – Depression – Bereavement – Relationship issues – Family issues – Addiction treatment are always available

Hence, I firmly believe that Laois GAA can be proud of its overall record of looking after its players. Of course there is room for improvement. Of course, we must continue to learn and develop new welfare initiatives as new challenges emerge. And yes, Laois GAA are committed to doing that.

Furthermore, as Chairperson the two most challenging aspects for me is overseeing our annual fixtures calendar and appointing competent managers / management teams for the betterment of all involved. And to be told that a young Laois hurler or footballer may be discouraged from representing their own County, is totally unethical and for me personally, an injustice and a wrong is bestowed on such young Gaels.

In reflection of the aforementioned, for 2024 I ask that all us loyal Gaels to encourage, at every opportunity our young talent to make themselves available and proudly represent their County if and when afforded the opportunity.

Continuing, I want to thank all players who have represented their club and their County over the past year. I am fully aware of the sacrifices made by many. Likewise, to all outgoing management teams, thank you for all you have given to Laois GAA. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to wish all County Teams including management well for 2024.

And on a very positive note, my congratulations to Stephen 'Picky' Maher (Clough-Ballacolla) who was selected on the Joe McDonagh Cup 'Team of The Year', in recognition of his outstanding displays and I hope this award will be honoured and celebrated by both his family and his club.

Fixtures

The split season is still novel perhaps and may have some advantages. For example, clubs are provided with some clarity which is to be welcomed of course. However, the split has also presented challenges which we had to acknowledge and overcome. In Laois, I know our fixtures Secretary Niall Handy (and indeed all fixture committee members) endeavours each year to provide a clear vision and games programme which respects all the players who play our games at club and County level.

There has been an inordinate number of requests from some Club Secretary's and managers regarding rescheduling of fixtures this year. As a committee, such requests are heard and discussed and where possible facilitated. However, I would plead with clubs here tonight to understand our predicament, that all requests for rescheduling fixtures cannot be facilitated for reasons such as dual players, dual clubs, schools matches, Leinster Competitions etc.

Continuing, as stated at last year's Convention, an undertaking was given to discuss further the viability of a new senior hurling championship format. Accordingly, both a hurling and football review was facilitated for with the clubs. From a hurling perspective, some clubs expressed an interest in exploring a 10 or 12 Team senior championship, whilst staying as status quo was also a probable option. As we now know, the hurling championship remains as was for 2024, and change will happen in 2025, when we see the start of a new 10 team senior hurling championship, and the relevant changes to grades thereunder.

From a football perspective, this year saw the introduction of both a Senior B competition and Intermediate alike. Clubs' response regarding same was very positive from a Senior B perspective. However, there was some concern, albeit minimal, to the value of the Intermediate B competition, considering no final took place owing to unavailability of enough players from one of the finalist. General consensus was to run again as is for 2024.

We seldom see or hear about the good things which happen, day in, day out, but they are there, and we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we do have a special and unique Organisation, one that can facilitate change as outlined earlier. The GAA still holds a massive place in society around the Country. Clubs are seen as pillars of the

Community, a refuge in times of struggles and a billboard for showing off our great achievements.

However, more and more Gaels are now rightly expressing how slowly but surely the joy is being taken out of our games. Those of us who's affection for hurling and football runs deep in our psychic, are now asking 'are we been offered the best possible games experience for players and spectators alike'? personally, I say we're NOT!!

Have I got the ultimate solution, no I don't, but I do think we need to be proactive and intuitive and encourage more risk-taking and incentives same. At the very least, we must experiment without delay.

Sponsors

The sustainable financing of all our units is of paramount importance. We have a duty of care to see that our clubs and our County is on a sound financial footing at all times. Thankfully, our financial statements reflect this.

To our main sponsor Laois Hire, I want to express our deepest appreciation to John Killeen & Keith McCann who have committed to supporting Laois GAA for the coming 4 years. This is a significant pronouncement to Laois as we strive to achieve optimal outcomes. Similarly, thanks to The Magi Group, Laois/Offaly Education Training Board, Enva & The Midlands Park Hotel, for their generous and continued support. Going forward Laois GAA must generate sufficient sponsors for us to maintain and enhance current structures and facilities. This would not be possible without the hard work and due diligence of Pascal McEvoy and his Finance Committee. In the true ethos of CLG, our largest single sponsor is in fact ourselves.

In addition, Laois Gaels through men and women give voluntary contributions, asking nothing in return, only to see their County to progress on and off the field. I want to thank each and every club, and member of Laois Gaels and in particular the hard-working committee members and in particular Leo Turley and Brian Breen.

Can I take this opportunity to wish Leo Turley well in the further, as he now steps down from his role as Chairperson of Laois Gaels, and to the in-coming chairperson 'Colm Begley', we look forward to working together to further enhance the work of your predecessor.

I always championed the very real benefits of club and county working in unison for the betterment of CLG in our County. I want to commend all our clubs on being extremely resolute and pragmatic during the year when faced with difficult times and sad experiences.

The easiest thing in the world is to despair and become inward looking. However, our clubs have come through such tragedy's and, in doing so, demonstrated their commitment to their people and families in their local communities.

Continuing, the developments going on at many clubs are an inspiration and showcase of just what an important focal point of the community our Association was and is.

We have seen an exponential growth in the use of social media in the association.

Social media is a wonderful tool for the promotion of our games, but it also has great destructive power when used recklessly, and in my opinion, is often a negative distraction to our members.

I would urge all clubs and all coaches and managers within clubs to conduct training and awareness programmes around responsible use of social media for all your members and players, particularly younger players.

We need to create a responsible and considerate culture in this area going forward. We cannot ignore this challenge. To do so would be negligent in the protection of our youth. Your personal reputation is at stake and also that of our Association. Act in haste, repent at your leisure.”

Equally as important is the role of more traditional forms of media. In Laois, our games enjoy widespread exposure. I want to thank all the reporters and photographers for their coverage of our Gaelic games in 2023. Our aim is to have an efficient and professional relationship with all forms of media, whilst accepting this may not always be achievable.

I also want to acknowledge our insightful partnership with Clubber TV. One of our foremost thoughts as a management team was how do we, ‘Laois GAA’ grow and attract a broader base for our games. I think this partnership with Clubber TV gives us not only the ability to give people greater access to games they may not otherwise have seen, but it also guarantees a consistent level of match day production, aligned with the proposition of giving viewers ‘the best seat in the house’, when viewers can’t be in ‘Laois Hire’ O’ Moore Park.

As we know, Gaelic games can provide chaos, and that is its glory. Anything can happen. Accordingly, I do feel that this should be a partnership, a partnership of equals, and I hope this is the start of great relationship for both Laois GAA and Clubber TV, and indeed prospective viewers alike.”

Executive & County Committees.

Over the years, many people have served diligently in different roles and on various County committees. This work is vital to the running of our County schedule of activities and I want to thank each and every one of them for their efforts.

I also want to urge caution. As you’ll see here this evening, we have none of elected positions contested on our Management committee. It’s very disappointing and it means one of two things: either everyone is entirely satisfied with everything that is being done, or there is a degree of apathy towards executive roles.

Neither is a healthy state of being in my view.

If we do not see more people coming forward into leadership and committee roles, then we will suffer collectively. Much of the good work which has been done at club and County level can quickly be lost if we do not start to develop a greater culture of collective responsibility. We have too many people too quick to criticise, yet slow to help out.

This isn’t just at County level; it’s an issue at club level too. In a way, I’m preaching to the converted here tonight. Volunteers are being squeezed with more and more demands on their time with an ever-increasing workload on serving at County board level or indeed club level. Make your clubs inclusive and welcoming places and also help to foster an awareness of the fact that County committees also need people to survive and function properly. I cannot stress that enough.

Coaching & Games

It was another busy year in our Coaching and Games department and the full details of all activities are contained in the convention booklet. When talking about games, Youth & Coaching are very much to the fore for us all. I believe the club with active Coaching Officer (s) will be the club who will reap the most reward. To try to help every club to progress further in these areas I will be asking the incoming Steering Committee to oversee the review and updating of our current Player Pathway for the County which in turn clubs will feed into. It's aim will be to pinpoint the issues clubs face in retaining young people and what more we can do to ensure our youth are continually attracted to our games.

Following this, our Committee will be asked to address the barriers facing our coaches. Most coaches get involved as they believe they can make a difference. What we aim to do is assist them to achieve this goal – in Laois that will involve recruiting the best possible coaches and mentors, ably led by our Games Manager 'Shane Keegan' and supported by our GDA's and GPO's alike.

Similarly, I will also be asking our Referees Committee to look into a similar recruitment for Development Squad referees with the aim of producing a batch of young referees wishing to progress and assisting them in that aim.

I want to thank Brian Quinn our Coaching Officer whom I think has contribute significantly over the last 12 months in the area of recruitment, be it Games Manager, GDA's, GPO's etc, I think we can look forward to a freshness and exciting time ahead with a lot of new faces aboard.

Integration

Efforts on the continued integration of all Gaelic games to include Ladies Football and Camogie within the wider GAA are currently underway at National Level. In many ways, we are ahead of the curve.

All codes enjoy and make use of the facilities here at LOETB COE & Laois HIRE OMP where feasible. Working together for the promotion of all Gaelic games is very much part of our overall ethos.

Furthermore, in recent years the involvement of women has been muted as revolutionised both Gaelic games and their administration. Last year's congress voted overwhelmingly to advance the process of integration, but it comes with challenges.

Delegates, I'm on record in Croke Park (Chairpersons Quarterly Meeting) expressing my views that both the LGFA and Camogie must first come together, show they can operate and cooperate before we the GAA can even consider coming up with a road map as to how this will be brought to a successful conclusion. This is similar to views our former Uachtaran (Liam O' Neill) expressed shortly after his term of office, when he said for integration to happen and evolve, both the above parties should come together as one.

Interestingly, Mary McAleese sentiments as expressed on her recent Late Late Show appearance, in my view has perhaps given a false picture of where integration is actually at. Furthermore, it has afforded certain stakeholders a level of expectations, which in reality is untrue expectations, that cannot be met without investment on many

fronts from investors external to all parties e.g. Government funding and serious funding at that.

In addition, I would also like to draw your attention to pressure we as County Boards are experience as a result of statements from certain individuals from the GPA, for some reason say 'We will be ready to mobilise' - Warning if female inter-county charter not in place. The GPA has promised to be 'organised and mobilised' for 'any eventuality' going forward. As chairperson of Laois GAA, I firmly believe such statements are far from constructive or indeed helpful.

The pace at which this is evolving must be paused, until we have a clearer and more strategic vision as to where, how and when this can be a genuine reality.

Just as integration has supplemented both playing and administrative numbers in rural areas, the boom in women's games, places significant and maybe unrealistic demands on our current facilities and additional pressure on a poor public recreation infrastructure.

Demographics

Changing demographics leave rural and urban clubs with major challenges. In the face of a rapidly evolving society many clubs struggle to find players while bigger clubs can't find anywhere to play.

As outlined more than 50 years ago, the McNamee Commission, the first in-depth study undertaken by the Association, stated an essential and ever present difficulty. "The GAA is concerned with all the people of Ireland, urban and rural. The problem is that the association is weakest where the population is increasing; it is strongest where the population is declining. That problem has always been there but the extent of the adverse trends in recent years has now brought a full realisation of its seriousness for the association."

In light of this Laois GAA are please to say that Adrienne McCarthy (Portarlington GAA) will be proposed for the role of Demographics Officer and it is envisaged Adrienne will be best equipped to support any such challenges clubs may face.

Governance & Volunteerism

A Governance Review undertaken with the Audit Department in Croke Park has identified key compliance areas, including establishing a Governance & Audit Committee, independent of our County Executive. This committee advises and supports our County Board regards operating to the necessary standards and good practices.

Laois GAA is an ever-evolving Organisation and has grown year on year and requires a large number of volunteers and committee members to assist with the running of our County. I would like to thank all our volunteers and Sub-Committee members who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure we operate to very high standards across so many different fronts.

Accordingly, the main governance challenge facing the association from my own viewpoint is 'volunteers' being held to account in areas where they may not have adequate time to dedicate themselves to, or sufficient expertise.

The GAA has become more and more professional in how it's operated and what is expected of its units, which is not a bad thing, but what County officers are now being asked to deal with is, possibly, going beyond the limit of what a volunteer can do.

"The workload and expectations of our volunteers, at all levels, has increased at an exponential rate. The challenge we face on foot of this is attracting and keeping good people involved." People must remember that the officers carry out their duties in a voluntary capacity and, while we don't always do things right, we do try our best for Laois GAA."

"I worry are we saying these are roles that can only be done by someone who is retired, somebody who has a less demanding job or, perhaps, someone who doesn't have family commitments. There are so many ways we are excluding people from possibly becoming County board/club officers because of the demands placed on us."

"Do we need a strategy as an Association overall for how we operate in terms of our paid staff and volunteers?"

All (of) this inter-county activity, never mind all the other different parts that make up our Organisation in our County, comes at a cost, and as you will have seen in our Treasurer presentation of the accounts, we are still committed to a sizable debt which we're obliged and committed to repay. Again, I want to thank our loyal supporters who travelled around the Country, including across the water, in support of all our County teams we really appreciate your support.

Scór

I want to acknowledge the Scór Committee for the promotion of Scór Sinsear agus Scór na nOg but we would love to see more clubs getting involved. However, the clubs that entered such competitions acquitted themselves very well and I want to thank our Culture Officer, Noel Stapleton in this regard.

Closing remarks

Finally, as I assume the role of Chairperson for 2024, on a personal note I'd like to thank my colleagues on the Management Committee and County Committee for their work and support all year and many others who have helped in various ways. We win together and we lose together.

A special word of thanks to our outgoing PRO Richard Kennedy who is not seeking re-election for 2024. A familiar sight wherever Laois play— thanks for your contribution and your vision for a better Laois Richie.

Similarly, Coiste na nÓg continues to provide an excellent introduction to competition for our young players and a sincere thanks to Joe and Tony, it was much appreciated, albeit an onerous task.

We don't say thank-you enough in the GAA, but I want us ALL to collectively thank and acknowledge the work we all do. Can I ask you to turn to the person(s) beside you and just shake their hand and say thanks, thanks for all you have done for the GAA in our Club and County.

On a personal note, it has been a year filled with challenges, a year that has tested the rule book on occasions, seen the implementation of more Regulations, the introduction of Codes into our games, democracy been practiced for the good of Laois GAA,

but all in all, a year that I believe has seen change, be it organisational change, be it our games assembly e.g. our 2023 football competitions and our hurling make-up for 2025, change in some of our administrative roles, additional GPO's, change to how we promote and provide coverage of our games. This I believe is change for the betterment of Laois GAA.

There are so many people who give their best for Laois GAA throughout the year and their efforts are recognised and very much appreciated. I'd like to thank everyone who makes that effort – in your club, as a delegate, on a committee, preparing pitches, acting as event Controller (Tom Jones) a steward, as a player, as a coach, as a referee – it sounds like a cliché but it truly does take us all. Also to our new office administrator, Pam Cooney, I wish you well in your new role and I know feedback from the clubs dealing with Pam, is nothing other than positive.

In Conclusion, we all look forward to the new year with enthusiasm and renewed determination to keep Cumann Luchleas Gael Laois at the forefront of all facets of our Association.

I wish all our Club units, our County Teams, our staff, each and every friend and member of Laois GAA, wherever they may reside, a very peaceful Christmas, and a healthy, happy sporting New Year.

Míle buíchas arís, agus nollaig shona dhaoibh go léir.

Many thanks again, and happy Christmas to you all.

P.S. Ó Ceallaigh

6. Election of Officers: The following officers were elected –

- Cathaoirleach (Chairman): PS O'Ceallaigh was elected unopposed.
- Cisteoir (Treasurer): Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí was elected unopposed.
- Leas Cathaoirleach (Vice Chairman): Ciarán Mac Eochaidh was elected unopposed
- Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer): Briain O Braoin was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Oiliuna (Coaching): Briain Ó Coinne was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish): Nollaig Mac an Ghaill was elected unopposed.
- Ard Comhairle (Central Council) Delegate: Mairtín O Broin was elected unopposed.
- Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council) Delegates (2): Tomas O Cleirigh & Briain O hAlluinn were elected unopposed.
- Congress Delegates (6): PS O Ceallaigh, Mairtín Ó Broin & Niall Mac Laitinh automatically elected along with nominees Briain O hAllúinn, Tomas O Cleirigh & Tomas Mac Seoin who were elected unopposed.
- Leinster Convention Delegates (7): Briain O hAllúinn &, Risteard O Cinnéide automatically elected. An Cathaoirelach announced remaining delegates would be appointed prior to Leinster Convention in Midlands Park Hotel on Sat 13th. January .
- Oifigeach Caidrimh Poibli (P.R.O.): As there was no nominee for this position. An Runai stated that election for this position be deferred to Special Convention in

January, where representation would be as at County Committee and nomination papers to be circulated later this week.

All elected officers acknowledged their Club for their nomination and thanked convention for their election to respective management roles.

7. **Coaching and Games Overview** – Shane Keegan Head of Games Development briefed delegates on our current Coaching and Games team, who have settled in well to the role and will now endeavour to work hard across a multiple of facets in the year ahead in an effort to do everything they can to help take Laois GAA in a forward direction. He outlined a brief synopsis of each of these sectors, incorporating present GPO's and plans to increase these personnel; plans for rollout of Formal Coach Education and Informal Coach Education; Go Games and importance of providing a regular programme of games for kids, in a non-competitive environment; our Academy squads and roles of Donie Brennan in Football and Ross Young in Hurling; successful Setanta and Ó Mórdha Óg programmes and plans for 2024; Primary Schools and role of our GPO's and GDA's engaging with kids at this age in developing a love of Gaelic Games at this age and increasing participation in our Clubs with this engagement; Secondary Schools and the challenges we face in getting students and teachers on board at this level; Athletic Development, under the tuition of our Head of Athletic Development Tom Hargroves and Performance GDA Brian Ging, with our Academy and Intercounty panels and plans to assist Clubs with their own Athletic development plans and finally the promotion of our games with increased social media presence and further interaction by means of mascots for county games, mini matches at half time, competitions and engagement of county and former county players in coaching workshops. He concluded by stating is availability to liaise with our Clubs on all matters Coaching and Games and willingness to take advice and direction from same in this sector.

8. **Motions** –

1. That a Clubs second or additional team can go forward to the Leinster Club championship if they win their County championship at that grade (**Cumann Ná Clairsigh**)
The Motion was passed unanimously on a show of hands after being proposed by Eanna Ó Faoláin and seconded by Ursula Ní Dhonnchaidh.
An Runaí stated that this was considered to be an amendment to "Code" 11.5 (a) (ii) and in his opinion needed to be ratified by Central Council, rather than Congress.
He asked Ná Clairsigh representatives permission to put in rule format, to which they agreed.
2. In accordance with the Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Appendix 4, Club Constitution, Executive Committee, 7.19 and Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Chapter 3, Organisational Structure, The County, Convention, Rule 3.12 Motions. I wish

to propose the following for consideration and submission to Annual Congress (Playing Rules Motions); Official Guide 2023, Part 1, Chapter 3, National, Congress, 3.38 Motions (d) Motions to revise Playing Rules may be tabled only in years divisible by five. Any such motion shall be submitted by the date required for submission of motions for the previous year's Congress and shall be referred to the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules for evaluation.

Background: It is widely accepted that Gaelic Football games have become very boring, lacking in skill, devoid of progressive play and generally poor to watch. I believe that part of the problem contributing to this deterioration is the “blanket defence” and the playing of the ball backwards even as far back as to the goalkeeper.

Purpose of Motion: To alter the rules of Gaelic Football so that the ball must always be played FORWARD (i.e. NO back passes allowed) BETWEEN the two 20 metre lines. I believe this will greatly change the dynamic of Gaelic Football for the better forcing teams and players to be positive and progressive in their play.

Motion: The ball may only be played forward between the 20m lines. Horizontal or “square” play will be permitted but play that is behind the Player playing the ball shall not be permitted. Once the ball has been played into the area between the two 20m lines it may not be carried or played back behind the 20m line by the Defending Team. Penalty for a “Backwards Pass/Play” between the two 20m lines shall be a free kick from where the ball is received/lands OR where the ball was played from if that is the more advantageous spot to the Attacking Team. If the ball is received or lands inside the 13m line, then the free kick shall be taken from the 13m line at the point closest to the centre of the goals.

Other Rules Affected: (* This is suggested and not authoritative and subject to review by the Standing Committee on the Playing Rules in accordance with rule).

It is suggested that this Motion, if adopted, be considered a “new rule” to be inserted into the Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rule 1, The Play as Rule 1.11.

- (a) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.2, Exceptions (ii) Any player who falls or is knocked to the ground while in possession of the ball may fist or palm the ball away on the ground, and may score by so doing. In the event that the player who falls or is knocked to the ground while in possession is between the two 20 metre lines he may only play the ball forward, or square, i.e. in the direction of the Opposition's goals. He may not play the ball backwards, i.e. towards his own goals.
- (b) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.3, When the ball is not on the ground, it may be played by any part of the body. In the event that the player who is playing the ball is between the two 20 metre lines he may only play the ball forward, or square, i.e. in the direction of the Opposition's goals. He may not play the ball backwards, i.e. towards his own goals. In the event that the ball is accidentally played off any part of the player's body by a Team Mate and it ends up travelling backwards as

a result it shall be deemed to be a backwards pass and therefore a free kick to the Opposition. “Accidental Backpass”.

