



Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Laois
Laois GAA County Board

Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2020



The O'Moore Rising
A new beginning for the GAA in Laois





 Baile Fionn Ballyfin	 An Fraoch Mór The Heath	 Na Clairsigh The Harps	 Rath Domhnaigh Rathdowney	 Baile Plocas Ballypicks	 Baile an Chaisleáin Castletown	 Ioma Eno
 Baile na Coille Ballinakill	 Crochta Árd Crettyard	 Mainistir Béal Átha an Róine Ballyroan Abbey	 An Sraibhaille Stradbally	 Cill Chabháin Kilcavan	 Ros Fhionnghlaise Roosallis	 Mointeach Míle Mountmellick
 Rath Domhnaigh Éireil Rathdowney Éireil	 Borris in Ossory/Kilcotton Buirios Mór Osrai Cill Chóirín	 Camross Camross	 Coill Kíle	 Gleann Uísteann Killeshin	 Naomh Seosamh St Josephs	 Ard Lios Chillín Arles Killeen
 Buirios Mór Osrai Borris in Ossory	 Coill na Cúirte Courtwood	 An Charrag The Rock	 Anach Ananrough	 Teach an Bhearra Barrowhouse	 Coill Chóirín Kilcotton	 Coillte Coil St Fintans
 Tigh Mochua Timahoe	 Cúil an tSúdaire Portlinton	 Ard Lios Cill Chruis Arles Killeen	 Gráig Chuilinn Grainveaheen	 Mountrath Naomh Fiontáin Maighéan Rátha	 Seanchua Shanahoe	 Port Laoise Portlaoise
 Spink Spink	 Tromaire Trimera	 Cloch Baile Cholla Clough Ballacolla	 Sliabh Bladhna Slieve Bloom	 Páirc Raithín an Uisce Park Rathfriska	 Mainistir Laoise Abbeyville St. Lazarus	 Na Diomasaigh O'Dempsey's
 Clusain na Sli Naomh Meánmain Clonsilla	 Baile Laigheanáin Ballylinan	 Clusain Fhada Clonad	 Eireil Éireil	 Slieve Marge Slieve Marge		

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Foreword



Peter O'Neill
Cathaoirleach CLG Laois

As incoming Chairperson of Laois GAA, I am delighted to be afforded the opportunity of implementing this Strategy and Action Plan for our Association in Laois. This report will give us focus on the importance of organising our administration to give the best to all our players, members and clubs in the coming years.

I wish to complement our Clubs for their overwhelming response, with their views expressed being reflected in this Strategy and Action Plan. The report does not shirk its responsibilities and it highlights the strengths and weaknesses within the Association in our county in equal measures. Only by knowing the true extent of any weaknesses within our structures can we hope to find a solution to address such shortcomings. The Strategic Review Committee has provided the direction in which our Association should be moving and I undertake to ensure that the recommendations will be fully implemented. We will set ourselves tasks that will involve the monitoring of progress.

I would stress that implementing the recommendations in the report will be the responsibility of every GAA stakeholder in Laois and not just our Laois GAA Management Committee. The report will be especially relevant to our clubs, as ultimately it is their commitment or otherwise which will determine whether the Report's recommendations are successfully implemented. With their assistance, I am satisfied that Laois GAA will not be found wanting in ensuring that the G.A.A. continues to lead and continue to be the great sporting organisation that it is in our country. We are determined to pass on an Association to the next generation of which they can be proud.

Nickey Brennan and his committee have put in a tremendous amount of time in preparing this report and on your behalf. I would like to say *Mile Buíochas do gach duine!*



Gerry Kavanagh
Iar-Cathaoirleach CLG Laois

During the year it was suggested we should undertake a Strategic Review of our Association's affairs. This I believed was important due to the fact that our previous Strategic and Action Plan expired in 2015 and I am a firm believer in the necessity to plan future strategy.

While I acknowledge that there is a lot of good about the GAA in Laois, there are a number of areas which must be improved, particularly in view of the many challenges being encountered by the Association in the county and especially in our clubs. This strategic review was an opportunity to assess every aspect of the GAA in our county and identify those areas that need to be changed or set in a different direction. I thank the members of our clubs who contributed to the debate by means of the consultation process and in completing the club questionnaire and to those who made individual submissions.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Nickey Brennan for agreeing to chair this Review Committee and I can only be impressed with the enthusiasm and energy he brought to the entire process, which I believe to be most extensive and thorough review of the Association in our county to date. I wish to express my gratitude to the other committee members, all of whom brought their own areas of expertise - David O'Brien (Secretary), Kieran Kehoe, Richard Kennedy, John Kelly, Shane Maher, Ger Slevin, Eamonn Jackman, Stephen Miller, Maurice Deegan, Liam Delaney, Michael Dempsey and Tommy Lanigan.



Nioclás Ó Braonáin
Cathaoirleach Strategy Review Committee

I want to acknowledge the support of Laois GAA Officers, Laois County Board and the clubs of the county in the preparation of this report. The views of over 500 people in Laois helped to inform the Strategy Review Committee on a wide range of topics, all of which have deep relevance for the Association in the O'Moore County. The theme of our Strategy and Action Plan is 'The O'Moore Rising - A new beginning for the GAA in Laois'. I want all Laois GAA stakeholders to view the launch of this Strategy and Action Plan as the start of a new journey for the Association in the county.

Successfully implementing the actions which are outlined in this report is the joint responsibility of the Laois County Board and the clubs in the county. This can only be achieved by everyone working together with a common aim of improving every facet of the Association in Laois. To safeguard the GAA's future in the O'Moore County changes are inevitable and that means addressing the actions we have outlined in the report.

I have included a range of comments regarding this Strategy and Action Plan in the Executive Summary.

I wish to acknowledge the work and dedication of the Strategy Review Committee and especially our Secretary David O'Brien. It has been a great pleasure for me to work with individuals who displayed a real passion for Laois GAA and a clear desire to safeguard the Association in the county for current and future generations.

Finally, my thanks to Laois GAA Officers, Gerry Kavanagh, former Chairman, Niall Handy, Secretary, Martin Byrne, Treasurer for their guidance and support through all stages of the review process.

Ní neart go cur le chéile!

Executive Summary

Laois GAA Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2020

When heading off on a long journey it is advisable to plan the trip well in advance to ensure that everything goes according to plan. Running the GAA in any county is akin to a long journey, often travelled across difficult terrain with the drivers changing periodically. Without a proper plan in place, the GAA journey can be challenging, the route to the ultimate destination unclear and the drivers (in this case the County Board and its Senior Officers) equally unsure as to where they are heading. The inevitable outcome is that individuals will have different agendas and there is little prospect of everyone reaching the ultimate destination together.

It is to the credit of the out-going Chairman, Gerry Kavanagh, and Secretary, Niall Handy, that they saw the need for a Strategic Review in Laois at this time. I am honoured to have been asked to Chair the Committee and I am indebted to an enthusiastic group of colleagues on the committee for their commitment and valuable input to the preparation of this report.

There are many positive things going on right now in Laois GAA circles, however, we met some pessimism in our engagement with clubs and individuals around the county. The Review Committee is confident that if its recommendations are acted upon by the Laois GAA County Board, the Association in the county will be in a stronger position to meet the challenges which are outlined later in this report.

Coaching – Games Development

At the core of any county's approach to promoting Gaelic Games is its attention to coaching and games activities. While the excellent work of Laois GDAs is acknowledged in this report, the level of support they and the various coaching and games programmes receive from volunteer County Board Officers is minimal. This is unacceptable and must change immediately.

This report sets out a series of recommendations to address the shortcomings which have been identified, especially in relation to the roles of the Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee. The Review Committee spent a significant amount of time discussing an appropriate Coaching and Games structure in Laois and how best to maximise the work of the existing GDAs. With this in mind, there is also a strong recommendation to appoint a Coaching and Games Manager to oversee the operational aspect of coaching and games delivery/management.

Implementing the recommendations outlined in the coaching and games section of this report, is critical to ensuring that the required improvements are forthcoming.