- (c) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 1.4, When a player is in possession of the ball, it may be:- (a) carried for a maximum of four consecutive steps or held in the hand(s) for no longer than the time needed to take four steps; (b) played from the foot to the hand(s) -toe- tapped; (c) bounced once, and once after each toe-tap; (d) changed from one hand to the other once, with the original holding hand maintaining contact until the change is completed; [In the event of (a), (b), (c) and (d) above occurring between the two 20m lines the ball MAY be carried backwards by the Player without penalty, however the ball may not be carried back over the 20m line by the Defending Team]; (e) played away with: (i) a fist (ii) an open hand-in which instance there shall be a definite underhand striking action [In this event – (e) – occurring between the two 20m lines the ball may only be played forwards, or square. It may not be played backwards.] (f) released for a kick, a toe-tap or a pass with a fist or an open hand. The ball may be knocked from an opponent’s hand(s) by flicking it with the open hand. [In the event of the ball being knocked from an opponent’s hand between the two 20m lines the ball may only be played forwards, or square. It may not be played backwards.]
- (d) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, The Playing Rules of Gaelic Football, Rules of Fair Play, Rule 1 – The Play, 2.9; When a team plays the ball over the sideline, a free kick from the hand(s) shall be awarded to the opposing team from outside the boundary line from the place where the ball crossed the sideline. If that place is between the two 20m lines then the Player taking the sideline kick must play the ball forward. If opposing players play the ball simultaneously over the sideline, or if the officials are not sure which team played the ball last, the Referee, facing the players, shall throw in the ball between one player from each team 13m from the sideline and directly infield from where the ball crossed the sideline. A ball that strikes a sideline or corner flag shall be treated as having crossed the sideline. All players except the player taking the sideline kick, or the two players contesting the throw-in, shall be at least 13m from the ball until it has been kicked or thrown in.
- (e) Official Guide 2023, Part 2, Important Terms and Definitions – Football and Hurling; introducing the definition of “Forward, Square/Horizontal and Backwards”;
- 24. Forward When playing the ball, the ball moves in the direction of the Opposition’s end of the pitch.
 - 25. Square/Horizontal When playing the ball, the ball moves in a direction that is parallel to the end lines. i.e. across the pitch, neither towards the Opposition’s end of the pitch nor the Defender’s end of the pitch.
 - 26. Backwards/Backpass When playing the ball, the ball moves in the direction of the Defender’s end of the pitch.

(Cumann Portlaoise).

The Motion was passed unanimously on a show of hands after being proposed by Peadar Ó Néil and seconded by Liam Ó Fionnalaigh.

An Runai stated that motions to change Playing Rules would not be considered until 2025 Congress, but that such motions must be submitted to the Standing Committee on Playing Rules prior to 23rd December 2023 for consideration.

9. Strategic Review – Update: C. Mac Eochaidh briefed delegates on the various themes of the review which included Maximising Participation & Review of County Demographics; Coaching and Games Development; Inter-County Teams; Facilities & Infrastructure Development; Promotion & Branding; Financing the Plan and our Laois GAA Community. He outlined that the next steps of the review included further liaison with the main stakeholders and engagement with clubs via a survey that will be circulated to all Clubs early in the new year. He was hopeful of document being completed by next March and that this review will provide a clear vision for our County for the next five years.

10. Any other Business:

- **Walsh Cup:** C. Ó Greacháin stated that opening round of Walsh Cup versus Offaly was scheduled for O’Moore Park on Thurs 4th. January and enquired possibility of some of these games being played in Club grounds similar to Mountrath and Rathdowney earlier this year. An Runai replied that no official venue had yet been submitted for Walsh Cup and they were exploring a number of venues.
- **Joe Brennan Referee:** L. Ó Rannachain wished to acknowledge the contribution of Joe Brennan, both as a player and a referee and wished him well in his retirement, which was re-iterated by the Chairperson.

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of Sympathy were extended to the following families:

- Annanough:** Tuohy, Deegan (Birdie), Deegan (Oliver) and Murphy (Tom) Families;
- Arles Kilcruise:** McDonald (John), Byrne, Behan and Mulhall Families;
- Arles Killeen:** Moran (John), McDonald (Jim) and Behan Families;
- Ballyfin:** Culleton (Ronan), Phelan (Denis) and Dunne (Eamon) Families;
- Ballylinan:** Walsh (Fintan), Walsh (Mick), Nolan, Bambrick, Brennan, Kelly, Dunne, Julian and Renehan Families;
- Ballypickas:** Wallace (Nonie), Foyle (Seamus), Cahill (Lynn), McEnergy (Carmel), Mulhall (Nuala), Bland (Anna), Rowan (Paddy), Lyons (Jack), McDonald (Lily) and O'Neill Families;
- Ballyroan Abbey:** Lyons (Jack), Beale (Nuala), McEnergy (Carmel), Mulhall (Mary), Foyle (Seamus), Bland (Anna) and Cahill (Lynn) Families;
- Barrowhouse:** Grey, Malone, Keville and Brennan Families.
- Borris in Ossory Kilcotton:** Abraham, Kelly, Dunne, Sweeney (Josephine), Phelan, O'Connor (Roscrea), Sadlier (Mary), Dollard (Ben), Geoghegan, Coyne, Delaney, Quinlan and Whelan (Dan) Families;
- Camross:** Lalor (Marie), Dowling (Denis), Scully (Michael), Moore (Phil), Mortimer (Donal), Danne (Gladys), Maher (Mairead), Dooley (Janet), Palmer (Cha), Coffey (Vincent), Hyland (Bridie), Phelan (Mickey), Drennan (Joe), Callaghan (John) and Ryan (Liam) Families.
- Castletown:** Cooke and Phelan Families;

- Clonad:** Sherlock, Moore (Pat), Foyle (Seamus), Delaney (Therese), McEvoy, McGuinness (Kathleen), Delaney (Leo), Clear, McCabe, Fitzpatrick, Cooke, Devoy, Browne, Fennell (John), Fitzpatrick, Lambe (Pat), Dunne (Colm), McNamara, Keane, Callaghan, Lyons, Donoghue and Walsh (Fint) Families;
- Clough Ballacolla:** Hyland (Agnes), Kerwin (Jim), Fitzpatrick (Nora), Clear (Sean), Coffey (Vincent), Begadon (May) and Byrne (Mick) Families;
- Clonaslee St Manmans:** Young (Eugene), Hogan and Dunne Families;
- Colt:** Delaney, Scully, Grant (Bosco), Commins (Claremorris), Phelan, Dowling, Murphy, Rafter, Brennan and Walsh Families;
- Courtwood:** Duffy, Dunne, Flynn, O'Connor (Richard), Murphy, Kearney, O'Connell (Tess) and Behan Families;
- Emo:** Moore (Pat) Family;
- Graigucullen:** Callan and Foley Families;
- Kilcavan:** Dunne (Mary), Sullivan (Pat), Weston (Betty) and Gorman Families.
- Killeshin:** McEvoy (Kevin) Family;
- Mountmellick:** O'Mahony (Ger & Bríd) and Kearns Families;
- O'Dempsey's:** Larke (George), Fallon (Sean), Dunne (Denis), Lawlor (Jim) and O'Neill (Shane) Families;
- Portarlinton:** Ward (Phillip), McGowan (Jonathon), Emerson, Hyland, Leavy and Donoghue Families;
- Park Ratheniska:** Ramsbottom (Paddy), Fingleton, Walsh, Sherlock, Cushen, O'Hara and Fennell Families;
- Portlaoise:** Scully (TA), Hughes (Jim), Brennan (Paddy), Brown (David), Fitzpatrick (Eoin & Dylan), Sydes (Dick), Walsh (Farney) and Hoban (Pat) Families;
- Rathdowney Errill:** Cahill and Dunne Families;

- Rosenallis:**..... Clancy, Gorman, McEvoy (Dorothy), McEvoy (Kathleen), Fennell (Billy) and Somers Families;
- Shanahoe:** Drennan, Malone, Bergin, Kirwan, Nolan, Bergin, Phelan and Kavanagh Families;
- Slieve Bloom:** Champion (Holly), Kavanagh and Heffernan Families;
- Spink:** Gorman, Costigan, Cahill, Wallace, Dwyer, Brennan and Hennessy Families;
- St Joseph's:**..... Knowles, Dwyer, O'Keeffe, Broderick, Rowan, Brennan and Lacey Families;
- St Lazerian's Abbeyleix:** Lally (Cormac) and Kelly Families;
- St Fintan's Mountrath:**..... Champion, Kirwan, Jackson, Ryan and Jordan Families;
- Stradbally:**..... Ramsbottom (Paddy), Lalor (Gerry), Fennell (Billy) and Langton (Birdie) Families;
- The Harps:**..... Deegan (Rory), Walsh (Padraig), Townsend and Finnegan Families;
- The Rock:** O'Riordan, Byrne, Grehan, O'Mahony and McKalisky Families;
- Timahoe:**..... McNamara (Ronan), Foyle and Rogers Families;
- Trumera:**..... Kirwan (Adam), Callaghan (Johnny), Kirwan (Donal), O'Neill (Fr Kevin) and Seale Families;

Tuairisc an Runaí 2024

I wish to extend a warm welcome all our delegates to our annual Laois GAA Convention and hope we can all reflect on Laois GAA affairs during the past year.

In terms of Inter-county activity, 2024 has to be considered a very successful year on the playing fields by means of our Senior Football and Hurling panels reaching four National GAA Finals. Whilst we celebrate our success in both Allianz League Division 2 Hurling and Division 4 Football finals and welcome promotion to the higher Divisions in 2025, we will reflect on the disappointment of our narrow defeat to Offaly in Joe McDonagh Cup final and our loss to Down in Tailteann Cup final.

Briefly reflect my thoughts on the year past

Senior Football

O'Byrne Cup – As normal this competition was used to view and trial some new panellists. In our opening game, we suffered a narrow defeat to Offaly in Stradbally and hence qualified for a new “shield” type competition. Here we paid the penalty for fielding a much changed panel to play Wicklow in Rathnew and ultimately exited this competition.

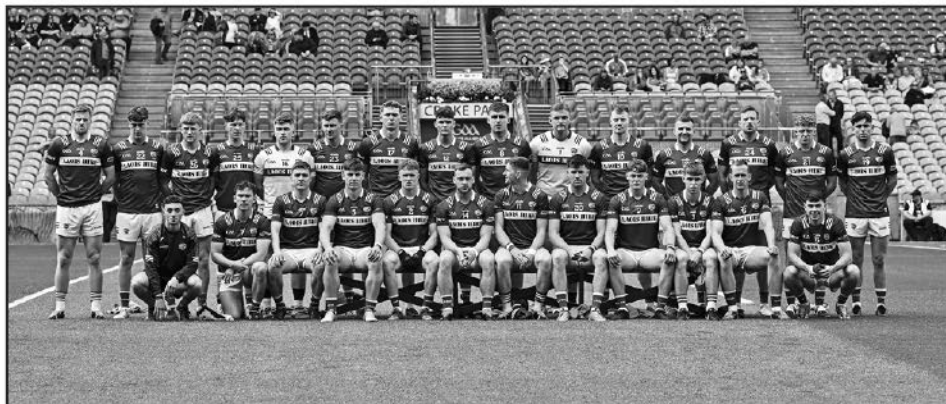
It is disappointing to see our pre-season competitions removed from the calendar for 2025. With the potential advent of the Football Review Committee's new rules, it would have been hugely beneficial to our panellists to experience these proposed new rules in a competitive environment prior to the Allianz League. It was on the recommendation of the GPA on the basis of

player welfare that these competitions have been rested, and ironically its same members will all now participate in challenge games to become accustomed to these proposed changes! The decision also showed little respect for the Leinster GAA benevolent fund for our injured players, which has greatly benefited from the gate receipts from these competitions.

League – At the outset, the ultimate goal was promotion back to Division 3, which always looks very achievable, but from our previous experience here, every game in this Division was going to be a dog-fight and not easily won. Fortunately, we got off to the best possible start with five successive wins against Longford, Carlow and London at home, Wexford in Wexford Park and Tipperary in Semple Stadium and had actually qualified for the League final, prior to our final two games. In our penultimate game, we suffered a narrow defeat to Leitrim at home, prior to finishing the campaign with a comprehensive win against Waterford in the SETU Arena in Carriganore. In the final, we faced Leitrim in Croke Park and avenged our previous league defeat in impressive fashion.

Hopefully, promotion to Division 3 football will help further progress this young panel and I look forward to the challenges of Leitrim, Kildare and Fermanagh away, whilst welcoming Offaly, Sligo, Antrim and Clare to Laois Hire O'Moore Park.

Leinster Championship / Tailteann Cup – The most disappointing performance of the 2024 campaign came in our Leinster



*Laois Senior Football Team -
Allianz League Football Div 4 Winners & Tailteann Cup Runners-up*



*Laois Senior Hurling Team
- Allianz Hurling League Div 2 Winners
& Joe McDonagh Cup Runners-up*

Championship game against Offaly in “Laois Hire” O’Moore Park. Our neighbours outplayed us in almost every sector of the game and were deserving winners.

In fairness to team and management, they gathered diligently to prepare for the Tailteann Cup campaign. I believe this competition to be hugely significant to the GAA calendar and particularly to counties like ourselves, whom at this stage of our development are not competitive enough to compete in Leinster championship as yet and progress in competition of this nature will help us take that next step. The competition format is likely to change for 2026, with a proposed motion to Congress to change competition structure to format similar to what is in operation for our local club football championship, but the purpose will remain the same. I think our extended run in the competition the previous year and perhaps the disappointing manner that we exited last year, helped fuel that enthusiasm and ambition for an extended run in this year’s competition.

Our opening games in the Group stage certainly did not portray that enthusiasm, with a draw in our opening game with Carlow and a narrow victory against Wicklow in Aughrim. In our final league game against Fermanagh in Pearse Park Longford, I think we saw a glimpse of the performance that this team was capable of, albeit in a narrow defeat to the Erne county. In our preliminary quarter-final, we hosted New York in Laois Hire O’Moore Park, possibly the first time in our history that we had both New York and London at home in the same year. Whether it was complacency on our behalf, the “exiles” certainly deserve praise for their committed performance, whereby it was only in the fi-

nal quarter that we took control to win this game. Our quarter-final game seen us play Kildare in O’Connor Park Tullamore and an encouraging display seen us emerge deserving winners, amazingly our first championship victory over our neighbours since 2005. In our semi-final, we were drawn again Antrim in Croke Park where another impressive performance seen us qualify for the final. Here we renewed rivalry with Down, who had inflicted a heavy defeat on us at semi-final stage of this competition the previous year.

In fairness, I must give credit to GAA headquarters for their organisation and promotion of semi-finals and final of Tailteann Cup, top class and hugely beneficial to our sponsors Laois Hire, although whether it will continue to take certain stage on a Sunday rather than All Ireland Senior Hurling quarter-finals is unlikely. Again, our supporters turned up in huge numbers, which offered great support to our team and you would like to hope that such support will continue on a more consistent basis in 2025. I think both players and management were conscious that we were not going to allow that “goal spree” we experienced last year occur this time. In the final, Down were deserving winners, more clinical on the day, but we had opportunities in the final quarter, which certainly gives hope for progression in the future.

I wish to take this opportunity to compliment all our players who committed to our county during the year. A number of our players were unavailable this year due to their desire to travel and more have taken that decision for the coming year, whilst disappointing from a Club and County perspective, I do wish them well and hope



Portarlington - SFC Winners 2024



Clough Ballacolla - SHC Winners 2024

they enjoy. The loss of our Captain Evan O'Carroll to an injury received in the Inter Provincial competition is also a huge blow to morale. There loss, I believe is an opportunity for some of our more exiting young players to fulfil their ambition to play for Laois and excel in a Laois jersey.

I want to thank our management and back-room team for their dedication and efforts during the year and who will remain in place for 2025. I believe they played a significant role in the turnaround in our fortunes during the year. Thanks to - Justin McNulty (Manager); Ross Munnelly and Diarmuid Carroll (Selectors / Coach); James Clarke (Goalkeeper Coach); Tom Hargroves (Strength and Conditioning Coach); Liam Ramsbottom (Player Liaison); Tony Bambrick, Daragh Sinnott, Liam Delaney, Niall Creery and Richard Dunne (Match Analysis); Paul Dargan, Martin Corrigan and Ian Bradley (Video/ Camera); Dr Simon Honan; Johnny Lalor and Joe Dunne (Physio); Ollie Byrne and Conor McCausland (Kit) and Seamus Delaney (Liaison and Logistics).

O'Byrne Cup:

Wed 03 Jan (Bill Delaney Park Stradbally)
Round 1:
Offaly 1-11 Laois 0-12

O'Byrne Cup Shield:

Sat 13 Jan (Rathnew) Round 1:
Wicklow 1-20 Laois 0-12

Allianz Football League Division 4:

Sat 27 Jan (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 1:
Laois 1-12 Longford 2-07

Sat 02 Feb (Wexford Park) Round 2:
Laois 1-19 Wexford 0-12

Sat 17 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 3:
Laois 2-14 Carlow 0-09

Sun 25 Feb (Semple Stadium) Round 4:
Laois 0-11 Tipperary 1-07

Sat 02 Mar (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 5:
Laois 2-12 London 0-09

Sat 16 Mar (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 6:
Leitrim 0-17 Laois 1-13

Sun 24 Mar (SETU Arena Carriganore)
Round 7:
Laois 5-19 Waterford 0-09

Sat 30 Mar (Croke Park) Final:
Laois 3-14 Leitrim 0-09

Leinster Senior Football Championship:

Sat 13 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Quarter-final:
Offaly 2-13 Laois 1-08

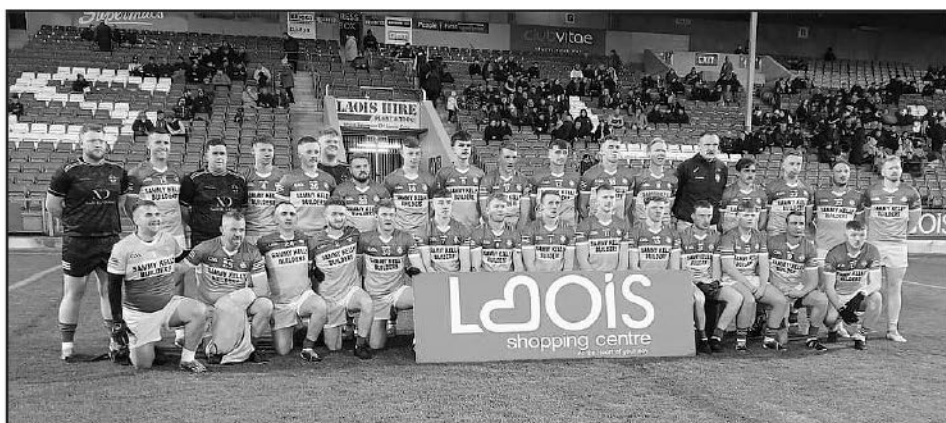
Tailteann Cup:

Sat 12 May (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 1:
Laois 2-17 Carlow 2-17

Sun 19 May (Echelon Park Aughrim)
Round 2:
Laois 0-11 Wicklow 0-10



Borris in Ossory Kilcotton - PIHC Winners 2024



Crettyard - IFC Winners 2024

Sat 03 June (Pearse Park Longford)

Round 3:

Fermanagh 3-11 Laois 2-13

Sun 09 June (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Prel Q/final:

Laois 1-13 New York 1-09

Sun 16 June (O'Connor Park Tullamore)

Q/final:

Laois 2-11 Kildare 0-12

Sun 23 June (Croke Park) S/final:

Laois 3-12 Antrim 1-13

Sat 13 July (Croke Park) Final

Down 0-12 Laois 2-06

Under 20 Football

With the removal of the pre-League competition from the schedule, preparation for Leinster U20 Football Championship was dependent on a small number of challenge games, which proved difficult enough to source.

Our opening game in league stage of Leinster U20 Football Championship was Carlow at home, which resulted in a comfortable win. Next up Wexford in Enniscorthy, where after a bruising encounter, we again got a result. The final game in the round robin series saw us face Wicklow in Blessington, where an impressive performance seen us emerge with a win. The luck of the pre-ordained draw resulted us in playing Meath in a quarter-final game in Donaghmore Ashbourne GAA grounds. Whilst the scoreline correctly shows a win for the home side, I must emphasise that the character and resilience displayed by this Laois team was excellent, and only a crucial mistake in the closing

quarter, handing the initiative to a Meath team, who would eventually progress to be Leinster champions at this grade.

I wish to thank all players who committed to this grade during the last year and I am confident that many have the ability to progress to senior grade in time. I wish to take this opportunity to thank our management consisting of - Kieran Kelly (Manager); Brian "Bruno" McCormack (Selector/Coach); Billy Delaney and Kieran Delaney (Selectors); Pauraic McEvoy (Strength and Condition); Eoghan Mealey (Physio); Gavin Deering (Team Liaison); Liam Delaney (Video & Match Analysis) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Kit) for their efforts and who will largely all remain at the helm for 2025.

Leinster U20 Football Championship

Tues 26 March (LOETB CoE)

Round 1:

Laois 3-08 Carlow 0-10

Tues 02 April (Belfield Enniscorthy)

Round 2:

Laois 1-09 Wexford 0-09

Tues 09 April (Blessington) Round 3:

Laois 2-12 Wicklow 0-06

Tues 18 April (Donaghmore Ashbourne GAA) Quarter-final:

Meath 4-08 Laois 1-10

Minor Football

There were high expectations that our Minor Football panel would return us to former glories at this grade. Our opening game against Dublin in LOETB CoE resulted in a heavy defeat, whilst our next game against near neighbours Offaly



Mounmellick - IHC Winners 2024



Kilcavan - JFC Winners 2024

proved to be hugely disappointing with another loss resulting in our exit from the Leinster championship. In our final game in the round-robin series, we beat eventual Leinster champions Longford in what was at that stage a meaningless game.