Competitions – Games – Combined Teams – Discipline – Inter-County Teams

Critical to any improvement in coaching and games is the need for an appropriate games programme for all players and especially at underage levels, which is particularly inadequate at some age groups. The Review Committee received much feedback from clubs in relation to the structure of various competitions. This issue was not included in the terms of reference for the review group, nevertheless, given the scale of feedback received it is a matter that should be reviewed by the Laois County Board (albeit that some issues raised by clubs are likely to be changed by the Laois County Board for 2018 competitions)

Coming as I do from outside Laois, I was surprised at the number of combined teams involved in various Laois competitions in 2017. I fully understand the reason for combined teams, but the process by which such teams are formed is woefully inadequate and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The issue of how disciplinary issues are addressed in Laois was consistently raised by clubs. The Review Committee had no specific remit in relation to discipline other than to note the scale of the comments which need to be addressed by the Laois GAA County Board.

Rural Laois

The most worrying aspect of the entire review is a concern for the survival of several clubs in Laois due to a decline in playing numbers, especially at underage levels. This became very clear in the club responses to the review questionnaire. Most of the clubs which find themselves in this position currently play as part of a combined underage team and are most unlikely to ever field on their own again at underage level. The commitment of the Officers, players and supporters from these clubs is to be admired, but the reality is that stark decisions await these clubs at some stage over the next decade.

The Review Committee is aware of the emotional impact which the potential winding-up of any club can have on its members, players, supporters and the community in which it operates. The Review Committee is recommending that Comhairle Laighean appoints a small group to meet with any Laois club which is struggling to survive and assist the Officers to identify options for the future.

Urban Laois

The Laois Local Authority County Development Plan 2018-2023 has identified a number of urban areas in the county where significant economic investment and housing development is anticipated over that period. It is important that the Laois County Board is conscious of the recommendations in the County Development Plan, as these are likely to have a profound impact on future GAA policy in Laois for both urban and rural clubs.

The County Board must also be conscious of the differing needs of urban and rural clubs in the planning and delivery of coaching and games programmes, as clearly the number of young players will be greater in urban clubs.

The County Development Plan outlines major plans for Portlaoise, the largest town in the county. This will lead to significant population growth over the five years of the plan. With this in mind, the Review Committee is recommending the formation of a specific juvenile club in Portlaoise which in time would become a feeder unit to other clubs in Portlaoise and environs.

Infrastructure Facilities – Future Development

The vision demonstrated by the Laois County Board in developing the new Training Centre is to be lauded. The development is on-going, and coupled with further upgrading at O'Moore Park in the years ahead, Laois GAA will be well-served with a fine Headquarters. The Review Committee is recommending that a sub-committee is established which would set out a ten-year vision for O'Moore Park, including the financial implications for Laois GAA.

Funding – Sponsorship – Financial Excellence

Laois GAA has benefited from excellent financial governance over recent years, but the challenge to continually raise finance for day-to-day operations plus the funding of capital projects is never-ending. The strong commitment to the County Board draw by Laois clubs is acknowledged, as is the generous sponsorship from multiple partners for inter-county teams and club competitions.

The Review Committee is recommending that the County Board continues to identify areas for which further sponsorship might be sought.

Organisational Structures – Communications – Club/Officer Support

The report makes a series of recommendations which, if implemented, will improve the operation of County Board Sub-Committees. While the feedback from clubs relating to County Board communications was good, several recommendations are made to further improve communications between the County Board and all its stakeholders.

Many clubs indicated that they undertook Club Officer training and while this is welcome, it is crucial that new Officers continue to engage with the GAA's official training programme.

Engaging with Other Organisations

The Laois GAA County Board is conscious of its obligations to assist other codes aligned to the GAA with access to its facilities in O'Moore Park and the Laois GAA Training Centre, whenever possible. The Review Committee recommends that this engagement continues.

Conclusion

This report is intended to cover the period 2018-2020, but in reality, it is a roadmap beyond that three-year timeline. While a number of the recommendations are noted for priority action, it behoves the County Board to identify sub-committees to assume immediate ownership of each recommended action.