Last November Special Congress passed a motion for the introduction of additional Tiers for All Ireland Minor Football championship based on your counties exit from their Provincial Championship. Laois qualified for Tier 3 of this competition and there were hopes of a prolonged campaign that would compensate for the disappointing performances in Leinster Minor Football championship. In our opening match, we defeated Antrim, prior to overcoming a determined Waterford side, which qualified us for a semi-final meeting with Westmeath. This was a game, where we had our opportunities, but in the end were defeated by a far more clinical Westmeath team.

I want to thank all players for their commitment and efforts to this panel, many I believe who have the talent to progress and represent our county in years to come. Likewise, I wish to thank our management team for their endeavours over the past year – Ger Slevin (Manager), who was assisted by Adrian Slevin, John Connolly, Michael Lenihan and Brian O’Sullivan (Selectors), Fergal Byron (Goalkeeping Coach), Donie Brennan (Coach), Cathal Murtagh and Brian Ging (Strength and Conditioning), Jamie Buckley (Physio), Tomas Moore (Video); John Murphy (Match Analysis) and Paddy O’Connor (Kit). The outgoing management team did not seek re-appointment for 2025 season.

For 2025, John Larkin will now take on the management role, where he will be supported by Colm Kelly (Coach), Darach Kennedy, Joe Dunne, Cormac Dunne (Selectors) and Barry Slattery (Coach / Liaison) and Brian Ging (Strength and Conditioning).

Leinster Minor Football Championship

Wed 27 March (LOETB CoE) Round 1:
Dublin 5-13 Laois 1-11

Wed 03 April (Laois Hire O’Moore Park)
Round 2:
Offaly 2-08 Laois 0-10

Sat 13 April (Pearse Park Longford)
Round 3:
Laois 0-15 Longford 1-06

All Ireland Minor Football Tier 3 Competition

Sat 18 May (Hunterstown Grove Louth)
Preliminary Quarter-final:
Laois 4-16 Antrim 1-09

Thurs 28 May (Netwatch Carlow Training Centre) Quarter-final:
Laois 3-11 Waterford 2-08

Sat 13 April (O’Brien Park Tullamore)
Semi-final:
Westmeath 4-12 Laois 1-14

Senior Hurling

Walsb Cup – Our opening game in this competition was against Offaly in “LOETB” Centre of Excellence and resulted in an impressive win against our neighbours. In our next game, we played Galway in Ballinasloe, where the home team were easy winners and seen us exit this compe-



Ballypickas - JHC Winners 2024



Stradbally - JFC "B" Winners 2024

tition. Both games were certainly a useful exercise for our preparation for our league campaign and similar to my comments on the O'Byrne Cup in football will be loss to our GAA calendar.

League – In having suffered the disappointment of relegation from the top tier in 2023, our ultimate goal was promotion to the newly constituted Division 1B for 2025. This is a change to a League format, we have canvassed CCCC strongly for in recent years and I think it will be far more conducive to our development than the previous version, where at times we suffered some humiliating defeats.

Our League campaign resulted in some impressive performances. We had effortless wins against Down in “Laois Hire” O'Moore Park, Kildare in Hawkfield, Meath in Navan and Kerry in Tralee, the only blemish in our campaign being a defeat to Carlow at home, which due to competition regulations would now mean that if we progressed that the “Barrowsiders” would have “home” advantage for the Final. Our semi-final opponents were Down, who again had to travel to “Laois Hire” O'Moore Park and again suffered a heavy defeat and qualified us for a final meeting with Carlow.

National CCCC came in for some criticism from our hurling fraternity for the disdain in which this final was treated and in my opinion rightly so. On the same weekend that our footballers adorned Croke Park for their Division 4 Final as part of a double-header, our hurlers were scheduled to play their Division 2 Final the following day in the home venue of our opposition Carlow. I suppose the fact that the Division 1 Final

was played the following weekend as a single game in Semple Stadium fuelled some of this disappointment. It is a matter we have raised with authorities and hopefully consideration will be taken on board in future.

In the final, I can safely say we saved our best league performance to last, with an excellent performance resulting in a facile success and Aaron Dunphy receiving the Division 2 trophy. With our promotion, we will now participate in Division 1B for 2025, which will consist of the next seven teams outside the top seven teams based on their 2024 league positions and we look forward to Westmeath, Waterford and Antrim away and welcome Offaly, Carlow and Dublin to “Laois Hire” O'Moore Park.

Joe McDonagh Cup – As a result of our league success, confidence and spirits were high for a realistic run in the Joe McDonagh Cup and potential promotion to Leinster Senior Hurling Championship for 2025. Similar to 2023, our opening game was against Offaly, this time in “Laois Hire” O'Moore Park, where a victory was always going to have a huge influence on our campaign. In a competitive game, our players showed great resilience with the goals proving the difference to Laois winning this game. This was followed by facile wins against Meath in Trim, Kerry in Tralee and Down again in “Laois Hire” O'Moore Park, which ensured our qualification for the Joe McDonagh Cup, prior to our final game against Westmeath in Cusack Park. In this game, all panellists were afforded game time and with minds perhaps more on Croke Park in a fortnights time, we were well and truly brought back down to earth, with the home side proving easy winners.



Clough Ballacolla - JHC "B" Winners 2024



St Joseph's - JFC "C" Winners 2024

The Joe McDonagh Cup reverted to its traditional setting of the opening game to the Leinster Senior Hurling Final and again our supporters yearning for a repeat of 2019 travelled in great numbers. In the game, we were more than competitive, but perhaps wasteful with our chances up front and a typical Offaly side that never gave up were more clinical in their finishing and similar to ourselves in the opening game of the competition got the important goals to achieve victory in this renewal. I congratulate them wholeheartedly on their success.

Both finalists qualified for an All Ireland Preliminary quarter-final against the third placed teams in the Leinster and Munster Hurling Championships on the weekend following the Joe McDonagh Cup Final. In my opinion, delegates at Special Congress in 2023 missed the opportunity by not supporting the motions to make amendments to the Joe McDonagh Cup competition. These motions included the removal of All Ireland Preliminary quarter-final games and introduction of Joe McDonagh Cup semi-final game for second and third placed teams, which would have allowed more scope for the scheduling of games in this competition over a greater period of time, rather than the current five games in six weeks scenario. Since the competitions inception, I believe Laois in 2019 are the only team to have progressed beyond this stage and whatever chance you might have coming off a win, the disappointment from losing was always going to prove more difficult. This year we were drawn against Wexford in "Laois Hire" O'Moore Park. In a game where we were competitive at times, the visitors proved their superiority as the game progressed to emerge easy winners.

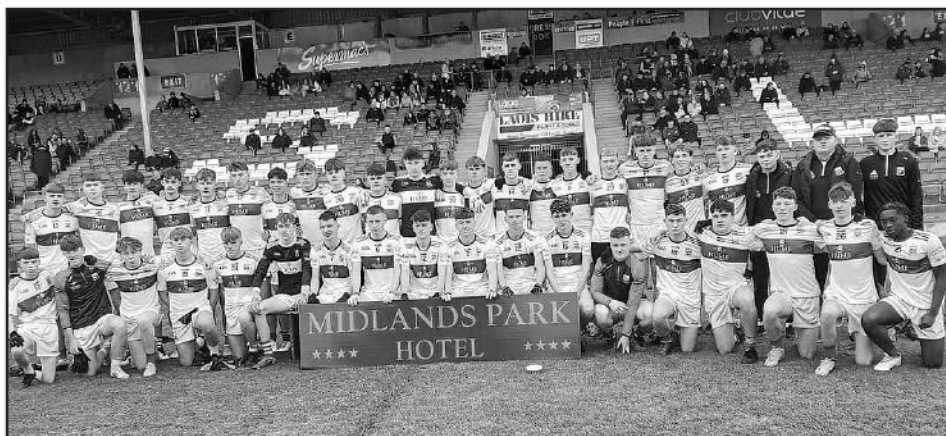
I believe for 2025 that there is a great opportunity for our panel of players to have a really competitive League campaign, with the purpose of achieving Joe McDonagh Cup success later in the year. I am encouraged with commitment to date and the introduction of a number of younger players to the panel will certainly increase competitiveness. I want to take this opportunity to compliment and thank all our players who did commit to our county for their dedication during the year and appeal for a concerted effort again in the coming year.

My thanks to Willie Maher (Manager) and his backroom team of Sean O'Flynn and Eamon Jackman (Selectors / Coaching); Paul Dermody (Goalkeeping Coach); David Moriarty (Strength and Conditioning); Martin Fitzgerald (Performance Coach); Alison Holmes and Sara Cuddy (Physiotherapy); Sean Conroy and Tony Bambrick (Stats and Performance Analysis), John Paul Campion (Doctor), Pat Delaney, Jack Harding and John Kealy (Kit), David O'Brien (Liaison & Servicing Secretary). The outgoing manager has not sought re-appointment for 2025.

The management team for 2025 will be as follows – Darren Gleeson (Manager); John Fitzgerald and Eamon Jackman (Coach / Selector); Sean O'Flynn (Tactical Coach); Paddy Quinlan (Strength and Conditioning); Martin Fitzgerald (Performance Coach); Alison Holmes and Sara Cuddy (Physiotherapy); John Paul Campion (Doctor), Pat Delaney (Kit) and David O'Brien (Liaison & Servicing Secretary).



Rathdowney Errill - JHC "C" Winners 2024



Portlaoise - U17FC Winners 2024

Dioralyte Walsh Cup

Thurs, 4th Jan (LOETB CoE) Round 1:
Laois 2-18 Offaly 0-18

Sunday, 14th Jan (Ballinasloe) Round 3:
Galway 6-29 Laois 2-20

Allianz Hurling League Division 2A:

Sun 4 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 1:
Laois 2-18 Down 0-17

Sun 11 Feb (Manguard Park Hawkfield)
Round 2:
Laois 3-22 Kildare 1-20

Sat 24 Feb (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 3:
Carlow 1-23 Laois 0-21

Sun 10 Mar (Páirc Tailteann Navan)
Round 4:
Laois 4-26 Meath 1-12

Sat 16 Mar (Austin Stack Park Tralee)
Round 5:
Laois 4-20 Kerry 1-19

Sat 25 March (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Semi-final:
Laois 1-24 Down 0-13

Sun 31 March (Netwatch Cullen Park
Carlow) Final:
Laois 2-22 Carlow 1-12

Joe McDonagh Cup:

Sun 21 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 1:
Laois 2-21 Offaly 0-24

Sat 27 April (Trim) Round 2:
Laois 7-29 Meath 1-16

Sat 04 May (Austin Stack Park Tralee)
Round 3:
Laois 1-25 Kerry 0-18

Sat 18 May (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Round 4:
Laois 4-31 Down 0-17

Sat 25 May (TEG Cusack Park) Round 5:
Westmeath 2-26 Laois 0-16

Sat 08 June (Croke Park) Final:
Offaly 2-23 Laois 0-26

All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship:

Sat 15 June (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)
Preliminary Quarter-final:
Wexford 0-32 Laois 0-20

Under 20 Hurling

For 2024, Laois were placed in Tier 1 of the Leinster U20 Hurling Championship, with our opening game against Kilkenny, where we were competitive at times, but concession of late goals saw Kilkenny deserving winners. In our next game we travelled to Wexford Park and in another very competitive game, the points were shared. This qualified us for a preliminary quarter-final game against Kerry in "Laois Hire" O'Moore Park, where we eventually ground out a result to qualify for a quarter-final proper against old adversaries Offaly in Tullamore. Here the gulf in class was evident from early in the game, where the eventual Leinster and All Ireland Champions were worthy winners.



Castletown - U17HC Winners 2024

I want to take this opportunity to thank all panellists for their commitment to the development of Laois hurling and with so many available for selection again in 2025, I look forward to greater reward in the year ahead. I wish to thank Damien Carter (Manager) along with his management team of Declan Qualter, Kevin Power and Derek McGrath (Selectors / Coach), Tomas Hassett (Strength and Conditioning), Laura Langton (Physio) and Johnny Fitzpatrick (Kit) for their dedication and efforts with this panel. It would be remiss of me not to mention Tom Brennan, whose support of this panel and indeed previously at minor grade, greatly enhanced their preparation.

Damien has decided not to continue in this role for 2025 and has been replaced by Derek Delaney, who has extensive experience with Clubs both inside the County and within the Province. He takes charge

of an U20 panel team that greatly resembles the minor set up of 2022, and will be ably assisted by Joe Callaghan (Coach/ Selector), Shane Maher, Gary Moore and Declan Phelan (Selectors), Tomas Hassett (Strength and Conditioning), Sara Cuddy (Physio). For 2024/25, Laois has again entered a combined schools team in the Leinster Post Primary Schools Senior Hurling competition, which will hopefully assist in some way for their preparation for their 2025 campaign.

Leinster Under 20 Hurling Championship

Sat 06 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Round 1:

Kilkenny 6-14 Laois 1-13

Sat 13 April (Wexford Park) Round 2:

Laois 0-18 Wexford 0-18

Sat 27 April (Manguard Park Hawkfield)
Preliminary Quarter-final:
Laois 2-19 Kerry 0-16

Fri 21 April (O'Connor Park Tullamore)
Quarter-final:
Offaly 1-29 Laois 2-09

Minor Hurling

For 2024, Laois were graded in Tier 2 of the Leinster Minor Hurling Championship. In our opening game against Kildare in Hawkfield, we got off to the worst possible start, where the concession of early goals proved too much, with the home side emerging victorious. We recovered with two competitive wins against Carlow and Kerry at home, which qualified us for a preliminary quarter final against Offaly in the Faithful Fields.

Without doubt, this was our best performance of the campaign, where we were the

better hurling side and is a game we really should have won, with a lapse in concentration in additional time, allowing the home side in for goals to win the game. I wish to thank all panel members for their commitment to Laois Hurling and with so many of them available at this grade again in 2025, I am confident that the disappointment and experience gained in their defeat to Offaly will go on to serve these lads so much better for the year ahead.

I wish to thank our management team for their endeavours with this panel – Glen McEvoy (Manager), Dermot McGill, Ger Cuddy, Mark Dunne and Martin Fallon (Selectors / Coach), Martin O'Connell and Brian Ging (Strength and Conditioning), Rachel Walsh (Physio), Jenny McEvoy (Analysis) and John Finn (Kit). The team for 2025 will remain much the same with Chris Murray replacing Ger Cuddy and



Celtic Challenge - Corn William Robinson Div 3 Champion

Mark Dunne, and Jason Woods assuming the role of Strength and Conditioning.

Leinster Minor Hurling Championship

Sat 23 March (Manguard Park Hawkfield)

Round 1:

Kildare 4-11 Laois 0-15

Sat 06 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Round 2:

Laois 4-08 Kerry 1-12

Sat 27 April (Laois Hire O'Moore Park)

Round 3:

Laois 3-12 Carlow 0-15

Sun 16 April (Faithful Fields Kilcormac)

Preliminary Quarter-final:

Offaly 4-16 Laois 4-13

Celtic Challenge

The Electric Ireland Celtic Challenge is named in recognition of the original juvenile hurling club known as 'Celtic'. The Divisional trophies are named in memory of six of the fourteen civilians who were shot dead in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday, 21st November 1920. Michael Hogan [aged 24], Tom Hogan [aged 21], John William Scott [aged 14], William Robinson [aged 11], Jerome O'Leary (aged 10] and Michael Feery.

The ethos of this competition is a developmental one, with teams initially competing at group stages and then depending on results, teams are graded for the knockout stages, giving all an opportunity to compete at their own level. It is a tremendous competition and in future years will likely be replicated at minor grade to replace current formats. Laois have used this compe-

titition for the purpose of fielding a second minor team, comprising of panellists from our minor squad, who were not receiving championship games and our u16 panel and it provided opportunities for these players that they otherwise would not experience.

It was tremendous competition to win and I am sure the experience gained at this level will benefit our minor panel in the year ahead. My thanks to Bryan Flanagan, Niall Ryan, Noel Concannon John Payne, Patrick Wright and Pat Kirby for their work with this squad.

Celtic Challenge

Sat 06 April (LOETB CoE) Round 1:

Meath 1-15 Laois 2-07

Sat 15 April Round 2:

Laois 8-17 Armagh 0-04

Sat 22 April (Manguard Park) Round 3:

Laois 1-21 Kildare (U16's) 3-08

Corn William Robinson Division 3

Sat 11 May Quarter Final:

Laois 3-18 Kildare (U17's) 3-06

Sat 18 May Semi Final:

Laois 2-12 Meath 0-14

Sun 02 June (NGDC Abbottstown) Final:

Laois 1-14 Mayo 2-09

Local Championships

As I write this article, our entire schedule is complete with exception of an outstanding ACFL Div 3 Final and our U20 Football competitions and I want to take this opportunity to thank all Club Officers for their



Presentation to Laois Hospice

patience and co-operation in completing this mammoth fixture programme.

I want to congratulate Clough Ballacolla and Portarlington on their success in their respective Senior Championship Finals and all our other competition winners, whom are listed in the roll of honour at the end of this report and I wish all those Clubs still standing in Leinster Club competitions the very best of luck.

Briefly some of my observations on our club competitions.

“Senior Hurling Championship” – For 2025, the Senior Hurling championship reverts to a ten-team competition, with two Groups of five, playing each other in a criss-cross format. I have reservations about proposed format, but we can certainly review after initial year. Whilst we also require an

additional two dates for scheduling of this new championship, which for 2025, will see us revert from “definitive” calendar dates to “potential” dates for our Senior Hurling Championship, which will be determined pending the exit of our Senior Intercounty football and hurling teams from their respective championship. It will also see the final delayed until after the Senior Football final.

“Palmer Cup” – Coiste Iomána brought forward a proposal to organise a 7-a-side Hurling Blitz in honour of this trophy, which was played on the May Bank Holiday weekend. Unfortunately, only five Clubs participated, but from those that did, the feedback was very good and it is potentially a competition that can be expanded to include more Clubs in 2025. I wish to acknowledge Damian Campion Electrical Contractor for his sponsorship of this com-

petition. The proceeds from the day were later presented to the Laois Hospice, which was very well received.

“Senior Football Championship” – Coiste Peil have proposed a reduction in the number of teams in our Senior Championship to twelve, with Intermediate Championship increasing to same. It is a proposal, I have advocated annually in my report to Convention and with statistics showing that the average losing margin in the past five years increasing from 5 points to 9 points, it is certainly worthy of consideration. It will be a matter for decision at November County Committee meeting and will be interesting to see if the mood has significantly changed on this topic. The one difficulty if passed will be the integration of an increased Senior Football Championship games schedule into our calendar along with our newly constituted Senior Hurling Championship, but such can be overcome. I believe the “B” championship for teams exiting the competition at quarter and semi-final stage respectively and incorporates relegation from both Senior and Intermediate championships are welcome and successful to date.

“Coiste na nÓg” – I want to acknowledge the work of Eamonn O’Connell, Tony Bambrick and their Coiste na nOg committee in their underage schedule of games. I don’t believe there were ever as many underage games played in a calendar year, with the incorporation of “shield” and at times “plate” competitions at all grades ensuring all our young players got additional games, which can only help the development of our underage players.

“Walkovers” – The number of walkovers given by Clubs during the year has reached crisis point. From a Club perspective, I am aware there are circumstances that sometimes dictate such action, but unfortunately, it has now almost become an acceptable practice in many of our league competitions. With regard to our championships, the decision of some Clubs to concede games and worse withdraw their teams from respective championship competitions is in my opinion is totally unacceptable and shows a complete lack of respect for all other Clubs participating in these competitions. We have made proposed amendments to our regulations to punish this practice. Coiste Peil is recommending a separate football competition for “hurling” clubs whose preference is biased towards the small ball and I believe it is certainly worth consideration, even be it on a trial basis.

“Football Review” – In my report to Convention last year, I expressed my concern over the game of football being in crisis and that it was becoming unwatchable with teams operating the slow, monotonous, defensive styles of play. On reflection, I do admit that in comparison to other years, the standard and quality of games in our senior football championship in 2024 was good, albeit many games were one-sided, with an exceptional senior football final. The Football Review Committee, under the tutorship of Jim Gavin, have completed unbelievable research and work in recent months, with their proposals on rule changes for decision at Special Congress on Sat 30 November. In my opinion, I think we have no alternative but to adopt them in full on a trial basis for 2025. However, I do have reservations on the capability of

them being officiated at Club level with a single match official in operation and I am wary as to whether they may create an even greater divide in standards at Inter-county level.

Referees and Disciplinary Issues

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our Referees and our Match Officials for their co-operation and dedication in the successful completion of our fixture schedule. Referees have an onerous task and it is as simple as this - without them, there is no match.

I do not believe any Club Official understands the difficulties incurred and time spent in trying to ensure there is a Referee in attendance at every fixture we schedule, in excess of 1,900 Fixtures in 2024 over a nine month period works out at approximately 50 referees required per week. We are working from a pool of approximately 50 referees, so it is not “rocket science” to understand the problems. One of the ongoing difficulties we incur is the weekly call from several of our Club officials looking to change a fixture date or time after the weekly schedule has been finalised. This has at times created havoc, particularly with a match official, who has his week planned and then we make a change, so naturally he is not best pleased. For 2025, I am suggesting that like some of our other sporting bodies that application for changes to our schedule, will only be accepted where fixtures are brought forward, rather than postponed.

Whilst, we are grateful to our Clubs who supply active referees and who earnestly try to recruit officials, a large number of our

Clubs do not have a referee (as listed in Referee Administration Report) and make no attempt either in the recruitment stakes. As a result, I will be making a proposal to CCC for inclusion in our regulations, that such Clubs forfeit “home” advantage for a percentage of their league or championship games for 2025. For example, if a Club has seven League games, the Club supplying a Referee will have four Home games, whilst the Club with no Referee will have three Home games. Referee recruitment and retention is the responsibility of all units of our Association, so rather than continue to complain about appointments and the standard of refereeing in our Club games, I am requesting each Club in the coming year to provide at least one Referee, who they believe to be both competent and suitable for training next January.

It would be wishful thinking to say that our match officials are universally appreciated for the tireless work they do in refereeing our games, and it is alarming the level of verbal and sometimes threatening abuse that is being meted out to them. In spite of the introduction of harsher penalties to eradicate such behaviour, there continues to be an escalation and an increasing lack of respect displayed by some of our Club Officials, Mentors, Supporters and Players towards our Referees and their Officials. The most worrying aspect is that this behaviour seems to be far greater at our underage grades. As Secretary, I have often being asked, what makes a good referee and in my opinion, a good referee is the official who is consistent in his application of the rules and gets the big calls correct on the day. Sometimes our officials do not get all these big calls right on important championship

days and I have sympathy for the Clubs on the wrong end of these game changing decisions, which often cause anguish and despair after the huge efforts, the finance and the time put into the preparation of their club teams. Our disciplinary system is not perfect and no doubt decisions are made from time to time that people don't agree with but at the same time, I honestly believe no referee goes out to deliberately give a wrong decision. From the records, Clubs will see that CCC have dealt with all reported incidents of verbal abuse and will continue to operate a zero tolerance policy towards disrespect for our referees, providing the Referee reports the act in the correct manner. Our Hearings Committee are the final arbitrators within the county for decision on enforcement of disciplinary action. Whilst not always in agreement with some of their decisions, the vast majority of decisions proposed were upheld, underlining once again that despite the perception that it pays to mount a challenge and a loophole will be found, the system is proving more robust than that.

All of our Adult Referees complete an Inservice training course, online Rules questionnaire and Fitness testing. Garda Vetting and Child Safeguarding is also a necessity. In my opinion, we have to continue to try and improve standards and with no disrespect to any official, I think there is room for improvement. I receive calls almost on a weekly basis during the year from disgruntled Club officials in regard to different sectors of officiating, like interpretation and implementation of rules, scorekeeping and the accuracy and the detail in Referee Reports. The potential introduction of these new football rules will

pose further difficulties. I would urge our incoming Referee Administration committee to re-consider having Referees assessed, introduction of in-house training seminars based on previous championship games and introducing a mentoring programme for our younger officials, with additional educational opportunities in the sector and implementing a formal development pathway for our Referees. I think a pre-championship meeting with Club Officers and Team Managers to explain and outline interpretation and implementation of our rules would be hugely beneficial as well.

Our Referee Administrator Vincent Dowling and his Committee consisting of John Carroll, Danny Gorman, Pat O'Connell, Joe Brennan, Tom Donoher, Brochan O'Reilly and administered by Pam Cooney are also deserving of our thanks for their efforts and I have no hesitation in admitting that this is the most difficult and thankless position in Laois GAA administration.

“Laois Hire” O’Moore Park and “LOETB” Centre of Excellence

As previously stated “Laois Hire” O’Moore Park is one of our main sources of revenue due to the income received from our internal club gate receipts and rental income from Leinster and Central Council games. In 2024, our stadium was again chosen to host numerous inter-county and club games, and we are thankful to Central and Leinster Councils for placing their trust in us to host such games. The stadiums exposure for such matches certainly supports Laois Hire sponsorship input and our many other pitch-side advertisers.

Our stadium is currently partaking in a Safe County Project audit by GAA National Health and Safety committee, which will include an adequately prepared Event Management Document template, an updated Capacity report, a Structural Integrity report for all structural elements of the ground, a Fire Compliance audit and a site-specific Safety Statement for O'Moore Park. This audit is progressing well and I am hopeful will be completed in early 2025. In present day circumstances, health and safety has to be an integral consideration for all our activities and events undertaken under the auspices of the GAA and we must ensure that the GAA is an exemplar organisation in the delivery of health and safety. To that extent, all our staff have completed mandatory health and safety training as well. As part of this audit and in order to continue to attract the high profile games that we have become accustomed to hosting, we will continue to require the support of our Club volunteers, who must partake in the requisite steward training, which will also be invaluable to your Club in hosting your own games.

Thanks to our financial surplus in recent years, we continue to upgrade our facilities in the grounds to ensure that we can continue to provide spectator friendly facilities and improve our playing areas. During 2024, we installed a new scoreboard, upgraded the stadium PA system and disability area, installed an irrigation system in O'Moore Park and completed extensive drainage works on our pitch. These projects and developments cost approximately €200k. For early 2025, a new energy project is planned, which will include upgrading floodlighting on all CoE pitches to 500

lux and LED lighting and the installation of solar panels on the roof of the CoE building including battery. It is anticipated that this project will incur savings of in excess of €30k per annum. The project is currently being tendered and is likely to cost in excess of €350k. I wish to acknowledge support of National GAA for this project who have committed grant funding of €250k, whilst SEAI grant funding is also being explored. Other projects under consideration for 2025 and beyond include development of stand and viewing area adjacent to Pitch 1 in CoE, development of covered disability area in OMP, astro-turfing ball wall area, hard-core additional car parking spaces in CoE, upgrade gym equipment and development of physio and meeting rooms.

Our "LOETB" Centre of Excellence continues to be used on a daily basis by our Intercounty panels, our Academies, our Clubs, our Primary and Post Primary schools, Camogie, LGFA and for internal Club games. In reality, we do not have enough pitches to meet demand and rely heavily on our partnership with Heywood CS for their facilities almost on a weekly basis.

I wish to acknowledge the support of our local Gardai when required on match days. I thank our Event Controller Tom Jones, Safety Officer PJ Kelly and our frontline Stewards Gerry Kavanagh, Connie Dunne, Andrew Broderick, Danny Gorman, Mick Holohan, Billy Behan, Ann Churchouse, Jim Morrin, Pat Gorman, Joe Nolan, Tom Donoher, Paddy Dowling, William Delaney, Conn Dowling, Mick Kelly, Ollie Byrne and our numerous other voluntary stewards, without whose co-operation and

support we wouldn't be able to host such games.

One of the mainstays of our Event Management team Tom Jones announced his retirement from the role of Event Controller after our Senior Football final. He has served in this role for in excess of 25 years and to state that there has been no major incident during this period is a testament alone to his organisation of events. He has also worked in many Laois GAA management roles over the years and on behalf of all Laois Gaels, I wish him well and hope he thoroughly enjoys his retirement.

I want to pay tribute to our Groundsman Colm McEvoy for his continued upkeep of our grounds in the Centre of Excellence and O'Moore Park. It has been a difficult couple years, with the pitch surface in the stadium, which I hope due to the extensive works now completed that the problems have now being resolved.

Our Caretakers are deserving of our recognition and thanks, Willie Stackpool, who was been ably assisted at times by Pat O'Sullivan when required for ensuring both OMP and CoE grounds are opened and closed for games and training. Mick Glynn was responsible for supervising the organisation of meetings and cleaning of CoE on a daily basis, retired in September of this year and I want to thank him sincerely for his work over and above his duties and hope he too enjoys his retirement. David Mulhare has replaced Mick and I know will prove to be a fitting replacement. I wish to acknowledge the work of our TUS and PCE Group Scheme team, consisting Dan Sinnott, Eddie Kinsella,

Roger McEvoy for their continued upkeep of the stadium during the year. Finally our Safety and Facility Officer John Kelly is also "hands on" in his role and liaises with our Event Management team on a weekly basis, as well as overseeing and progressing the many development projects that we have on an ongoing basis.

Finance

Our financial year-end accounts I am pleased to say will again show a surplus for the year. This surplus was achieved due to enhanced team expenses for reaching Joe McDonagh and Tailteann Cup finals. Whilst the audit of our accounts has not been finalised as I write this article, they will show an expenditure of €1 million on the administration of our intercountry panels for 2024. From an administrative perspective, I believe that such expenditure is a huge commitment to provide the requisite resources for our Inter-county teams and do wonder the sustainability of such ever increasing costs for our county in the long-term.

In order to meet the increased demand on our financial resources, I do think another substantial fundraiser will be required in the future. Briefly, I wish to highlight a number of our fundraising initiatives, which we have concentrated our efforts on in recent years. My thanks to all those involved for their contribution to these events—

- Club County Board Draw continues to be our primary fundraising activity and is essential to both our County and Clubs wellbeing. In 2024, our Clubs benefitted to the tune of €885,000, while the County profited to almost

€140,000. I wish to express a huge thanks to Clubs and their members for their support of this Draw, which will continue in 2025. Again, I appeal for your cooperation in making this your Clubs primary fundraiser for the year;

- Our “NOSTRA Race Day” at the Punchestown Racing Festival in April continues to grow and proved to be a huge success in 2024, where we managed to sell 38 tables, with all guests thoroughly enjoying the Punchestown “corporate” experience. Our thanks to Barry and Kevin O’Loughlin and their company Nostra Systems for their sponsorship of this event. For 2025, we hope to increase our table sales for this fundraising event again, so I would ask Clubs to canvass their racing enthusiast members or members just looking for a good day out to support this fundraising venture. I would like to mention Paschal McEvoy, Bryan Breen and Kieran Leavy for their efforts with this fundraiser;
- “Laois Gaels” is the fundraising arm, that effectively replaced the old “Club Laois” initiative, whereby all funds raised are channelled towards additional supports for our talent academies. In fairness, membership has continued to increase on annual basis, thanks to the efforts of “Laois Gaels” committee consisting of Colm Begley, Bryan Breen, Shane Keegan Paul Dargan, Niamh Delaney and Oonagh Maher. The committee actively promoted Laois Gaels during the year, by means of invitation to our Clubs underage sector to attend a Laois Senior Inter-county League or Championship game, where-by they participated in a meet and greet

with extended panel members. Whilst I might add the experience certainly added to the mayhem, it was an excellent promotion for Laois GAA and very well received by those participating Clubs. Unfortunately, Bryan Breen who has been the driving force behind “Laois Gaels” is no longer able to commit to this role for personal reasons and I just wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank him for his excellent work in this sector.

During the year, we signed up to a Shared Bookkeeping Service, which is a structured platform that enables sharing of books and records in a secure manner for the administration of our accounts. This administration service is facilitated by personnel from the National Finance Department in Croke Park and includes a dedicated finance email address for receipt of payable invoices for entry on XERO financial system. Each county also has an exclusive One Drive folder for sharing other information such as creditor statements, lodgement schedules, accrual and prepayment schedules, bank reconciliation and management accounts. From our own governance perspective, all inputs submitted to this service must be firstly approved by Laois GAA and all payments are the responsibility of Laois GAA, which in future will be paid on a monthly basis by bank transfer. At present in excess of twenty counties are availing of this new service. I have to say the service is a welcome support and delivers comprehensive financial reports and budget comparisons. For Convention, our 2023/24 Financial Accounts will be presented in a slightly different format than we have been accustomed to, which is a change requested by

the National Finance Committee in an effort to streamline presentation of all counties accounts. In respect of this, I want to acknowledge and thank Aine McKenna, Adrian Duffy and David Connellan, all from National Finance, for their assistance with this service to date.

Governance has become a central theme in the GAA and has seen the establishment in GAA Rule of an Audit and Risk Committees at Central and County level. The Chairperson of our Audit and Risk Committee is Richard Dunne, whom is assisted on this committee by David Dwyer, John Connolly and Maeve Conroy. The purpose of this committee is to provide guidance and oversight to our Management Committee to fulfil their ever-growing responsibility to deliver and promote good governance, clear financial reporting and risk management oversight within Laois GAA. This is further supported by Michelle McAleer in leading this initiative through her Internal Audit office in Croke Park. In July, we were subject to an internal audit from headquarters, which included an onsite visit. This review was to gain awareness of where county boards are on their governance journey and to provide support through advice and recommendations. I still await the result of this audit, which I am sure will inform us of the needs and structures required to bring our County to full compliance. From a club perspective, governance will also become a priority, whereby compliance with your Club Constitution will be become a necessity. To a certain extent, this process has already commenced with insistence that a Club AGM is scheduled prior to end of

November and Club Financial Statements are submitted on conclusion of AGM's.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Treasurer Paschal McEvoy for his time and efforts in this important role, his responsibility in overseeing gate collection at our games on a weekly basis does not go unnoticed. Likewise his assistant Bryan Breen and our former Treasurer Martin Byrne for his assistance and professionalism in preparing our accounts.

JP McManus Donation

I think it is only fair that I acknowledge and thank JP and Noreen McManus for their magnanimous gesture in donating a €1,000,000.00 from the JP McManus Charitable foundation, which on their request was evenly distributed between the GAA, Camogie and Ladies Football clubs within our County. Our 48 GAA Clubs, 17 Ladies Football Clubs and 10 Camogie Clubs each received €13,333 from this generous donation. This funding no doubt proved to be a massive boost to our local economy and was a substantial resource for developments within our Clubs and was hopefully spent wisely.

Local Media

All our games in the county got more than their fair share of coverage during the year and for this I thank the local GAA correspondents in our local editions of Laois Today, Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express and the various commentators in Midlands 103. We are indeed fortunate to have press personnel, who are passionate about Gaelic games and play a role in spreading our message and promoting our games. Denis Byrne does a magnificent

job on photographs and enhance the work of our scribes while our former PRO Paul Dargan further compliments this with his match day photo albums, which are also very well received.

In recent years, we have successfully streamed our internal club games initially through All Rounder Sport, and for the past two years via Clubber tv. The service provided has been excellent and is a means for our older membership to view our games. Our contract with Clubber tv has now concluded and renewal is presently under review, with a variance of opinions as to whether to continue with Clubber or explore producing our own Laois GAA tv service.

Our website, www.laoisgaa, was upgraded last autumn and now has better functionality for the traffic and user engagement it receives on a monthly basis. We continue to embrace social media with Twitter/X, Facebook and Instagram. Alison O’Kelly from AOK Mentoring has also been engaged to support, plan, organise and monitor all our social media accounts in an effort to better promote Laois GAA and our sponsors, which I believe she has achieved very successfully.

Our PR and Communications committee, headed by our PRO Oonagh Maher, are also deserving of our thanks and recognition. The position of PRO is expanding every year and the role would not be able to function without the assistance of her team which includes Eoin Culliton, Canice McCarthy, Conor McCarthy, Aoife McEvoy and Pat McEvoy.

Coaching and Games

The promotion and development of our games is the single most important activity that we undertake and this sector will be dealt with more comprehensively later in this report by our Coaching Officer Brian Quinn and our County Head of Games Shane Keegan.

I want to acknowledge the work of our ever expanding Coaching and Games team for their dedication and efforts to the Laois cause. Our Coaching and Games Steering Committee meet every six weeks and I am confident that we are beginning to make progress under the leadership of our County Head of Games Shane Keegan. Our team includes Donie Brennan, Head of Football; Ross Young, Hurling GDC; Dean Malone, Participation GDC and Brian Ging, Physical Performance GDA and our Games Promotion Officers working with the following clubs - Jamie Moriarty (Portlaoise); Jordan Walshe (The Harps & Castletown); Dan Butler (Abbeyleix, Ballyroan Abbey, Ballyfin, Ballinakill & Ballypickas); John Noonan (Graguecullen & Mountmellick); Cian Moffit (Clonaslee St Manmans, Colt Shanahoe & Borris in Ossory Kiltotton); Ciara Kavanagh (Clonad, Mountrath & Rathdowney/Errill); Daragh McEvoy (Portarlinton & The Heath) and Jason Woods (O’Dempseys & Arles Killeen). It is hoped and planned for recruitment of one additional GPO to cover Annanough, Stradbally and Timahoe.

Tom Hargroves our Head of Athletic Development is responsible for the development and execution of an athletic development plan up to and including our senior intercountry teams. Whilst also involved as

Strength and Conditioning Coach with our Senior Football panel, he also works closely with our Coaching and Games team with the athletic development of our academy panels. I am hopeful his role can be expanded to include the delivery of workshops to our Clubs with the purpose of educating our mentors in the athletic development of our underage club players.

I want to thank all our mentors involved in a voluntary basis with our academy panels. In reality, this is where all the hard work starts. As I have stated before, our results at minor football grade in particular in recent years have been disappointing and is worrying for a county that once prided ourselves on our production of minor football panels. Our academy system has been in place for a number of years now and performances should be better. It is an area that our Coaching and Games department are concentrating a lot of their efforts on at present. Whilst our athlete development programme is now up and running and will benefit our panels in the long-term, it is the coaching and tactical element of our games that requires support. Our ongoing struggle is to entice quality personnel with requisite coaching skills to get involved with our panels. I want to emphasise that this is no disrespect to the personnel involved at present, all of whom bring many other exceptional qualities to our squads.

Our Setanta & Ó'Mórdha Óg Programmes were organised again this year and expanded to include U10, U11 & U12 age grades, which was a massive undertaking. This programme allows all kids in these age grades the opportunity to partake in structured training sessions. I want to thank all

the volunteer coaches who helped deliver the programmes, the organisational expertise of Brendan Phelan, Liam Ahearn, Des Conroy and Mark Russell and special word of thanks to Clonad Club for the use of their facilities.

The schools of Laois both Primary and Post Primary deserve our thanks for the work they do to promote our games within their jurisdictions. We have developed an excellent relationship with Cumann na mBunscol who do tremendous work in our primary schools and thankfully our relationship with the Post Primary sector, whereby we now have a presence in almost every school, continues to grow on a yearly basis.

I also want to acknowledge Laois County Council for their generous financial contribution towards the employment of our GDA's.

Sponsors

I wish to extend our sincere gratitude Laois Hire for their generous sponsorship of our adult Inter-county teams and the naming rights for O'Moore Park stadium. Laois Hire has now been acquired by Briggs Equipment and we look forward to building relations with both Gary Clements and Enda Eiffe and developing this sponsorship. I sincerely hope Laois Hire will get the exposure they deserve and desire from our association with them.

Our thanks to Ted Berry and his company The Magni Group for their continued support as our associate jersey sponsor.

Our Championships and Leagues are kindly sponsored by Laois Shopping Centre, which will also continue for 2025. We are entirely appreciative of Kevin Doyle and his company for their generous sponsorship.

Midland Park Hotel is sponsor of all our Juvenile Championship and Leagues and our thanks are extended to Colm Neville, George Leahy and Dara Cruise for this sponsorship.

Our appreciation and thanks are also extended to –

- O’Neill’s, our official gear sponsors, and my thanks to Tony Towell and Carol Carr for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the year;
- LOETB (Laois Offaly Educational Training Board), sponsors of our Centre of Excellence;
- Downey’s Autostop, suppliers of our kit vans in both Football and Hurling and hurling courtesy car and will continue for 2025;
- ENVA, local company who will carry their brand on our Talent Academies and Underage Divisional Competitions and I wish to acknowledge Richard Kennedy for his support in sourcing this sponsorship;
- Barry and Kevin O’Loughlin, Nostra Systems for their generous sponsorship of our Punchestown Corporate Race Day last April;
- Mochua Print and Design, our Awards Night sponsor;
- Billy Shaw, WR Shaw, our “Setanta” & “Ó Mórdha Óg” sponsor;
- Tirlán, for their Training Pitch Sponsorship;

- Tom Brennan, for his Training Pitch Sponsorship;
- Dwyer Transport for their “Man of the Match” sponsorship and our appreciation to PJ and Elva Kelly for this sponsorship;
- Gerry Browne Jewellers and Colm McEvoy Pitch Maintenance for their respective Scoreboard sponsorship in O’Moore Park stadium and Centre of Excellence and finally to all companies and persons who contributed to Laois GAA in some type of sponsorship during the past year.

I would appeal to all our GAA patrons to support our various sponsors in whatever means they can and hopefully their faith in Laois GAA will be justifiably rewarded with the success their investment deserves.

Strategic Review 2025-2026

It is with regret that we have not finalised our Strategic Review for 2025-2026. I view this as an important document and commit to bringing to a conclusion in coming months. I wish to compliment our Vice Chairperson Kieran Kehoe for his hard graft to date, including the gathering of data from the engagement process with our Clubs. It is planned that the document will now be formatted as a Strategy Statement rather than the traditional Strategic Plan and will incorporate the following themes - Maximising Participation & Review of County Demographics; Coaching and Games Development; Inter-County Teams; Facilities & Infrastructure Development; Communications, Promotion & Branding; Financing the Plan and our Laois GAA Community.

Demographics will be an important element of this review and I want to acknowledge the work of Adrainne McCarthy and her committee comprising Rob Nolan, Grainne McCann, Eoin Culliton and Shane Keegan for their comprehensive report on this matter. This report is included in this booklet and it is intended to present some of its findings to our delegates at Convention. Whilst depopulation will pose problems for some of our Club's survival, the fact that in excess of a quarter of our counties population is now living within the Portlaoise urban catchment area will be another matter for review. It is important that the Clubs identified in this report engage with our Demographics committee to plan for their future.