It is my earnest hope that every County Board Officer, County Board Member plus every GAA Club in Laois will study this Strategy and Action Plan in advance of it being formally discussed at an upcoming County Board meeting. For the recommendations to have the necessary impact there must be renewed enthusiasm from County Board Officers, Members and Clubs.

I have already indicated to the Chairman and Secretary the importance of undertaking a progress review at six-monthly intervals over the coming three years, with a report being submitted to the County Board in June and December each year for consideration. This is essential to ensure that the implementation of the report's recommendations proceed in a timely manner.

The first important step in setting Laois GAA on a new journey has been completed with the launch of this Strategy and Action Plan. Now comes the challenge for all GAA stakeholders in the county to combine their undoubted passion for the Association to ensure that the future is secure at every level by implementing the recommended actions of the Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2020.

Níoclás Ó Braonáin

Cathaoirleach

Strategy Review Committee

Review Methodology

Strategy Review Committee

The membership of the Strategy Review Committee was as follows:

- Nickey Brennan (Kilkenny) – Chairman
- David O'Brien – Secretary
- Liam Delaney
- Michael Dempsey
- John Kelly
- Ger Slevin
- Richard Kennedy
- Shane Maher
- Tommy Lanigan
- Eamonn Jackman
- Kieran Kehoe
- Steven Miller
- Maurice Deegan

The Strategy Review Committee met formally on fourteen (14) occasions, while the Chairman and Secretary met with other individual Laois GAA stakeholders also. All individuals who contributed to the review are acknowledged in Appendix A at the end of this report.

Club Engagement

Widespread engagement took place with Laois GAA clubs. Firstly, a Questionnaire was prepared and sent to each club for completion. This afforded all clubs an opportunity to consider specific questions with their responses being considered by the Strategy Review Committee in the preparation of the final report. Thirty-three (33) of the forty-four (44) Laois clubs returned completed questionnaires. This was a 75% return and was considered by the Strategy Review Committee to be an excellent response.

The second phase of the club engagement process saw consultation meetings taking place in clubs where attendees were asked to consider three questions as follows:

1. What is good about the GAA in Laois at present?
2. What is not good about the GAA in Laois at present?
3. What should the priorities be for Laois GAA at this time and be included in the Strategy and Action Plan report?

Forty-one (41) of the forty-four (44) Laois clubs (i.e. 93.2%) arranged a consultation meeting with a member of the Strategy Review Committee. A total of four hundred and eighty-five (485) people attended club consultation meetings. This was an excellent turnout and was very helpful in compiling the actions which have been included in this report.

Full details of the Questionnaire Responses and the Club Consultation meetings are outlined in Appendix B at the end of this report.

Laois Local Authority Development Plan 2017-2023

In preparing the Laois GAA Strategy and Action Plan, the Review Committee was cognisant of ‘The Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023’ which sets out the following vision – “County Laois will be a cohesive and sustainable community of people enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environments, where the natural environment is protected, cultural and built heritage is safeguarded, where opportunities for existing residents and future generations to live, work, visit and enjoy safely and as equals, without compromising the environmental integrity of the county”.

The purpose of the Plan is to enhance the quality of life for the current and future population of Laois and manage the county in the interests of the common good. This will be achieved by providing for good quality housing, economic opportunities, physical and social infrastructure while protecting the natural and cultural heritage and the environmental quality of Laois.

The Plan has several aims, many of which have deep relevance for the GAA in Laois. Chief among those is a provision for the growth of County Laois towards a target population of up to 89,790 by 2023, this to be structured in a balanced manner between the Principal Town of Portlaoise (up to 25,382) and the rest of the county (up to 64,408), encompassing:

- The consolidation of the Key Service Town of Portarlinton.
- The measured growth of the five Service Towns (Abbeyleix, Graiguecullen, Mountmellick, Mountrath and Stradbally), two Local Service Towns (Durrow and Rathdowney), and villages of population not exceeding 800.
- The maintenance of viable rural communities in the hinterlands of these towns and villages.