Club Alignment was an outstanding action from our previous Strategic Review, whereby it highlighted that the process for facilitating players without a particular code in underage grades was inadequate and without any geographical consideration. Nickey Brennan, Chairperson of this previous review has engaged with our Club Alignment sub-committee in recent weeks and it is intended that their recommendations will be concluded in coming weeks, whereby underage players from a Club without a particular code will all be facilitated with another Club.

Hopefully, this strategy will give our Club units and members direction on where the Association wants to be by 2026 and how we plan to get there.

Na Mairbh

Every year sees the passing of some great GAA people and this year has been no exception.

On behalf of Laois GAA, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathy to families who contributed so much to our association at both club and county and readily come to mind, my sincere apologies if I omit someone – Melissa Peacock, St Lazerian's Abbeyleix; Robert Orr, Ballypickas; Alan Langton & PJ Bowden, Barrowhouse; Peter Redmond, Dan Bergin & Lily Sheeran, Borris in Ossory; Sean Cuddy, Tom Dunphy & Sean Bergin, Camross; John "Jack" Delaney, Clough Ballacolla; Mick Behan & Ned Ryan, Courtwood; Paddy Purcell, Martin Doyle & Donal Whelan, Crettyard; JJ Treacy, Tom Brown & Patrick "Sharky" Kirwan, Emo; Kathleen Hassett, Errill; Liam Drennan, Kilcotton; Liam Doran, Declan McDermott & Siobhan Galligan, Killeshin; Marjorie Phelan & Paul Maher, Kyle; Jack Kenna & Jim Whelehan, O'Dempsey's; Patricia Sweeney, Portarlinton; T.A. Scully, Dan Duggan, John Joe Ging & Kathleen Rigney, Portlaoise; Billy Ramsbottom & Mick Carroll, Timahoe; Seamus Bracken, Rathdowney; Davy Tobin, St Fintan's Mountrath; Paddy Deering & Cyril Brennan, St Joseph's; Ned Bambrick, Pat Walsh & Robbie Moore, Stradbally and also to the families of the wider GAA community whom have been bereaved during the year by the loss of those dear to them.

Go ndeanfaidh Dia trocaire ar a nanama-cha.

Congratulations

I wish to acknowledge some achievements by our members in other sectors of the association during the year:

- Aaron Dunphy, Aidan Corby, Enda Rowland, Padraig Delaney, Paddy Purcell and Diarmaid Conway on their GAA Champion 15 Awards and selection on the Joe McDonagh Cup team of the year in recognition of their outstanding displays for the county during the year, which was presented at a gala “Champions 15” function in Croke Park on Friday 18th. October.
- Evan O’Carroll, Brian Byrne, Killian Roche and Mark Barry on their GAA Champion 15 Awards and selection on the Tailteann Cup team of the year in recognition of their outstanding displays for the county during the year, which was presented at a gala “Champion 15” function in Croke Park on Friday 18th. October;
- Enda Rowland, who had the honour of captaining the Irish team, and Tomas Keyes who were both members of the successful Irish Shinty team who defeated Scotland in the recent Shinty International in Cusack Park Ennis in October 2024;
- Evan O’Carroll, Killian Roche, Mark Barry and Paul Kingston on their selection for Leinster for the recent Allianz GAA Inter Provincial series in



Joe McDonagh Cup Team of the Year - Laois Award Winners at “Champions 15” Presentation in Croke Park



*Tailteann Cup Team of the Year- Laois Award Winners at
"Champions 15" Presentation in Croke Park*



*Enda Rowland (Captain)
and Tomas Keyes
representing Ireland after
defeating Scotland in the
Shnity International*



*Tony Mahony Leinster
GAA U16 Poc Fada
Champion*

Croke Park. For good measure Justin McNulty was a member of the Leinster GAA management team.

- Tony Mahony, The Harps and Laois Minor Hurler on his success in the Leinster U16 Poc Fada Finals on Mount Leinster and finishing runner-up in that category in the National Finals on the Cooley Peninsula on August Bank Holiday weekend.

Buíochas

As I conclude my report for 2024 and my observations about the state and structures of our games, I want thank all Club Officers, Players and Voluntary workers who have assisted Laois GAA during the year and who continue to keep our organisation in the County on sound footing through their hard work, co-operation and goodwill.

I wish to thank my Cathaoirleach PJ Kelly for his leadership and continued support, while also acknowledging the huge commitment and dedication he has given the Association in the County during the year.

Likewise, my fellow Executive Members, CCC, Hearings and our other sub Committees for their advice, help and co-operation during the year, each in their own right through their tireless effort and work ethic greatly contribute to the smooth running of the Association within the County. All sub Committee reports are outlined later in this booklet.

Brian Quinn Coaching Officer and Bryan Breen Assistant Treasurer have both announced their intentions not to seek re-election in their respective roles. Seamus Lahart our Children's Officer has conducted an enormous amount of very sensitive work in this sector and has also signalled his intention to stand down from this important position. I want to express my sincere thanks to all outgoing officers for their excellent work in what are difficult officer roles and all on a voluntary basis. It is without doubt one of the most worrying aspects of our Association at present and is prevalent at both Club and County and that is sourcing the volunteer to work in these positions.

Our Office Administrator, Pam Cooney, also deserves special praise for the efficient manner she carries out her duties. She has an excellent relationship with our Club Secretaries, and her administration and routine work in dealing with Referee appointments and reports and her many other administrative duties greatly reduces the work of yours truly.

Our sincerest thanks go to Michael Reynolds and his staff in Comhairle Laighean CLG for their constant courtesy, support and accessibility. Similarly, Tom Ryan and his staff in Croke Park headquarters are also deserving of our thanks.

In conclusion, I wish you all an enjoyable and successful 2025.

Le meas

Niall Mac Laitimh

Runaí CLG Laoise Nollaig 2024

2024 CHAMPIONSHIP AND LEAGUE RESULTS

LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Laois Shopping Centre Senior Hurling Championship Final (06-10-2024)

Clough Ballacolla 2-22
Rathdowney Errill 0-22

Laois Shopping Centre Premier Intermediate Hurling Championship Final (05-10-2024)

Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 2-16
Ballinakill 0-19

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate Hurling Championship Final (05-10-2024)

Mountmellick 1-09
St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 0-12

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate Hurling Championship Final Replay (25-10-2024)

Mountmellick 4-17
St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 1-16

Laois Shopping Centre Junior Hurling Championship Final (20-09-2024)

Ballypickas 1-16
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 2-11

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B" Hurling Championship Final

(23-08-2024)
Clough Ballacolla 2-17
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 1-07

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "C" Hurling Championship Final

(06-09-2024)
Rathdowney Errill 2-18
The Harps 2-14

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 Hurling Championship Final

(16/11/2024)
Camross 2-09
The Harps 2-10

Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 "B" Hurling Championship Final

(10/11/2024)
Ballyfin Mountrath 1-23
Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-13

LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE HURLING LEAGUE FINALS

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

1 Final (30-06-24)

The Harps 1-16

Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 0-18

Relegated: Rosenallis

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

4 Final (21-06-24)

Mountmellick 3-10

Clonad 0-17

Relegated: The Harps

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

2 Final (28-06-24)

Castletown 3-20

Camross 1-16

Relegated: Ballinakill

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

5 Final (19-06-24)

Clough Ballacolla 2-27

St Fintan's Mountrath 3-18

Relegated: Clonaslee St Manmans

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

3 Final (30-06-24)

Clough Ballacolla 3-17 Castletown

0-12

Relegated: Colt-Shanahoe

Laois Shopping Centre ACHL Division

6 Final (21-06-24)

St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 3-17

Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 3-10

LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Laois Shopping Centre Senior Football

Championship Final (13-10-2024)

Portarlinton 3-13

Portlaoise 0-13

Relegated: Ballylinan

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate "B"

Football Championship Final

(26-09-2024)

Arles Kilcruise 1-07

Timahoe 0-05

Laois Shopping Centre Senior "B"

Football Championship Final

(12-10-2024)

The Heath 2-08

Clonaslee St Manmans 1-06

Laois Shopping Centre Junior Football

Championship Final (20-10-2024)

Kilcavan 3-09

St Joseph's 1-09

Relegated: Castletown & The Harps

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate

Football Championship Final

(29-09-2024)

Crettyard 2-12 Mountmellick 0-10

Relegated: Ballyroan Abbey

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B"

Football Championship Final

(04-10-2024)

Stradbally 1-08 Rosenallis 1-05

Relegated: Ballyfin & Slieve Bloom

**Laois Shopping Centre Junior “C”
Football Championship Final**
(25-09-2024)
St Joseph’s 1-08 Courtwood 0-08

**Laois Shopping Centre Under 20 B
Football Championship Final**
(15-11-2024)
Portarlinton 0-07
Killeshin 1-07

LAOIS SHOPPING CENTRE FOOTBALL LEAGUE FINALS

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
1 Final (06-07-24)**
St Joseph’s 2-09
Courtwood 1-09 (AET)
Relegated: Ballyfin & Portarlinton

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
4 Final (24-06-24)**
Graiguecullen 3-12
Portlaoise 2-12
Relegated: Portarlinton

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
2 Final (06-07-24)**
The Heath 2-12
Emo 0-08
Relegated: Killeshin & Mountmellick

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
6 Final (22-06-24)**
Clonaslee St Manmans 2-09
Park Ratheniska 0-13
Relegated: Ballyroan Abbey

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
3 Final (07-12-24)**
Clonaslee St Manmans
Kilcavan
Relegated: Ballylinan & Ballyroan Abbey

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
7 Final (22-06-24)**
St Joseph’s 3-14
Courtwood 0-15

**Laois Shopping Centre ACFL Division
5 Final (02-07-24)**
Stradbally 0-26
The Heath 2-15
Relegated: The Harps

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL HURLING CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Midlands Park Hotel U13 A Hurling Championship Final (14-09-2024)

Camross 1-08
Portlaoise 1-06

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Hurling Championship Final (28-09-2024)

Park Ratheniska Timahoe 3-05
Clonad Trumera 2-06

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Hurling Championship Final (28-09-2024)

Clough Ballacolla 2-07
St Pauls 4-00

Midlands Park Hotel U13 A Hurling Championship Shield Final (14-09-2024)

St Fintan’s Mountrath 3-04
Castletown 1-09

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Hurling Championship Shield Final (28-09-2024)

Milltown Sarsfields 4-08
Rathdowney Errill 4-02

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Hurling Championship Shield Final (28-09-2024)

Colt-Shanahoe 2-11
Portarlington 2-01

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling Championship Final (05-10-2024)

Camross 0-22
Ballinacill Ballypickas 1-10

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling Championship Shield Final (19-10-2024)

The Harps 2-08
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 0-17

Midlands Park Hotel U15 B Hurling Championship Final (19-10-2024)

Park Ratheniska Timahoe 4-16
Rathdowney Errill 2-08

Midlands Park Hotel U15 B Hurling Championship Shield Final (19-10-2024)

St Fintan’s Mountrath 2-09
Abbeyleix St Lazarians 1-08

Midlands Park Hotel U15 “C” Hurling Championship Final (28-09-2024)

St Pauls 7-17
Portarlington 3-15

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling Championship Final (06-10-2024)

Castletown 2-17
The Harps 1-19

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling Championship Shield Final (12-10-2024)

Park Ratheniska Timahoe 6-17
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 2-11

Midlands Park Hotel U17 “B” Hurling Championship Final (21-09-2024)

St Fintan’s Mountrath 2-14
Rathdowney Errill 2-11

Midlands Park Hotel U17 “B” Hurling Championship Shield Final (23-09-2024)

Mountmellick Portarlington 2-13
Rosenallis Clonaslee St Manmans 1-13

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL HURLING LEAGUE FINALS

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 1 Final (17-06-2024)**
Camross 2-07
The Harps 1-10

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 1 Final Replay
(25-06-2024)**
Camross 4-05
The Harps 4-04

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 2 Final (07-06-2024)**
St Lazerian's Abbeyleix 2-09
Clough Ballacolla 2-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 3 Final (07-06-2024)**
Clonad Trumera 4-05
Ballyfin 2-08

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 1 Shield Final
(14-06-2024)**
St Fintan's Mountrath 1-13
Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-03

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 3 Shield Final
(07-06-2024)**
Milltown Sarsfields 2-10
St Pauls 1-06

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
League Division 3 Shield Final
(07-06-2024)**
Colt-Shanahoe 5-06
Portarlinton 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Division 1A Final (03-06-2024)**
Camross 1-25
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton 3-11

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Division 1B Final (03-06-2024)**
Portlaoise 6-09
Ballinakill Ballypickas 3-09

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Division 2 Final (03-06-2024)**
Rosenallis-Clonaslee St. Manmans 4-9
St Fintan's Mountrath 3-7

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
League Division 3 Final (03-06-2024)**
St Pauls 4-11
The Harps 0-4

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Final (21-09-2024)

Portlaoise 2-07

Stradbally Parish Gaels 0-04

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Football Championship Final (21-09-2024)

Kilcavan The Rock 2-07

Park Ratheniska 0-02

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Football Championship Final (21-09-2024)

Mountmellick 4-06

Camross 0-08

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Shield Final

(21-09-2024)

Na Fianna Óg 2-06

Ballylinan 1-06

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Plate Final (21-09-2024)

Killeshin 1-18

O’Dempsey’s 4-06

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Football Championship Shield Final

(21-09-2024)

St Pauls 1-10

St Joseph’s 2-05

Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Football Championship Shield Final

(21-09-2024)

St Fintan’s Mountrath 4-10

Colt-Shanahoe 0-01

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football Championship Final (13-09-2024)

Mountmellick Parish Gaels 3-06

Crettyard Spink 0-09

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football Championship Shield Final

(13-09-2024)

Portlaoise 3-09

Ballyfin 1-09

Midlands Park Hotel U15 “B” Football Championship Final (05-10-2024)

Rosenallis Clonaslee St Manmans 4-05

Graiguecullen 2-07

Midlands Park Hotel U15 “B” Football Championship Shield Final

(14-09-2024)

Stradbally Parish Gaels 5-08

Ballylinan 5-04

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football Championship Final – (13-10-2024)

Portlaoise 4-07

Portarlinton 0-11

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football Championship Shield Final

(05-10-2024)

Mountmellick Parish Gaels 0-09

O’Dempsey’s 0-08

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football B Championship Final (04-10-2024)

Park Ratheniska 1-08

Heath-Colt-Shanahoe 0-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football B
Championship Shield Final**
(03-10-2024)
Ballyroan Abbey 4-12
Ballylinan 3-12

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL FOOTBALL LEAGUE FINALS

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 1 Final (09-06-2024)**
Portlaoise 3-05
Ballyfin 0-01

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 2 Final (01-06-2024)**
Killeshin 2-16
St Joseph's 3-08

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 3 Final (04-06-2024)**
Camross 3-06
Rosenallis 2-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 1 Shield Final**
(03-06-2024)
Portarlinton 2-10
O'Dempseys 0-11

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 2 Shield Final**
(31-05-2024)
The Heath 2-12
St Pauls 1-10

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 3 Shield Final**
(31-05-2024)

Portlaoise 5-08
St Fintan's Mountrath 2-05
**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football
League Division 1 Plate Final**
(03-06-2024)
Stradbally Parish Gaels 3-13
Crettyard Spink 1-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
League Division 1A Final (31-05-2024)**
Mountmellick Parish Gaels 4-18
O'Dempsey's 2-07

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
League Division 1B Final (31-05-2024)**
Ballyroan Abbey 3-08
Portlaoise 2-09

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football
League Division 1C Final (31-05-2024)**
Na Fianna Og 2-13
Crettyard Spink 1-15

AIB LEINSTER CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS

AIB Club Senior Football Championship

Sun 03 November in Laois Hire O'Moore
Park - Round 1
Portarlinton (LS) 0-10
Tinahely (WW) 2-05

AIB Club Intermediate Football Championship

Sat 02 November in Laois Hire O'Moore
Park - Round 1
Crettyard (LS) 1-11
Fr Manning Gaels (LD) 0-11

Sat 09 November in Parnell Park -
Quarter-final
Crettyard (LS) 0-04
Naomh Mearnóg (Dub) 0-08

AIB Club Junior Football Championship

Sat 02 November in Laois Hire O'Moore
Park - Round 1
Kilcavan (LS) 0-05
Craobh Chiaráin (Dub) 0-04

Sat 09 November in Laois Hire O'Moore
Park - Quarter-final
Kilcavan (LS) 1-09
Barcelona (Eur) 0-11

Sat 23 November in Pairc Tailteann
Quarter-final
Kilcavan (LS)
Dunsany (MH)

AIB Club Senior Hurling Championship

Sun 17 November in Parnell Park -
Quarter-final
Clough Ballacolla(LS)
Na Fianna (Dub)

AIB Club Intermediate Hurling Championship

Sat 16 November in Rochfordbridge -
Quarter-final
Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton (LS)
Fr Dalton's (WH)

AIB Club Junior Hurling Championship

Sat 16 November in Arklow -
Quarter-final
Mountmellick (Laois)
Avondale (Ww)

Sub - Committees Reports

COISTE PEIL 2024

INTRODUCTION

2024 saw a rise in fortunes for our County Football teams, from a low base in 2023. Our Senior Football Team reaching two National finals, winning one tells its own story.

A strong showing by our u20 team in the Leinster Championship, losing out narrowly to eventual champions Meath, and our minor teams improved competitiveness in the Leinster Championship / Tier Three All Ireland competition, all be it after a bad start in Leinster, indicates that as a county we are heading in the right direction.

SENIOR FOOTBALL

National Football League Division 4

Wins in the opening rounds against Longford, Wexford, Carlow, Tipperary, London, were followed by a hiccup against a promotion chasing Leitrim side. A comprehensive win against Waterford in the last round saw Laois top the group, gain promotion to Division 3 and into the Division 4 Final. While there were good performances over the course of the league, the best was left to last, with a comprehensive win in the League Final against a Leitrim team who had caused us difficulties in the past 12 months.

Leinster Championship

Our championship campaign began at home to Offaly, on the day Offaly were the better side and ran out deserving winners on a score of 2-13 to 1-08 in a disappointing result for all Laois Gaels.

Tailteann Cup

A win against Wicklow, a draw against Carlow and a narrow loss to Fermanagh saw Laois through to the preliminary Quarter Finals of the competition, followed by a flat performance against a fired-up New York saw us through to the Quarter final with neighbours Kildare. A first championship win in 19 years against Kildare in O'Connor Park meant a return to Croke Park and a date with Antrim.

On a day where a big Laois crowd turned out to support the team, goals from Kevin Swayne and Brian Byrne proved the difference between the teams, the reward, a shot at redemption against Down. The final proved to be a cagey affair with a sensational Goal from Mark Barry the highlight of the day, and although Down ran out winners, Laois were competitive and were in the game until the final minutes of the game.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Evan O'Carroll, Brian Byrne, Mark Barry, and Killian Roche on their selection to the Tailteann Cup Team of the year. Congratulations are also

in order, to the management team and panel on achieving promotion, winning the National League, and reaching the Tailteann Cup Final. A lot of the team goals set out at the start of the year were achieved and should provide the building blocks for improvement in the coming years.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank team manager, Justin McNulty, team mentors Ross Munnely, Diarmuid Carroll and James Clarke for their dedication and expertise in preparing the 2024 senior football team. I can say no stone was left unturned in their pursuit for improvement of the team. I wish them, and the rest of the backroom team all the best for the 2025 season ahead.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the Laois Senior Football team in 2024, Tom Hargroves (S&C), Johnny Lawlor and Joe Dunne (Physiotherapy), Seamus Delaney (Logistics), Liam Ramsbottom (Player Liaison) Ollie Byrne (Team Secretary) Conor McCausland (Team Kit), Paul Dargan, Ian Bradley and Martin Corrigan (Videography), Liam Delaney, Darragh Sinnott, Richard Dunne, and Niall Creery (Performance Analysis) and Simon Honan (Team Doctor). Thank you all, for your dedication and expertise.

U20 FOOTBALL

Under 20 has been a grade where Laois have been competitive over the last num-

ber of years and this year again saw this group remain so, losing out to the eventual Leinster Champions.

Preparation

As part of preparation for the Leinster championship the Under 20 team played a number of challenge games throughout February and March against Tipperary, DIT, Clare, and Limerick.

Leinster Championship Group Stage

The group stage saw Laois take on Carlow at home, with Wexford and Wicklow away, three wins from three games meant qualification for a quarter-final meeting with Meath who were All Ireland Champions in this grade at minor level in 2021.

Quarter Final

On a fine evening in Ashbourne, Laois supporters were treated to entertaining, competitive championship fare where both teams played with tempo and intensity, Meath took control with two goals early in the game, but Laois settled into the game going into halftime only two points down after a Jonah Kelly goal. Midway through the second half Laois took the lead however a late burst of scores from Meath, the eventual Leinster Champions saw them through, final score 4-08 to 1-10.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank manager Kieran Kelly and team mentors Brian McCormack, Billy Delaney, and Kieran Delaney for their dedication in preparing the U20 Team.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the u20 Team, Pauric McEvoy (S&C), James Clarke (Goal keeping Coach) Gavin Deering (Team Secretary) Eoghan Mealey (Physio), Liam Delaney (Videography / Match Analysis) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Team Kit) Thank you all for your dedication and hard work.

The Under 20 grade is arguably the most important grade for player development with regards to progression onto Senior Level, unfortunately it probably does not get the number of games afforded to the other grades. The pre-season cups (John Kerins) had previously addressed this need, and the GAA at national level should look at their re-introduction as a priority.

MINOR FOOTBALL

Preparation

As part of preparation for the Leinster championship the Minor team played a number of challenge games throughout February and March against Sligo, Cork, Armagh, Roscommon, Marist Post Primary School, and Clare.

Leinster Championship

Confidence was high entering the Leinster Championship in a group that contained Longford, Offaly, and Dublin. However disappointing results against Dublin and Offaly resulted in the team exiting the Leinster Championship before the last group game against Longford. However, a particularly good result against the even-

tual Leinster Champions raised hopes of a good run in the Tier 3 All Ireland series.

Tier 3 All Ireland Series

Antrim were to be the first opponents of this new competition, the form shown against Longford was carried into the game which saw a comprehensive win for Laois winning 4-16 to 1-09.

Quarter-Final

Another good performance in a delayed re-fixtured against Waterford saw Laois run out 3-11 to 2-08 winners and on to the Semi-final.

Semi-final

Laois were the better team for large parts of this game, but goals at the end of the first half and 1-03 in the final minutes of the game meant Westmeath took the victory winning 4-12 to 1-14.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Gerard Slevin (Manager), Donie Brennan (Coach) along with selectors Adrian Slevin, John Connolly, Mick Lenihan and Brian O'Sullivan for their hard work and dedication in preparing our minor team this year.

In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution and commitment to the Minor Team in 2023, Brian Ging (S&C), Fergal Byron (Goalkeeping coach), Jamie Buckley (Physio) Tomas Moore (Videography) John Murphy (Match Analysis), Paddy O'Connor (Team Kit). Thank you all for your commitment and expertise.

What may go unseen is that many of these people had been with this group of players from u14 to u17 level giving their time to this group of players over a period of four years, and I thank them for their commitment to this group over that period.

SUPPORTERS

To our supporters I would like to thank you for again supporting and getting behind all our Laois Football Teams throughout the year, I know the players and management teams appreciate the lift you give them as the “16th man”.

COISTE PEIL

Thank you to Coiste Peil members Pat O’Connell (Secretary), Kieran Kehoe, David Murphy, John O’Loughlin, Eamonn Delaney, Joe Cunningham and Brian Quinn to bring forward initiatives / proposals:

- Restructuring of Adult Football Championships.
- Proposal to alter Championship grading of players allowing to play one championship game ‘up’1.
- Proposal to enhance GDA link with our Secondary Schools.
- Provision of performance analysis courses to development squads.
- Re-introduction of Laois Schools Football Team to provide access to Senior A Schools football with the aim of providing coaching and exposure to high level competition to those in the

18-19 years age group where there is a perceived fall off in participation.

- Members provided support to the management appointment committee for the appointment of our minor team mentors over the summer.

In addition, I would like to thank Chairperson PJ Kelly, Secretary Niall Handy, Administrator Pam Cooney, Shane Keegan and Donie Brennan for your assistance and advice throughout the year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish our football management teams headed by Justin McNulty, Kieran Kelly, and John Larkin all the best for 2025.

Is mise

Antaine Ó’Baimbric
Cathaoirleach, Coiste Peil.

COISTE IOMÁNA 2024

Senior

The year started on a positive note with a good win over Offaly in the Walsh Cup but we were well beaten by Galway in the next round.

In the league, with the new structures coming in 2025, our main priority was to achieve promotion from division 2A. Despite a loss to Carlow mid-steam, wins over Down, Kildare, Meath and Kerry secured promotion and a place in the league final. We played Carlow in the Division 2A final in Carlow and gave a very impressive display winning by 2-22 to 1-12. It was great to see Aaron Dunphy being presented with the trophy and to be part of the joyous scenes and celebrations on the pitch afterwards. A special thanks to Graiguecullen GAA club for hosting the team for the meal after the game. However, I felt that the GAA could do more to help promote the game in weaker counties like Laois and Carlow by playing the Division 2 league final as a curtain raiser to the Division 1 final in Croke Park. We look forward to Division 2 in 2025 where we will play Waterford, Dublin, Offaly, Westmeath, Antrim and Carlow. It will be a very competitive league with serious jeopardy if we don't get things right.

We started our Joe McDonagh Cup campaign with a great win over Offaly in Portlaoise. Wins over Down, Meath and Kerry meant we qualified for the final with a game to spare which we always knew was going to be against Offaly again. In the final against Offaly in Croke Park we came

up agonisingly short losing by 3 points, 2-23 to 26 points. In the end, our tally of 18 wides cost us. It was great to see such a large Laois crowd in Croke Park on the day and I know the team really appreciated the support. Hopefully this will drive us on to get back there and be victorious in 2025.

A special thanks to the businesses and individuals who put up sponsorship at short notice for our senior hurlers for the Joe McDonagh Cup final.

Congratulations to Enda Rowland, Diarmuid Conway, Podge Delaney, Paddy Purcell, Aidan Corby and Aaron Dunphy on their Joe McDonagh awards. Also, congratulations to Enda Rowland and Tomás Keyes on being selected on the Irish team who were victorious in the recent Shinty international against Scotland. It was a great honour and achievement for Enda to captain his country.

During the summer our senior hurling manager Willie Maher decided to step down due to work commitments. I would like to thank Willie and his management team for all the hard work and effort they put into Laois hurling over the last 2 years. On a personal note, I found Willie Maher to be a gentleman to deal with and I would like to wish him and his family all the best in the future.

I now take the opportunity to wish our incoming manager Darren Gleeson all the best for 2025 as we hope to retain our Division 2 league status and bring back the Joe McDonagh Cup.

U.20

Our U20 campaign started with a heavy loss to Kilkenny. In the next game we played our best hurling of the year when we drew 18 points each with Wexford in Wexford. We then beat Kildare comfortably to qualify for a quarter final against Offaly. Unfortunately on the night we were not good enough losing 1-29 to 2-9 in O'Connor Park. Offaly proved how good they were by going on to win the All-Ireland U20 title.

I want to thank Damian Carter and his management team for all the work they put in with the U20s and minors over the last number of years. A special thanks to Derek McGrath for all his work for Laois hurling and I would also like to congratulate him on his historic success with Doon recently.

Best wishes to incoming U20 manager Derek Delaney as he embarks on his coaching journey with Laois in 2025. This year, with the help of Shane Keegan and our coaching and game department, we entered a combined schools' team into the Leinster Colleges championship. This gave players an opportunity to hurl at A level. We beat Dublin schools and lost to Offaly schools in the final. I want to thank Declan Qualter and Damian Carter for looking after this team and the secondary schools for their cooperation.

U.17 Minor

Our minors started their year with a poor display against Kildare when early goals cost us. However good wins over Kerry and Carlow brought us to a preliminary quarter final against Offaly. Here we gave our best display of the year and were very

unfortunate to lose by 4-16 to 4-13, the winning goal coming deep in injury time. I would like to thank Glen McEvoy and his management team for the time, work and effort they put into these young players. I wish them all the best for 2025 and I know the experience they gained in 2024 will stand to them.

Congratulations and well done to our Celtic Challenge team who had a great year winning their division by beating Mayo in the final in Abbotstown. Thanks to Brian Flanagan and his coaching team who looked after these players.

Palmer Cup

Coiste Iomána decided to revive the Plamer Cup by holding a novel 11 a-side hurling tournament with all proceeds to go to a local charity - this year Laois Hospice. I want to thank the clubs who took part, Castletown, Rathdowney-Errill, Clonslee St Manmans, Ballinakill and Colt-Shanahoe. The tournament was well received by all who attended. It was non-stop action with plenty of space for players to show their attacking ability. We had an enjoyable day's hurling with Castletown defeating Rathdowney-Errill in the final in O'Moore Park. 2670 euro was raised for Laois Hospice and I want to thank the 5 clubs and individuals who contributed to this. Thanks also to everyone who helped out on the day, in particular Damian Campion for his sponsorship. Hopefully next year we can entice more clubs to take part.

Poc Fada

Coiste Iomána, in conjunction with Laois Camogie, ran a successful Poc Fada competition in Mountrath Golf Club in June.

I would like to congratulate the 4 winners, in particular u16 boys' winner Tony Mahony from the Harps who went on to become Leinster Champion and represent Laois in the All-Ireland competition in the Cooley Mountains. Once again thanks to the clubs who took part, the members of Coiste Iomána who helped out on the evening and Mountrath Golf Club for the use of their facilities.

Setanta

The Setanta programme completed a successful third year in 2024. Thanks to all the parents, coaches and players who showed great enthusiasm and commitment to complete the 8-week programme. A special thanks to Clonad GAA Club for the use of their facilities and to Brendan Phelan, Liam Ahern and Ciara Conroy for their drive and organisational abilities to keep everything going. In 2025 we will have four groups participating, u10 to u13. We will then be feeding directly into

development squads which was the original idea.

I would like to congratulate all those who were successful in our leagues and championships at adult and juvenile level and wish our representatives the best of luck in the Leinster Club Championships.

I would like to thank the members of Coiste Iomána for their help and ideas during 2024 as we endeavour to promote Laois hurling

Finally, I would like to wish happy retirement and good health to Tom Jones and Mick Glynn who recently stepped down from their roles within Laois GAA. We remember also at this time our colleague on Laois County Board, Alan Langton, who passed away far too young during the year. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Is mise,

Maitiú Ó Coiléir

COISTE NA NÓG REPORT 2024

As I was a late appointment to the role of chairman we commenced planning for the season 2024 in February. As we needed to get formats in place it was decided to mainly follow last year's systems as this had been favourably received by the clubs. As in the previous year, Development competitions were held for clubs second teams

Having formed a new Coiste nÓg committee we reviewed the feedback and data on previous competitions and proposed both league and championship competitions in both codes at all age groups to the Competitions Control Committee (CCC) and for ratification by the County Committee. The leagues were graded with a view on previous performances and also to ensure that all teams got a similar amount of games played at each age group. As there would be a large number of players unavailable to their respective teams due to County Minor team commitments it was again decided to run the u17 Leagues as development leagues. Our league competitions finished in late May/ Early June with most finals being played in the LOETB Centre of Excellence. A small number of finals were played at club venues and our thanks goes out to the people who made these days such a success for the teams involved. I personally was delighted to see that our u13 development competitions were a success with blitz nights held at LOETB Centre of Excellence with over 200 children taking part. This competition is designed for children of a possibly different stage of development to get as

much football and hurling as their peers without the huge pressure of results and league places. With this in mind I would appeal to our club mentors to ensure that EVERY child plays equal time and that development matches are treated in the way they are designed

Our Feile hurling competition was scheduled for the weekend of the 19th, 20th, and 21st of April. After a challenging spring weather-wise, it was heartening to see the efforts that our host clubs made to make their grounds available and in immaculate order and I thank the clubs involved. Our football Feile was played on the weekend of 10th, 11th, and 12th of May and once again I thank the host clubs involved. All Feile semi Finals and Finals were played in the LOETB Centre of Excellence and our winners represented the county well at the Regional and National events.

And so onto our Championships. As we came to the end of our leagues, Coiste Na nÓg commenced a very thorough process of grading teams for their championship groupings. This grading was done with a mixture of review of league results and with the input of experienced people who had gained a lot of knowledge of the teams involved through attending matches and speaking with various people throughout the County. While every effort was made to ensure an equal grading I'm sure that there were some anomalies and Coiste na nÓg would welcome the input of clubs prior to next year's grading's in order to

ensure an equal grading for the clubs of different levels. Our competitions progressed well over the summer with Cup, Shield, and Plate competitions taking place throughout September and into October in LOETB Centre of Excellence. The object of multiple competitions in each age grade was to ensure that all of our players got as many meaningful matches as possible as late into the season we could manage. Unfortunately, we were unable to accommodate our “A” finals in O Moore Park as we had in previous years. This was due to remedial work which was carried out on the pitch drainage which meant that large areas had to be reseeded. Advice from our maintenance people and the drainage company recommended that we drastically limit the number of matches played on the surface and so our finals were scheduled in the LOETB Centre of Excellence. Both of our minor “A” finals were played as curtain raisers the Senior finals and the players rose to the occasion and provided the crowd with two excellent finals. Disappointingly the “C” grade of the u17 football championship fell by the wayside and was not completed.

Once again I refer to our Development competitions at both U13 and U15. These competitions are hugely important and run for the benefit of both clubs and players at a time when retaining players is a challenge. The competitions are designed so that all players have access to competitive matches without the pressure of winning a specific competition. Players develop differently and we must be conscious of this so that no player feels excluded or not part of a team no matter what their level of ability. I again appeal to clubs to

treat our development competitions in the spirit in which they are designed, not as a win at all cost exercise. Children face many difficulties in these challenging times and our clubs can be a place of inclusivity and safety and if we can keep children involved in sport we will reap the benefits of this in our communities in years to come. Our development competitions will continue next season and I ask all clubs to consider entering teams if their numbers allow.

A review of our 2024 competitions will take place and our committee looks forward to working with the clubs in order to put in place suitable competitions for all our players in 2024. During the past year we again increased the number of games played at underage level in Laois which I feel is a positive development. I understand that there may be difficulties facing some clubs with regard to fielding teams at different grades and I would ask clubs to engage with Coiste na nÓg and our County Board to seek solutions to ensure that all players get to participate in our games. While ensuring that all players play it is very important to remember to try to manage the workload of certain players. Our most talented may be faced with dual code commitments and also faced with playing in two age grades in a certain year. Add in commitments to County Academy squads and it's easy to see that these players may be overworked.

I wish to put on the record my sincere gratitude to our referees and officials. With extra games comes extra workloads for our officials. From our go games up to minor level there was an incredible com-

mitment shown to ensure that all games were officiated. I witnessed first-hand, referees changing matches at the 11th hour to suit others in order that every match went ahead. A large part of this is due to Vincent Dowling and his referee's coordinators so a big thank you to them. To our young whistlers who are starting out on their refereeing journey thank you. I do wish to address the issue of respect of our referees. Our games depend on our officials and it is of utmost importance that we as adults show respect for our officials. I have been troubled to hear of refs being spoken to in less polite terms at times and sometimes abused. This trend must be reversed as our children are learning from their trainers and parents so good example must be set to them. I would ask all of our clubs to try to address any issues they may have in this regard.

As is the case with taking up any new position I had to lean on and seek help and guidance from various people and I would particularly like to mention the fantastic work of the Juvenile secretary Tony Bambrick. Every enquiry was dealt with promptly and clearly and his wealth of knowledge of past results, of leagues, of structures is unrivalled and he was always at the end of the phone should the need arise. To the four People who took the call at the start of the year and agreed to be part of Coiste Na nÓg, Mark Russell, (Borris in Ossory/Kilcotton) Mike Langton (Barrowhouse) Darren Hennessy (Annanough) and Colm Clear (Portlaoise) thank you. To my colleagues on the county Board and various committees I say thanks. Whether it was a quiet word or a steer in the right direc-

tion it was appreciated. Thank you to the Staff of the LOETB Centre of Excellence whom always accommodated us and had pitches, dressing rooms etc. available to us for various finals and events. To all of our fantastic volunteers, stewards and officials without whom our matches could not have taken place. Your help does not go unnoticed and you are as important to the development of our young players as anyone else. I also wish to thank PJ Kelly and Niall Handy for their help and guidance throughout the year. Sometimes we take for granted the fact that fixtures are in place, Refs turn up and results and league positions are put up, this is due to the tireless work of the office administrator Pam Cooney so a huge thank you is deserved to her. Finally to our clubs. I have enjoyed meeting the various people involved with our juvenile clubs whether at matches meetings or just through phone call. Thanks to all the mentors and coaches and parents who give their time freely and pass on their knowledge for no other reward than the satisfaction of helping their clubs and young people. To our players, if you are moving into the adult ranks Good luck and thank you and for our Juvenile players I look forward to seeing you again next year

Eamonn O' Connell

Cathaoirleach, Coiste na nÓg

COISTE ÉISTEACHTA LAOISE (LAOIS HEARINGS COMMITTEE) REPORT 2024

As I submit this report, I am able to account that we had a busy year to date with 11 meetings inclusive of 2 Teams calls where required. 2024 saw a 50% decrease from the number of meetings we had in 2023. This throws up two questions to be answered, 1. has the number of infractions decreased or 2. there was insufficient evidence to appeal a decision by the CCC and bring a case to the Hearings Committee (H.C.). The committee are hoping that both assumptions and logical conclusions are true, that infractions by players and mentors have decreased, and clubs have realised that without sufficient and compelling evidence the H.C hands are tied and are bound by the rules of the association.

For the H.C of 2024, the last hearing to date was held on the 10th of October at the time that this report was being prepared. The Committee led by our Chairman Micheál Condrón commenced this season's duties on the 24th of January where the committee was asked by the Provincial Council to hear a case from another county. A total of 4 Transfer appeals were heard in late March 2024, all of which were ruled out of order.

Our first disciplinary hearing took place in May 2024 and the requests slowly increased as the leagues and championships in both codes and all levels commenced. In all cases, the H.C was not aware what penalty had been proposed by the C.C.C.

and any sanctions imposed by the H.C. were based solely on the evidence presented in accordance with the applicable rule. To all club officials again please note that, a referee's decision can only be overturned in accordance with Rule 7.3 (aa) (vi) "A referee's report, including any Clarification thereto, shall be presumed correct in all factual matters and may only be rebutted where unedited video or other compelling evidence contradicts it. The H.C understand that there are times when individuals are disappointed with the outcome of their hearings but hope they will agree that they are always treated fairly and with respect and understand that decisions reached are always in accordance with an Treoraí Oifigiúil.

On 4 occasions in 2024 video footage has been utilised as evidence, in 3 of those cases the C.C.C decision was overturned. On 4 separate cases, clarification was sought from the referee about infractions that occurred, and 1 of the 4, where the referee's resultant clarification had the outcome of changing the original decision of the CCC. The decisions by the H.C are not a personal on a referee nor do they in any way disrespect the referee. The table below outlines the number of cases heard to date in 2024 and where sanctions were imposed.

The Hearing Guidelines were again sent out to all clubs at the start of the 2024 season and this had a positive effect on the

Year	Transfer Appeal Requested	Hearings Requested	Out of Order	Withdrawn/ Reprocessed before/ after Hearing	Player Sanctions Imposed	Club Official/ Mentor Sanction Imposed	Video Evidence used	Appeals to Leinster Council
2024	4	12	2	3	6	2	4 cases. 3 of the 4 sanctions overturned	2 cases.

number of hearings and appeals requested year to date. The H.C would ask all club officials to revisit these guidelines for 2025 before a Hearing request is sought, this is to ensure that unnecessary hearings discontinue, and it also gives club officers clarification and guidance of the procedures before they come to a hearing. If at any time, there is a question or clarification requested by a club official or player, please feel free to contact any member of the committee, as we are there to assist in these matters where we can.

I would like to thank all the individual players and club representatives for their courteous co-operation in their dealings with the Hearings Committee this year. My thanks to the representatives of the C.C.C. for their courtesy and consideration in their attendance at these hearings. I would also like to sincerely thank and acknowledge the role of our County Secretary, Niall Handy and our Administrator, Pam Cooney, in the preparation of paperwork and for liaising with the H.C and referees when clarification of their reports was requested. Their assistance in this regard is very much appreciated. My appreciation and thanks go to

County Chairman P.J Kelly where he was required to attend when Niall was unavailable. My gratitude goes to the members of this year's H.C, Micheal Condron, Tom Jones, Alex Stenson, John Scanlon, Walter Hovenden, and Michael Lennon who gave so generously of their time whenever they were called upon, at very short notice more often than not.

To every member of Laois GAA who I have had the opportunity to meet during 2024 in this role, thank you for the courtesy you have shown me and the H.C, I hope we have always done our best to be fair and supportive to everyone that we engaged with.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy Christmas and all the very best in 2025.

Le meas,

Leonard O Mordha

Rúnaí, Coiste Éisteachta Laoise 2024

2024 COACHING AND GAMES REPORT

Introduction

Coaching and Games are delighted to present our 2024 report, in which we review the year past and look forward to our plans for 2025.

To achieve those targets in the short, medium and long term, the Coaching & Games department are massively reliant on the help and assistance of the outstanding volunteers at all levels of Laois GAA.

2024 saw the relationships between the clubs and the Coaching & Games department continue to grow & strengthen, and while we may have faced some challenges along the way, both sides always did their best to come to satisfactory resolutions.

I hope that we can continue to build fruitful and lasting relationship with clubs and volunteers as we all look to achieve our shared aim of bettering all aspects of GAA activity in our county.

REPORT

1) Coaching & Games Team

Our current Coaching & Games team is as follows:

Shane Keegan – County Head of Games - shane.keegan.chg.laois@gaa.ie

Donie Brennan – Football GDC (Games Development Coordinator) - donal.brennan.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Ross Young – Hurling GDC - ross.young.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Brian Ging – Performance GDC - brian.ging.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

Dean Malone – Participation GDC – dean.malone.gdc.laois@gaa.ie

All members of staff are readily contactable and would greatly welcome the input and suggestions of club members as to what we can do to help you in the development of your club and what we can do to progress as a county.

2) GPOs (Games Promotion Officers)

This year saw the expansive of our GPO team and we were delighted to welcome some fantastic new additions.