While the Plan contains many other aims, which have relevance for Laois GAA, the following is worthy of note:

- Facilitate the provision of housing in a range of locations to meet the needs of the county’s population, with particular emphasis on facilitating access to housing to suit different household and tenure needs in a sustainable manner and in appropriate locations.
- Promote and encourage the development of critical mass in Portlaoise and enable more economic development opportunities and provision of services in a cost-effective manner.
- Facilitate the provision of and improvements to social and recreational infrastructure and ensure universal access to all to such facilities throughout the county for all its residents.

The Urban and Rural environments of County Laois are identified in the Plan as follows:

Principal Town Portlaoise
Key Service Town Portarlinton
Services Towns Abbeyleix, Mountrath, Stradbally, Graiguecullen, Mountmellick
Local Service Towns Rathdowney, Durrow, Ballylinan
Newly Emerging Local Service Town Ballylinan
Villages > 400 Population Borris-in-Ossory, Clonaslee, Ballinakill, Killenard
Villages < 400 Population Attanagh, Arles, Ballacolla, Ballybrittas, Ballyroan, Camross, Castletown, Clough, Coolrain, Cullahill, Emo, Errill, Killeen, Newtown, Doonane, Rosenallis, Shanahoe, The Swan, Timahoe
Open Countryside Rural Laois

The Plan identifies anticipated population growth as per the following chart:

	Projected Population 2023	Projected Growth 2011-2023	Project increase in Households
County Laois	89,790	9,231	3,216
PRINCIPAL TOWN			
Portlaoise	25,382	5,237	1,824
KEY SERVICE TOWN			
Portarlinton	8,567	779	271
SERVICE TOWNS			
Mountmellick	5,478	739	257
Graigecullen	4,584	618	215
Abbeyleix	2,112	285	99
Stradbally	1,334	180	62
Mountrath	1,920	259	90
LOCAL SERVICE TOWNS			
Rathdowney	1,395	187	65
Durrow	974	131	46
All Villages < 800 Population / Open Countryside (Total)	38,044	929	324

Principal Town - Portlaoise

The Laois County Development Plan outlines the following policies in relation to Portlaoise:

- Continue to promote and facilitate the development of Portlaoise as a Principal town.
- Direct population into the Principal Town to ensure that population growth is appropriate in scale with its identified role in the Regional and County Settlement Hierarchy.
- Apply increased residential densities up to 35 per hectare where appropriate having regard to Sustainable Residential Developments in Urban Areas.
- Apply appropriate development management measures in ensuring growth is appropriate and in compliance with the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.

Key Service Town

Portarlinton is the Key Service Town in County Laois and functions as a support to the development of the Principal Town of Portlaoise. Much of its population increase over the past seven years is attributable to immigration from Dublin commuters, attracted to the town by affordable house prices and the availability of excellent rail links to the capital. It is recognised that Portarlinton must strengthen and widen its economic base so as to retain its population, and promote a balanced spatial structure to ensure its continued vitality and development. However, it is also acknowledged that the continued expansion of the town must be regulated to ensure that community, social and retail developments keep pace with recent rapid phases of mainly residential development.

Service Towns

The Service Towns are so designated, because they are important resources for their hinterlands, providing community and infrastructural facilities and services and the population base to maintain them. These towns perform important retail, residential, service and amenity functions for local, essentially rural hinterland and support the upper tiers of the urban hierarchy, including the principal towns.

- Mountmellick has a role to play in supporting the principal town of Portlaoise.
- Graigecullen is located in the extreme south-eastern tip of the county and is heavily linked and connected to Carlow and the adjacent southeast region for the majority of its services.
- Abbeyleix, Stradbally, Mountrath are also Service Towns dispersed around the county on the national and road network. These towns are considered appropriate for managed population growth over the plan period, together with employment opportunities, business, industry and tourism and infrastructural development. A limiting factor in the growth of these settlements will be the availability of infrastructure, specifically waste water treatment facilities.

Villages > 400 population

They have an important role to play in performing local residential, retailing, social and leisure functions and providing appropriate local services to a wider rural hinterland.

Villages < 400 population

These areas have a limited service base and are to a large extent founded on the local primary school catchment area. These villages provide opportunities for future expansion/provision to attract a population seeking to live in a rural environment. Development growth should be low density, relative to the scale of the settlement, located as near as is practicable to the core area.

Mapping of Laois Urban and Rural Areas

The map on the next page is critical to understanding the areas within County Laois which are to be considered as Urban (strong green) or Rural (lighter green) over the period of the Local Authority County Development Plan.

Conclusion

The Laois Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 is a comprehensive document outlining a wide range of issues that have relevance for every resident and organisation in County Laois between now and 2023.

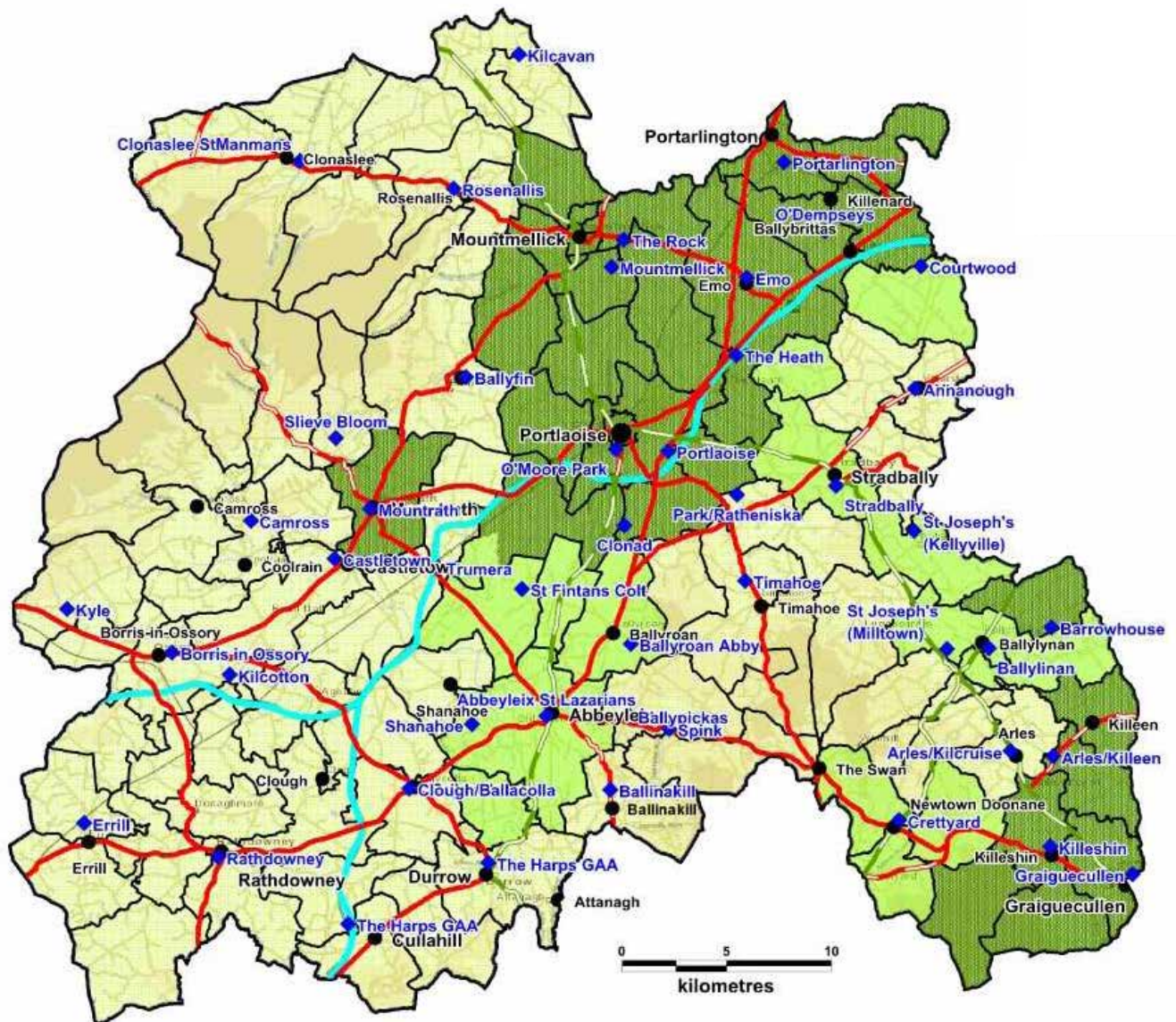
The Gaelic Athletic Association is one such organisation that will be impacted by the many recommendations in the Plan (some of which have been noted above).