Our current structure is as follows:

Cian Moffit – Borris Kilcotton, Colt Shanahoe & Clonaslee

Jamie Moriarty – Portlaoise

Daniel Butler – Abbeyleix, Ballyroan Abbey, Ballinakill, Ballypickas & Ballyfinn

Jordan Walshe – Castletown & The Harps

John Noonan – Grauigeccullen & Mountmellick

Ciara Kavanagh – Mountrath, Clonad,
Rathdowney Errill

Darragh McEvoy – The Heath &
Portarlinton

Jason Woods – O’Dempsey’s & Arles
Kileen

Our GPO’s continue to work hard in
the areas of Primary School Coaching,
Post Primary Coaching, Club & Coach
Development, Club Camps and Physical
Development.

We would like to thank the many club
volunteers who have worked alongside our
GPO’s to help steer and guide them based
on their clubs key requirements.

We are currently have three clubs still
waiting on the replacement of their GPO
and I am working hard on trying to find a
suitable candidate.

To this end, can I encourage all clubs to
consider whether they may have some suit-
able GPO candidates amongst their own
club members, and if so, please contact me
with your recommendations.

3) Formal Coach Education

Introduction to Coaching Gaelic Games (ICGG)

In 2024, we have delivered 22 ICGG
courses to date. These break down as 6
Centre of Excellence based courses, 8
club based courses and 8 transition year
schools’ courses.

We will continue to run Centre of
Excellence based courses in the first quar-
ter of the 2025. These dates are currently
being publicised and circulated and regis-
tration is open to all club members.

We are also more than happy to come to
your club to put on an ICGG course at a
club’s facilities, provided they can assure
us of 10 or more sign ups.

**It is worth remembering that the ICGG
course is a mandatory award that must
be held by all members of your club who
are involved in a coaching capacity.**

We attempt to make this course as practi-
cal and enjoyable as possible in the hope
that it will be seen as just the first steps on
a new coach’s journey.

Award 1 Football & Hurling

In 2024, we have delivered 5 Award 1
courses. These break down as 4 Centre of
Excellence based courses and 1 club-based
course.

We will be running one Award 1 football
course and one Award 1 hurling course
in the first quarter of 2025. Again, these
dates are currently being publicised and
circulated and registration is open to all
club members who have already completed
the ICGG course.

The Award 1 course has been designed
to take account of the different playing
capacities that exist between children (up
to 12 years), youths (age 13-18) and Adults
(age 19+) and the competencies that a
coach is required to display when work-
ing with each of the playing populations.
Therefore, coaches can specialise in coach-

ing the particular players that they are involved with.

Growing our coaching base

We currently have 2,676 qualified coaches across our clubs in Laois. We have just undertaken a process by which each club has now received a list of all qualified coaches in their club, whether they be active or inactive.

I would encourage each club to take a detailed look at this list and see if some of those inactive coaches could be brought back inside the coaching net while also encouraging others to think about progressing up the next step of the coaching ladder.

4) Informal Coach Education

Informal Coach Education will be divided into two sections for 2025.

A) Club Workshops

Our Club Workshops will be delivered by our GPO's and GDC's at the club's venue and will cover the following areas:

- 1) Club Player Pathway
- 2) Session Planning
- 3) Nursery Programmes
- 4) Go Games
- 5) Youth Games
- 6) TURAS
- 7) Athletic Development Programmes
- 8) End of Year Reviews

These workshops will run right throughout 2025.

B) County Workshops

Our County Workshops will be delivered by guest speakers at the LOETB Centre of Excellence and will cover the following areas:

- 1) Nursery Coaching
- 2) Go Games Coaching
- 3) U13 – U17 Coaching
- 4) Football Goalkeeping
- 5) Hurling Goalkeeping
- 6) County Development Squads Coaches
- 7) Athletic Development & Nutrition
- 8) Primary School Coaching
- 9) Future Leaders (Transition Years)

These workshops will run right throughout 2025 but will be front loaded towards the first half of the year.

We are also setting up a mechanism whereby the vast array of coaching content that currently exists within the GAA actually gets to those who most require it; the volunteer coaches are tasked with delivering their clubs sessions on a weekly basis.

In addition to this, knowledge sharing of 'best practice' amongst our clubs, with guidance provided around implementation has the potential to have major benefits for all.

5) Go Games

2024 saw an overhaul in how we delivered our GO Games programme, and I am delighted to say that the vast majority of the feedback has been tremendously positive.

Below are some of the changes that were implemented.

- a) A reduction in 'per side' playing numbers.
- b) A more appropriate fixture list based on club numbers, standard and location.
- c) Splitting of older and younger players within an age bracket to better match up levels.
- d) Set agreed standard rules rather than the home team dictating.

A positive Go Games experience is vital in the journey of our young players, so it is imperative that we do all that we can to facilitate this outcome.

Unfortunately, a very small minority of clubs have been identified as not helping us to achieve this aim. **If this continues to be the case again in 2025, these clubs will be removed from invitations to attend Centre of Excellence blitz days, and the O'Moore Park Experience evenings.**

6) Academy Squads

The Academy Squads continue to be a key corner stone in the development of both our future county players, and the young players that we hope will go on to form the bedrock of our adult club sides.

Our summer training programme, which saw all Academy players involved in morning gym & pitch sessions during their holidays, was, for the most part, a big success.

As part of this programme, our U16 football & hurling panels also received weekly educational talks in areas such as nutrition, goal setting, lifestyle and further education.

Trying to avoid clashes between county and club training sessions and games has without a doubt been the biggest challenge in terms of structuring the academy year.

To this end, the Coaching & Games department intend to work extremely closely with Coiste na nÓg to try to come up with the best possible fixtures plan that we can to ensure that our young players are available to their clubs for training and games while still partaking in a comprehensive county academy programme.

7) Setanta & Ó'Mórdha Óg Programmes

In 2024, we managed to achieve our aim of running the Setanta and O'Moore Og programmes at U10, U11 & U12 age groups. This was only possible down to the outstanding work of the volunteer coaches who drove the programme.

Particular credit must go to Brendan Phelan, Liam Ahern, Des Conroy and Mark Russell.

While numbers in the Setanta programme continued to hold up strong, we were a little disappointed by the O'Moore Og numbers and would ask clubs to help us out by pushing the initiative in their clubs in 2025 as best as they can.

The opportunity to avail of extra training sessions in a structured environment where they get to play with and against new kids, and be coached by different voices, has endless benefits in terms of their progression and enjoyment.

A massive thank you to Clonad GAA club for the continued use of their facilities.

8) Primary Schools

Driving participation in our GAA Clubs by engaging with kids through our Primary Schools continues to be a key focus for us. The roles played by our GPO's here in helping to develop a love of Gaelic Games at a young age cannot be underestimated.

For those clubs still without a GPO, the club-school link has offered an excellent alternative. I am delighted to say that by incorporating three excellent college interns into our club-school link programme alongside our GPO's, every primary school in Laois received a weekly coaching session over the second half of the 2024 school year.

This is a target that we are confident that we can achieve again in 2025.

We continue to work closely with fantastic Cumann na mBunscol committee that we have here in Laois as we aim to support them with current and new initiatives.

As an example, we recently had a brilliant uptake in our 3rd/4th class blitz days that we held in the Centre of Excellence and we look forward to rolling out a new 6th

class training programme, which will be delivered by coaching and games staff, in the new year.

9) Post Primary Schools

The Post Primary School sector is an area in which Laois, while a slow burner, has seen some encouraging progression in 2024.

We understand the challenges schools face in terms of getting students and teachers onboard at schools' level and with that in mind the Coaching & Games department are offering their assistance in whatever way we can.

This year, our staff have assisted in delivery of coaching sessions in St Fergal's Rathdowney, Mountrath Community School, Knockbeg College and most recently St. Mary's CBS Portlaoise. Plans are also underway for us to help deliver sessions in Heywood Community School.

In addition to this, we have had excellent take up on our offer to deliver the Introduction to Gaelic Games and the Young Whistlers courses to the Transition Year Future Leaders programmes.

St Fergal's Rathdowney, Mountrath Community School, Knockbeg College, Portlaoise College, Heywood Community School, Colaiste Iosagain Portarlinton, Clonslee Secondary School and Dunamase College Portlaoise all took part in the programme.

We have looked to increase the games programme available to schools, putting

particular focus on 1st and 2nd year, by running blitz days in the Centre of Excellence. These have gone very well and have given the students and opportunity to represent their school early in the year.

We have also entered Laois Combined Schools teams in both football and hurling at multiple age grades in an effort to give students an opportunity to play at as high a level as possible.

10) Cul Camps

The delivery of the 2024 Kellogg's Cúl Camps in Laois was a huge improvement on the previous year, mainly thanks to our participation GDC Dean Malone.

Dean took control of the co-ordination of venues, recruitment and training of

coaches, and generally pushed the overall standards of what should be delivered to ensure that feedback from kids and parents alike was massively improved on the 2023 experience.

We successfully held 36 camps in 35 different venues throughout the county, in which our clubs hosted 17 Football, 10 Hurling and 8 Dual camps with almost 3,000 kids in attendance.

2024 saw our very first county-based Inclusion Cúl Camp take place in the Centre of Excellence, merging two existing inclusion camps from The Rock GAA and Portlaoise GAA into one county camp, with 29 kids taking part. A huge thanks to Laois Sports Partnership for their help in running the camp.

Brian Quinn & Shane Keegan

SAFETY & FACILITIES REPORT 2024

Delegates and all in attendance, I am pleased to present my report as Laois CLG Safety & Facilities Officer for 2024. I'd like to thank all members of the 2024 County Board for supporting me during the year including the staff at the Centre of Excellence.

The Safety & Facilities officer role can be reported upon from two main areas: Support to clubs and development of O'Moore Park including Centre of Excellence.

Support to Clubs

Firstly, dealing with support to clubs, it The Leinster Council Development Grant scheme opened for applications in September 2024, and I was pleased to help all clubs in their application process. The club officers involved have done a great job in getting grant support for the capital works carried out between Summer 2023 and Summer 2024. I am very hopeful of a positive outcome from Leinster Council by the end of 2024 in this regard.

The national Sports Capital Programme was announced in September 2024 bringing record awards for Laois clubs. Congratulations to all and I will remain available to support them during the construction phase of each development. These developments will make a substantial improvement to the playing facilities across the County which can only be positive for our players development.

I want to thank Michael Reynolds, Patricia Clear and John Browne in Comhairle Laighean for their constant support and advice during the year.

Development of O'Moore Park & Centre of Excellence

O'Moore Park stadium is in good shape overall, but a few areas were in need of attention. In particular the viewing area for disabled patrons and the aging scoreboard as I mentioned in last years report.

I am proud to have completed the wheelchair area upgrade project during October 2024 with support from the County Board. I believe it is a positive improvement for wheelchair users who attend any matches.

I was also pleased to be able to progress the new digital scoreboard project during 2024 with the support of the Management Committee. I want to thank Jodie Conway, Pascal McEvoy, Niall Handy, Colm McEvoy and initially Richard Kennedy for their support in making this project a reality. The digital scoreboard has been in operation throughout the club championship and has modernised the patron experience. Thanks to the Contractor FSL for their professional implementation.

The Centre of Excellence is a fantastic facility for all our county players and clubs. I commenced an energy review of the facility during 2024 with the support of TippEnergy. The transition to a more sustainable footprint will be an important

part of the CoE complex development into the future. With Niall's help an application was made to Central Council for grant support. A grant of up to €250,000 was approved in October 2024 for the energy project which will include new LED floodlighting to all CoE pitches and the installation of solar to the roof of the CoE building including battery. A supplementary application has been made to Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland (SEAI) via TippEnergy which will further support the project. It is planned to have the project completed by Spring 2025 which is very positive for the sustainable improvement of the Centre of Excellence.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Colm McEvoy and all the grounds staff. Pitches were in excellent condition throughout the year. In addition to the new irrigation system installed in 2023, the decision was taken to replace the drainage of O'Moore park pitch for the long term benefit of the pitch. Works were carried out in Summer 2024 and the benefits of this project will be seen over the coming years. I'd like to recognise Niall and Colm's work in making this project a reality.

Finally, with the need to constantly keep improving and give strategic direction to the future development of the complex, a future development planning process has been kicked off to set out the next phases of development. I look forward to keeping delegates updated on this strategically important process throughout 2025.

I want to thank PJ Kelly, Martin Byrne and Niall Handy for their constant support during the year in relation to all the above projects.

Stewarding & Safe hosting of games

Once again throughout 2024, I am extremely impressed and grateful for the dedication of all stewards and others who help during games. These are the unsung heroes who give generously of their time to Laois GAA and its patrons. I thank you all for your dedication. Dealing with the public can always throw up issues, but all stewards that I have come across during the year are very courteous to patrons which gives a very positive reflection of Laois GAA.

I want to sincerely thank Tom Jones in particular, for his support during 2024. As Events Coordinator, Tom has led the organising and hosting of all matches for many years. He has decided to step back from his role into 2025 and he will leave a huge gap which is likely to be filled by more than one person. Tom has given endless hours of his time to Laois GAA which I'm sure will be recognised by all. I wish Tom the very best over the coming years.

I would like to thank PJ Kelly as Safety Officer who has been a constant support regarding hosting games throughout the year; and the workers in O'Moore Park who have kept the stadium clean, painted and very presentable during 2024. And finally, I want to thank Pamela, Willie and Michael for their support of me during 2024.

Le Meas,

John Kelly

County Safety & Facilities Officer

PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT 2024

As my first year as PRO and a member of the executive committee comes to a close, I want to express how much I've enjoyed being part of the Laois GAA family. Having previously served on the PR Committee, I'm grateful for the guidance from past PROs like Tom Clear, Paul Dargan, Pat O'Sullivan, Canice McCarthy, and Richie Kennedy. Thank you for always being there to help.

I also want to extend my thanks to the executive committee for their warm welcome during our meetings.

A huge shoutout to my PR Committee:

- **Aoife McEvoy (Portlaoise)** for her support on match days, handling the scoreboard, updating Twitter, and capturing pre-game photos. Special thanks to Aoife's dad for always lending a helping hand.
- **Eoin Culleton (Mountmellick)** for expertly maintaining our Twitter feed and sharing his extensive knowledge of Laois GAA.
- **Canice and Conor McCarthy (Portarlington)** for managing the scoreboard during both club and county football games and for their dedication in keeping our social media updated.
- **Alison O'Kelly (Laois Hire)** for her invaluable contributions to expanding our social media presence; we are

incredibly fortunate to have her on board.

- **Niamh Delaney (Clough/Ballacolla)** for traveling with me to various locations to keep our social media feeds active on game days—your help has been invaluable.

I would also like to thank the press and media outlets—Laois Today, Leinster Express, Laois Nationalist, and Midlands Radio—for their support throughout the year.

It was fantastic to see our social media following grow:





Thank you to the clubs in Laois for their efforts in sharing information, pre-game photos, and full-time scores, especially during busy match days. A heartfelt thank you to all the club PROs and officials for their cooperation.

I appreciate the teams, management, and backroom staff for making me feel welcome on match days, particularly Pat Delaney, John Kealy, Mattie Collier, Tony Bambrick, Ollie Byrne, and Conor McCausland for their consistent support.

To all the players at every level, your talent and dedication are what we promote, and we appreciate you.

Thank you to our sponsors for their invaluable support throughout the year. A special mention to Niall Handy and Pam Cooney for their assistance with my numerous queries, as well as the stewards, Willie Stackpool, Bosco Catering, and everyone behind the scenes who make match days at Laois Hire O'Moore Park possible. I'd like to particularly recognize

Tom Jones, a stalwart of Laois GAA and a friendly face in O'Moore Park.

I am proud of my own club, Clough/Ballacolla GAA, for their unwavering support and dedication. We are fortunate to have so many great Laois people involved.

Lastly, a heartfelt thank you to my family for their unwavering support throughout the year. A special shoutout to my brother Shane for always proofreading my work before publication—this report included. Thanks, Shane.

I want to finish by wishing all the Laois teams the very best of luck for the 2025 season & look forward to travelling the country supporting the lads once again.

Oonagh Maher
Laois PRO

LAOIS AWARD WINNERS 2024

FOOTBALL

Senior Footballer of the year:
Rioghán Murphy (Portarlíngton)

Senior B Footballer of the year:
Páddy Fitzpatrick (The Heath)

Intermediate Footballer of the year:
Cormac Murphy (Crettyard)

Intermediate B Footballer of the year:
Jamie Conway (Arlis Kilcruise)

Junior Footballer of the year:
Cian Ryle (Kilcavan)

Minor Footballer of the year:
Darren Brennan (Portlaoise)

Laois Intercounty Footballer of the year:
Killian Roche (Killesshin)

HURLING

Senior Hurler of the year:
Lee Cleere (Clough/Ballacolla)

Premier Intermediate Hurler of the year:
PJ Scully (Borris-in-Ossory Kilcotton)

Intermediate Hurler of the year:
Laurence Kenny (Mountmellick)

Junior Hurler of the year:
Darragh Hiney (Ballypickas)

Minor Hurler of the year:
Kyron Cuddy (Castletown)

Laois Inter County Hurler of the year:
Aidan Corby (Clough/Ballacolla)

Hall of Fame:
Tom Jones (The Heath)

Referee:
Anthony Stapleton (Rathdowney/Errill)

Rounders:
Gillian Keenan (Emo Rounders)

Scor:
Monica Delaney (Castletown)

Handball:
Elizabeth Pearson (Clough/Ballacolla
Handball)

AUDIT & RISK REPORT 2024

Following a period of significant Audit & Risk review in 2023, the Committee maintained this momentum into 2024. The aim of the Committee is to provide guidance and oversight to the Management Committee to deliver and promote good governance across all functions of Laois GAA.

Risk Management is at the cornerstone of the committees remit. The identification of “inherent risks” allows the Committee to address same with a view to reducing these to “residual risks” while in turn improving overall governance. As outlined, this remit is not restricted to a “Financial” Audit & Risk function but across all activities of Laois GAA to identify and mitigate risk.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the sub committees who met with the committee during 2024 and provided significant insights to both the opportunities & risks across their roles.

A summary of the overview and initiatives recommended to the Management Committee in 2024 were as follows:

Club Financial Review

For the second year running an assessment of Financial Year End 10/2023 accounts of every club in Laois was undertaken by the committee with each club being assigned a level of risk depending on the clubs current financial performance and their overall financial position. There were a number

of clubs who moved between risk levels when compared to their FYE 10/2022 accounts and level of information provided. Reports will issue to each club in this regard in the short term.

Following the FYE10/2022 review and findings, the Committee introduced a Financial Template to all clubs who were instructed to adopt same so that there is a uniform Financial reporting system across the county. A number of clubs satisfactorily produced their FYE 10/2023 accounts on the new template, however, there is a gap that needs to be addressed where clubs did not engage with the new template. The financial position in a no. of clubs continues to be difficult to establish in the absence of a Balance Sheet.

I would encourage all clubs to adapt the new Financial Template and if any guidance is sought on completion, please reach out to the Committee via the County Secretary. We are striving for best in class approach to financial reporting to drive improved governance across the club population through this uniform approach.

Coaching and Games Officer

The Committee met with Shane Keegan, Head of Coaching & Games to establish what what risks have been identified since Shane took up this position in June 2023.

Shane brought the Committee through a SWOT analysis recently completed for

presentation at Provincial level which brought to light the strong work being carried out in Laois to progress our games.

There was one area identified as a key risk to the Coaching and Games function and that is in the area of Post Primary schools. The Post Primary player development pathway in Co. Laois is not at a sufficient level to drive progress at inter county level.

The Committee share this concern raised as it has been a recurring theme identified since the Audit & Risk Committee was established.

Given Post Primary GAA competition is a significant pathway for player development and with the notable lack of Laois schools competing in "A" level competition, we deem this to be a fundamental risk.

There is a Proven link from Post Primary success to Inter County success and a lack of competitive games and dual approach to player welfare between inter county coaching teams and Post Primary Schools level hinders their development at a crucial stage of life.

The Audit & Risk Committee held subsequent meetings to discuss and draft a recommendation on Post Primary strategy which has been recently furnished to the Management Committee for due consideration.

Strong fundamentals are evident in Laois Primary Schools, through a very healthy Cumann na mBunscol programme, which is dually fostered by clubs from Nursery through to Go Games etc. The benefits of this investment in Primary School chil-

dren will continue to be unravelled by the issues encountered at Post Primary level if not addressed imminently.

Refereeing

In a similar vein, the Committee consulted with Maurice Deegan on the remit of Refereeing in Laois to establish what pertinent risks are facing referees, and to establish what accountabilities and development pathway gaps exist. A recommendation paper has been submitted to the Management Committee for due consideration.

The overarching recommended approach is that a working group be established to assess the SWOT analysis outlined in the furnished paper. Consideration to be given to the areas of weaknesses and opportunities that can be addressed and initiatives put in place to maximise the opportunities for improving refereeing standards. A key driver of this analysis will be to increase the refereeing population and implement a formal development pathway for Laois referees.

Management Committee

The Audit & Risk Committee met with the County Secretary and County Treasurer to review Laois GAA financial performance during the year vs. budgets furnished to Croke Park.

The Committee found there to be a satisfactory performance vs. budget and significant cost controls and monitoring in place

which is satisfactory. The key risk to Laois GAA is the incremental cost of funding inter county teams. It is acknowledged by the Audit & Risk Committee that this is a macro issue across all counties, however, close monitoring of same is required to ensure Laois GAA maintains a surplus position in each Financial year.

It is important to note, that the success of the Senior Footballers and Senior Hurlers in reaching national finals in 2024 resulted in generation of additional income. The Committee wish all our inter county teams continued success into next season and recommend a strong balanced approach to funding of these panels through prudent management which was evident in the past 12 months, albeit at an increasing rate as outlined.