The Laois Local Authority Development Plan 2017-2023 has noted that the primary economic development and future housing infrastructure will mainly occur in designated urban areas, with Portlaoise identified as the Principal Town of the county. The impact of this policy for Laois GAA will be as follows:

- Clubs operating in the Urban areas of County Laois (i.e. those areas highlighted in dark green on the map on the next page) can expect to see continued economic investment plus additional houses being constructed, the net impact being a population increase (see details in the earlier chart in this section of the report). It is reasonable to assume that the majority of clubs operating in urban areas are very likely to retain current playing numbers, with some areas certain to see an increase in playing numbers.
- Much of the economic development and additional housing infrastructure will be concentrated in Portlaoise, the principal town of the county. While a number of GAA clubs operate in Portlaoise and its environs, the anticipated population increase will afford these clubs an opportunity to increase playing numbers. It is with this population growth in mind, that the Strategy Review Committee is recommending the formation of a new juvenile club in Portlaoise, which over time can become a feeder-unit to the other clubs in Portlaoise and environs.
- Economic development and house building in rural Laois will not match that envisaged for the designated urban areas of the county and is likely to vary considerably from one rural area to another. Less housing construction in rural Laois will have a major impact on GAA clubs operating in these environments. From data supplied by clubs plus the work undertaken by the Strategy Review Committee, we already know that many rural GAA clubs are facing significant challenges fielding underage teams. We can only conclude from the policies outlined in the Laois Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 that the playing population in rural Laois GAA clubs will not increase and is more likely to fall in many rural areas of the county over the next five to ten years.

Finally, the Strategy Review Committee strongly recommends that the Laois County Board invites executive members of the Laois Local Authority to provide a summary presentation of the Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 as many of its recommendations have clear relevance for the strategies which the GAA County Board will adopt in the future, including the recommendations outlined in this Strategy and Action Plan.

Laois GAA County Board acknowledges the financial support of Laois Local Authority towards the promotion and development of Gaelic games in the county.



Laois GAA Clubs



Club Locations

Laois County Council
County Development Plan 2017-2023
Rural Area Designations



Areas Under Strong Urban Influence



Stronger Rural Areas



Structural Weak Areas



Recommended Actions at a Glance

(Refer to the relevant section of the report for full details relating to each area plus the recommended actions)

(P) denotes a Priority Action (To be completed or have commenced by the 31st March 2018)

SECTION 1: COACHING – GAMES DEVELOPMENT

- Greater County Board oversight through its Coaching Officer & the Coaching and Games Committee (P)
- Greater focus on the planning, oversight, delivery, management and review of coaching and games activities and GDA's (P)
- Recruitment of a Coaching & Games Manager (P)
- Preparation of an Annual Coaching Plan (P)
- Monthly Meetings of key Coaching & Games Personnel (P)
- Presentation to Laois clubs on the new coaching structures/operations by the 31st March 2018
- Review of Development Squads, Cúl Camps and Go Games including greater volunteer involvement
- Clearly planned engagement with Primary and Second Level Schools
- Planned and better engagement with clubs
- Continued promotion and delivery of Coach Education
- Referee recruitment drive with an added focus on Referee Education
- Embed the GAA Respect Initiative in all Laois coaching and games activities