It is also a function of the Committee to review external Auditors findings on the Laois GAA accounts and an independent meeting has been requested to review FYE 10/2024 position. The Committee had interaction with the Auditors prior to finalisation of the 2023 accounts with a satisfactory outcome.

Finally, I would like to thank committee members Maeve Conroy, John Connolly and David Dwyer for their time, guidance, enthusiasm and initiative they brought to this important function during 2024. We are looking forward to 2025 to maintain our focus on mitigating risk across Laois GAA activity to promote a culture of strong risk management.

A key focus of next year will be the completion of a look back exercise on recommendations submitted to the County Board to date to establish how risks identified have been mitigated and to investigate underlying issues where inherent risks still exist.

Mise le meas

Risteard O'Duinn

Cathaoirleach, Audit & Risk Committee

REFEREES ADMINISTRATOR REPORT 2024

'Referees don't just turn up on match day by accident'

Referee Appointments:

Hurling:

Adult & U17

John Carroll Mountrath
Danny Gorman Clough Ballacolla
Vincent Dowling O'Dempsey's

U15 & U13

Brochan O Reilly Portlaoise
Danny Gorman Clough Ballacolla

Referee Appointments:

Football:

Adult & U17

Tom Donohue - Mountmellick
Joe Brennan - Crettyard
Pat O'Connell - Courtwood
Vincent Dowling - O'Dempsey's

U15 & U13

Pat O'Connell - Courtwood
Vincent Dowling - O'Dempsey's

New Referees Tutor

Maurice Deegan - Stradbally

In-House Tutors

Padraig Dunne - Colt
Seamus Mulhare - The Heath

Garda Vetting & Level 1 Child Welfare

Seamus Le Hart - Shanahoe
Deirdre Hurley - Graiguecullen

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Leona Conroy - Clonad

Bleep Testing

Richard Dowling – O'Dempsey's

Match Notifications

Pam Cooney Office

The list of personnel above shows what is needed to run an effective Referees Administration committee. All our referees have to reach set targets throughout the season so they can officiate our games. This year we had 39 referees available to cover football matches and 26 referees available to cover hurling matches. We had 14 dual referees included in these numbers. With the input from all personnel named and the input from our referees, our recruitment, training and organisation puts the Laois Gaa Referees Administration way above all other counties in Leinster. This is news that I am pleased to bring to you this evening.

My thanks to all involved in 2024.

Vincent Dowling

BREAKDOWN OF CLUBS WITH ACTIVE REFEREES

Abbeyleix St. Lazarians	0
Annanough	0
Arles Kilcruise	0
Arles Killeen	0
Ballinakill	0
Ballypickas	0
Ballyroan Abbey	0
Borris in Ossory	0
Clonad	0
Emo	0
Kilcotton	0
Kyle	0
Mountmellick	0
Slieve Bloom	0
Spink	0
Timahoe	0
Trumera	0
Ballyfin	1
Barrowhouse	1
Clonaslee St. Manmans	1
Clough Ballacolla	1
Crettyard	1

Errill	1
Killeshin	1
Rosenallis	1
The Harps	1
The Rock	1
Ballylinan	2
Castletown	2
Colt	2
Courtwood	2
Kilcavan	2
Park Ratheniska	2
Rathdowney	2
Shanahoe	2
St. Fintan's Mountrath	2
St. Joseph's	2
Stradbally	2
Graiguecullen	3
O'Dempsey's	3
Portarlinton	3
Portlaoise	3
The Heath	3
Camross	4

CHILDREN'S OFFICER REPORT 2024

Safeguarding Training.

This was a very successful year. Deirdre Hurley was always available to all clubs and to the county board to facilitate this training, sometimes at short notice. She was also available to clubs throughout the year to discuss what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable.

The safeguarding training is only valid for three years. It can be renewed through face-to-face or online training.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all clubs of the requirement for up-to-date vetting certification in 2025. Only vetting approved in 2022 & 2023 & 2024 is valid for the 2024 season. Only vetting letters provided by the GAA, LGFA, and or Camogie are acceptable. This vetting is also and safeguarding is also valid for work within primary schools where there is no GPO available to the school. I would remind all clubs that the coach assigned to the relevant primary school has a valid vetting, safeguarding cert and coaching qualification.

All clubs where they participate in Independent teams must have open communication with the lead club and ensure that only suitably approved coaches/officials are in place for all games and training sessions. In the same way where an official/coach is recruited from outside the club(s) each executive is responsible for ensuring that all officials (coaches / mentors / referees / umpires etc) are suitably vetted and trained. For all adult teams where at least

1 under 18 player is training with the team the safeguarding requirements apply with-out exception.

It is essential (as part of legislation) was all clubs have appointed a Children's Officer and a Designated Liaison Officer. These are not optional appointments.

We request that the Children's Officer email address should be used by all clubs as this is the only method of approved communication in line with good governance and GDPR rule for communication especially of person's personal data. I want to take this opportunity to request that all clubs change email passwords when a new officer is appointed so that the old officer no longer has access to the email associated with the role. This is not a personal email instead it is a "work email" and should only be used in this circumstances.

A disappointing aspect of 2024 for me is the increased use of negative / abusive language on the side-lines and in games in Laois by supporters, players, game officials and appointed officials. We need to remember that we are playing our games with either young people playing and or watching and we are role models for all our young players and supporters.

I would implore all clubs to ensure that this behaviour is not accepted and that any club where this behaviour occurs manage it in accordance with the Safe Guarding protocols. We need to remember that our players / mentors / official's do not deserve / expect to be a recipient of any abuse

(verbal or physical) and it is not necessary. As a parent would you accept your child being verbally abused? Would you allow them to be in the environment where verbal aggression is ok? If no is the answer to these questions then we need to better manage our behaviour at games, training sessions and stop this negative behaviour. There is no place in the GAA (and our sister organisations or any other sporting environment or society) for this behaviour. If this behaviour is not accepted in normal everyday society, it is not accepted within the GAA in any circumstances.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the club children's officers for their diligent work in their own clubs and with independent teams this year. The conversations we are having locally are a positive reassurance to me that the role within each club is held in high regard and is viewed as essential to good club governance. Within Laois Co. Board the role of the children's officer has now evolved to supporting the clubs and ensuring the county development structures/teams are compliant with all safe-guarding rules. I wish to thank Deirdre Hurley for her work in Laois GAA and her excellence in delivering safeguarding training.

In 2025 all clubs will be requested to complete the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, (last completed in 2023). This assessment is completed every two years. It is important to remember that without an updated approved statement on show in every club grounds, the club will not be able to host games and training. This statement is a Legal Requirement as defined in the 2015

Children First Act and is not an opt-in opt-out requirement.

To conclude I would like to take the opportunity to thank my club Shanahoe for nominating me to the role of Laois Children's Officer over the last 10+ years. I would also like to thank and acknowledge previous committees and Chairpersons Gerry Kavanagh, Peter O Neill, and current Chairperson PJ Kelly for putting their trust and the trust of Laois GAA in me to ensure that Laois GAA was fully compliant with GAA rules for child safeguarding.

Séamus Lahart

HEALTH & WELLBEING REPORT 2024

The Health and Wellbeing Committee would like to express its heartfelt appreciation to all our Laois GAA clubs for their exceptional and ongoing efforts to support our members' evolving needs. Each year, the importance of supporting our members health through wellness initiatives continues to grow, and we are witnessing the positive impact these initiatives have on our clubs and communities. The strong sense of community within each club is evident in the work clubs have done to enhance the well-being of our members. We look forward to continuing this important work in the years to come, helping our clubs promote health and wellness for their members and within their communities.

participate in Phase 6 of the Healthy Club Project. Over the next 18 months, they will be supported by the county committee on their journey to achieve Healthy Club status. So far, seven clubs have successfully completed this initiative and, every 18 months, they undergo the renewal process to maintain their status and continue their excellent work. The clubs participating in Phase 6 are:

Abbeyleix GAA

Clough-Ballacolla GAA

Portlaoise GAA

The Harps GAA

The Heath GAA

Trumera GAA

Healthy Club Project

We are delighted to announce that six additional clubs have been selected to





Alongside enhancing the preventive measures essential for optimal health and well-being, we aim for the proactive efforts of the Healthy Club Project to mitigate some of the challenges facing our communities. To truly support one another both on and off the pitch, we must uplift every member. Our dedicated efforts will strengthen our clubs, ultimately benefiting our communities. As a committee, it is our responsibility to assist Laois clubs in reaching this goal by implementing health-promoting initiatives and policies that cater to members of all ages.

Staying Well – On and Off the Field

This year, we conducted a highly successful workshop aimed at supporting our referees, both on and off the field. This

workshop was the first of its kind in the country which focused on various aspects of referee development, including mental health, stress management, and techniques for handling challenging situations during matches. The positive feedback we received highlighted the need for ongoing support and resources for our officials.

As a result of the insights gained from this workshop, we have put forward several recommendations to our county executive. These initiatives will aim to enhance the experience of our referees and address the challenges they face, ensuring they feel valued and supported in their roles.

Prioritising the mental health of our referees is crucial, as it directly impacts their performance and overall well-being. We urge every club to fully embrace the ‘Give

Respect, Get Respect' initiative. This program fosters a culture of respect and support, not only for referees but also for all club officials. By creating a respectful environment, we can help ensure that our referees feel safe and appreciated, ultimately benefiting the entire GAA sporting community.

Health Screening Events

This year, we successfully conducted two full day heart screening clinics in our Centre of Excellence, providing essential health checks to a total of 89 young athletes in our development squads. Out of those 89 we had 3 requiring follow up tests and a cardiology review. Our goal is to raise awareness about the importance of these screenings and the need for early intervention should any issues arise. By running these clinics regularly, we aim to identify any underlying conditions, ensuring players receive timely support. This initiative not only promotes the health and safety of our young athletes but also offers peace of mind to both players and parents as they engage in sports.

Sun Smart Dispensers

This year saw the installation of Sun Smart dispensers in our county grounds to promote sun safety. These dispensers will provide free sunscreen to all members and visitors, encouraging everyone to protect their skin during outdoor matches and events at the COE. By prioritising sun safety, we aim to raise awareness about the

importance of sun protection and help our GAA community enjoy a healthier, safer experience in the sun.



The Year Ahead

In 2024, the Health & Wellbeing Committee will continue to encourage and support our clubs in implementing health-promoting initiatives within their communities. We will strengthen our connections with national and local support services, as well as the dedicated Healthy Club Officers in our clubs.

Our plans for 2025 include:

1. Ensuring every club in Laois has a dedicated Healthy Club Officer.
2. Requiring all clubs to adopt a critical incident plan and a substance abuse policy.
3. Encouraging participation in the 'Clean Air Around Us' initiative to promote a smoke-free environment in all our club grounds.

4. Rolling out the HEED & Substance Misuse educational and awareness program for interested clubs and their coaches/mentors.
5. Promoting the 'Give Respect, Get Respect' initiative to foster a culture of respect.
6. Launching educational programs focused on mental health, and raising awareness about drugs, alcohol, gambling, as well as diversity and inclusion.

These initiatives will enhance our clubs' commitment to health, safety, and community well-being.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to everyone who has supported us throughout the year, especially our County Board Executive and the Coaching and Games Committee. We also thank the Croke Park

National Health & Wellbeing Committee and the Healthy Club Officers in Laois. We are committed to expanding these efforts to prioritise health and wellness in all aspects of our sporting organisation.

The Committee continued to be: Leona Conroy (Chairperson), Tom Jones, Ciara Conroy, Paul Harding, PJ Kelly, Seamus Lahart, Martina Murphy, Eamonn O'Connell, Brian Quinn

Leona Conroy

Chairperson - Laois GAA Health & Wellbeing Committee

FIXTURES REVIEW 2024

Introduction

In compliance with Rule 3.18 (iii) of the GAA Official Guide, the role of the fixture analysts is to

- Review the adult fixtures programme for 2024
- Carry out a consultation process with the clubs through a questionnaire
- Make recommendations for changes to be considered by Laois CCC for 2025

Review of Adult Fixtures

Following an analysis of fixtures, the review makes the following observations:

- Dedicated weeks for both football and hurling worked well in championships
- Football (ACFL) and hurling league (ACHL) games on the same weekend poses challenges for dual clubs and is a player welfare issue.
- Football leagues need restructuring specifically the 2nd phase of Division 1, 2 and 3
- The level of walkovers in Junior A Football Championship (JFC) needs to be addressed
- Senior B football competition was taken seriously and worked well
- A walkover in the Senior Hurling Championship (SHC) in 2024 is a cause of concern, in light of the decision to increase the numbers of teams from 8 to 10 for 2025
- Any decision to increase the number of rounds in the Senior Football Championship (SFC) needs to take account of the welfare of dual players

Consultation

As part of the review, the clubs were consulted and requested to complete an online questionnaire. A summary of the key findings are as follows:

- Only one third of clubs responded
- The majority of respondents favoured making changes to ACFL 1, 2 and 3
- Some appetite to reduce the number of teams in the Senior Football Championship (SFC)
- Hurling and football leagues should be played on different weeks
- One suggestion is that lower grade competitions should start later in the season
- Player welfare was raised (specifically playing games on consecutive days)
- Clubs are keen that the Co Board deal firmly with walkovers in championships

Recommendations

The following should be considered when framing fixtures for 2025:

- Changes to the SFC format needs to take account of the demands on dual players
- Restructuring of JFC is required
- All clubs in SHC must play at least one round before commencement of lower grades
- Senior, Premier Intermediate and Intermediate hurling should finish on the same weekend
- Separate league weekends for football and hurling leagues as far as practicable

- Standalone football competition for clubs with no real interest in promoting the game
- Penalties in place to act as a deterrent for walkovers in championship games

Seán Ó Conghaile *agus*
Micheál O Conaráin

1st November 2024

Appendix 1: Analysis of walkovers

Adult Football Leagues			
Division	Scheduled	Not Played	%
1	41	5	12.2
2	41	3	7.3
3	42*	5	11.9
4	31	6	19.35
5	31	9	29.03
6	29	7	24.14
7	52	16	30.77
All	267	51	19.10

* Final not played

Adult Hurling Leagues			
Division	Scheduled	Not Played	%
1	31	0	0.00
2	31	2	6.45
3	31	1	3.23
4	31	3	9.68
5	31	7	22.58
6	33	8	24.24
All	188	21	11.17

Adult Football Championships			
Grade	Scheduled	Not Played	%
Snr	37	0	0
Inter	17	1	5.88
Jun A	37	11	29.73
Jun B	23	5	21.74
Jun C	44	9	20.45
All	158	26	16.46

Adult Hurling Championships			
Grade	Scheduled	Not Played	%
Senior	17	1	5.88
Prem Inter	17	0	0.00
Inter	18	0	0.00
Jun A	15	0	0.00
Jun B	15	2	13.33
Jun C	22	5	22.73
All	103	8	7.77

TUAIRISC OIFIGEACH CULTÚR & GAEILGE CLG LAOISE - CRUINNIÚ CHINN BHLIANA CLG LAOISE 2024

Ba mhór an onóir dom bheith tofa arís mar Oifigeach Cultúr & Gaeilge Laoise don bhliain 2024.

During 2024, Scór activities were back to normal and our first event was Scór Sinsir taking place in the Centre of Excellence in November of last year. Unfortunately the attendance was low, however this year was slightly different as instead of having Scór Sinsir and Scór na nÓg in the winter of 2023/24, we had two separate rounds of Scór Sinsir. The second round was better attended, with competitors in 4 of the competitions. These competitors did us proud, with Sarah Troy from Mountrath GAA qualifying for the Leinster final! Next event was Scór na bPáistí held in Mountrath's St Fintan's Hall at the end of April. This was a great evening with competitors and talent aplenty. A special word of thanks to Mountrath and especially Monica Middleton for helping to organise this event. Doireann O'Connor was our adjudicator and commented on the wealth of talent in our primary school aged children. Our Scór na nÓg for 2024 takes place on November 9th in Vicarstown, and it promises to be a great afternoon's entertainment!

This year, with the help of Bryan Breen and Laois Gaels, we also facilitated entertainment at the Laois intercounty home games in O'Moore park. This consisted of various people singing or playing Amhrán na bhFiann before each game, and having music provided for the spectators at half time by the various Comhaltas branches

in the county. A special thanks to all those who performed!

Regarding progress in promoting An Ghaeilge in the GAA, with the help of Seán Ó Curráin from Glór na nGael, we held an opening evening in July with some of the Oifigí Gaeilge from clubs around the county to promote the Fondúireacht Sheosaimh Mhic Dhonncha, an initiative to promote the use of an Ghaeilge in the clubs.

I would like to thank my Committee; Michael Martin (Runaí), Monica Delaney, Martin Stapleton, John-Paul Nevin, Niall Ó Braonáin, Tomás Ó Maolagáin, Emer Liston and Monica Middleton.

As is my annual request to you, the clubs of Laois please try to promote the use of our native language in the day to day business of your club. Please make your club signage and road signs at least, bilingual. I am reminding you again in the run up to your club's "Cruinniú chinn bhliana" to present a little of all reports 'as Gaeilge'.

I look forward to hopefully working with you all again in the coming year, and I hope to continue promoting an Chultúr agus an Ghaeilge in the GAA!

Thank you to my fellow County Board Officers, Officers of the clubs of Laois agus an foireann san Oifig.

Nollaig Mac an Ghaill
7/11/2024

AINMNIÚCHÁIN (NOMINATIONS)

Cathaoirleach (Chairperson):

PJ Kelly (Outgoing)

Cisteoir (Treasurer):

Paschal McEvoy (Outgoing)

Leas Cathaoirleach (Vice Chairperson):

Kieran Kehoe (Outgoing)

Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer):

No Nominee

Oifigeach Oiliúna (Coaching Officer):

No Nominee

Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish Officer):

Noel Stapleton (Outgoing)

Oifigeach Caidrimh Poiblí (P.R.O.):

Oonagh Maher (Outgoing)

Ard Comhairle (Central Council Delegate):

Martin Byrne (Outgoing) & Brian Allen

Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council Delegate) (2):

Brian Allen & Tom Clear (Outgoing)

Congress Delegates (3 to be elected):

Cathaoirleach, Runaí & Ard Comhairle delegate automatically attend:

Brian Allen, Tony Bambrick, Tom Clear & Paschal McEvoy.

Leinster Convention Delegates (5 to be elected):

Outgoing Comhairle Laighean delegates automatically attend: PJ Kelly &

Paschal McEvoy.

NA RÚIN (MOTIONS)

1. In order to bring Byelaw 7 “Playing Restrictions” closing date in line with Byelaw 6 “Transfer Byelaw”, it was agreed to bring forward motion to amend Byelaw 7 as follows (*change in bold italic*) –
 - (a). Subject to Riail 6.7, (c), T.O. 2024, the CCC shall process and make decisions on applications received on or before **31st January** in any year for permission for an Adult player from an exclusively Football Club to play Hurling with a Dual Club or a player from an exclusively Hurling Club to play Football with a Dual Club.
 - (b). Subject to Riail 6.7, (d), Exception (1), T.O. 2024, the CCC shall process and make decisions on applications received on or before **31st January**, in any year for permission for a Club’s Underage (up to including U20 / U21) players who may be without an Underage Team in a particular Grade or Code or who may be from an exclusive Football Club to wishing to play Hurling with a Dual Club or a player from an exclusive Hurling Club wishing to play Football with a Dual Club. (*CLG Laoise*)
2. Proposed changes to Byelaw 8 Grading as follows:
 - (A): That the number of player’s teams have to submit for their first and subsequent teams (by Feb 28th) should be reduced to **13** players;
 - (B): That the number of players submitted for Championship panels be reduced to **15** players;
 - (C): That the date for submitting championship panels be put back from May 14th to **June 21st** and that clubs be allowed to amend their Championship panel at this time. (*CLG Sráidbhaile*)
3. Proposed amendment to be included in Byelaw 8 Grading as follows:

That after two championship rounds clubs would be allowed to apply to regrade a maximum of two players subject to approval of the CCC. To be eligible to be considered for this regrading, a player must not have started both of the games played at the higher grade. (*CLG Sráidbhaile*)
4. MOTION: Any players from a single code Club currently registered and attached to a second Club to avail of hurling/football be allowed continue with that Clubs for the duration of their playing career. REASON: This rationale for this is in light of current and upcoming Club alignment moves, it has to be recognised that there are players who have been playing with Clubs from Nursery up to U13 for up to 6 years in some cases. These player should be allowed continue with that Club rather than being uprooted to another Club at a young age, which could cause player dropout. All other players post club alignment becoming effective be directed as per wishes of Laois GAA. (*CLG Páirc Raithín an Uisce*)



*Midlands Park Hotel Underage Championship
vand League Sponsors 2024*



*Laois Shopping Centre Adult Championship
and League Sponsor 2024*



Downey Kit Vans Sponsor 2024



MIDLANDS PARK

Hotel • Conference • Leisure



*Weddings
Meeting Rooms
Carvery Lunch
Bar Food
Kellys Steakhouse
Triog Restaurant*

THE ALL NEW

MIDLANDS PARK HOTEL

FORMERLY PORTLAOISE HERITAGE HOTEL



WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU....

Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Tel: +353 57 867 8588

info@midlandsparkhotel.com | www.midlandsparkhotel.com

LAOIS HIRE

PLANT & TOOL



Official Sponsor of Laois GAA



Browse our
Online Store
laoishire.com

Your Local Hire Supplier

Portlaoise | Athy | Dublin | 1800 20 40 40 | laoishire.com