SECTION 2: COMPETITIONS - GAMES – COMBINED TEAMS – DISCIPLINE – INTER-COUNTY TEAMS

- Establish Work Groups (with external Chairpersons) to review all adult and underage competitions – separately (P)
- Establish a Working Group (with an external Chairman) to review the operations of combined teams in Laois (P)
- Laois GAA to consider the negative feedback from clubs relating to their handling of disciplinary matters (P)
- Clarify process/regulations relating to internal Player Transfers
- Clarify process/regulations relating to Player Regradings
- Laois GAA to hold an annual meeting between the two Senior Inter-County Team Managers and Club Team Managers

SECTION 3: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES - COMMUNICATIONS – CLUB/OFFICER SUPPORT

- Comhairle Laighean to support the challenges facing rural clubs (P)
- County Board to initiate better communications with clubs on decisions/matters from County Board meetings (P)
- County Board to review appointments to Sub-Committees
- County Board to review Terms of Reference for each Sub-Committee
- Develop stronger relations with all independent media sources (Print, Radio, TV and Social Media) in Laois
- Expand the use of social media and other communications sources
- Expand the Club Officer Training programme
- Laois GAA to establish a promotional drive to attract more volunteers to clubs

SECTION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES - FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- County Board to set up a Working Group to develop a Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park (P)
- Upgrade Media & Wheelchair Facilities in O'Moore Park in the short term
- Build 200 Seater Stand with Wheelchair access at the Laois GAA Training Centre (Main Pitch)
- Upgrade the floodlighting on one Training Centre pitch for hurling games
- Develop a branding strategy for the Training Centre & O'Moore Park to promote Laois GAA achievements

SECTION 5: ENGAGING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- Access to the Laois GAA Training Centre for Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Cumann na mBunscol
- Access to O'Moore Park for Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Cumann na mBunscol
- Access to Laois GAA web site to Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Cumann na mBunscol

SECTION 6: FUNDING - SPONSORSHIP - FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE

- Laois GAA to establish a specific fund-raising Working Group to raise funds for capital projects
- Laois GAA to review existing sponsorship agreements to help identify further opportunities
- Laois GAA Clubs to submit their annual accounts to the County Board by the end of February each year

SECTION 7: URBANISATION, RURAL DE-POPULATION AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

- Comhairle Laighean to support the challenges facing rural clubs (P)
- Laois GAA to review the Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 for its relevance to future GAA policies
- Laois GAA to continue the promotion of community integration in the clubs of the county.



Section 1: Coaching - Games Development

Key Objective: Laois GAA will provide every child in the county with the opportunity to learn, play and enjoy Gaelic games in a safe environment.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA players at all levels in the county receive the best available coaching from qualified coaches and an appropriate games programme/environment is provided for all players, especially at underage levels.

Coaching Structures, including the work of GDAs

Current Structure

Coaching and Games Development in Laois comes under the direct management of the County Board Secretary, Niall Handy. The coaching team includes Lead GDA Andrew Kavanagh and four other GDAs, Donie Brennan, Ciarán Muldowney, Peter Hally and Colm Begley. An Annual Coaching Plan is prepared, in conjunction with Comhairle Laighean, while a review of ongoing activities takes place each month and is attended by the six individuals just named plus a representative from Comhairle Laighean. The current coaching and games structure in Laois is shown in the schematic in Appendix A at the end of this section of the report.

The review identified a significant workload attached to each GDA, with minimal input from volunteer members of the Association in the county. This is not sustainable going forward, albeit that the appointment of additional personnel this year is a positive development. It is important to acknowledge the work which GDAs undertake in Laois. A worrying lack of understanding from clubs as to the role and responsibilities of GDAs was noted and resulted in some negative feedback through the Club Questionnaire responses and the Club Consultation meetings. The appointment of a Coaching & Games Manager plus significantly greater input from both the Laois Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching & Games Committee is essential to ensure that the work of GDAs is more closely monitored and managed to deliver optimum results. These changes will also ensure that GDAs receive better support from all sections of the Association in Laois to undertake their duties.

Changes Required

The Strategy Review Committee, based on the opinions of its members and on the feedback received from many Laois clubs, is of the view that changes are required in how coaching and games activities are delivered and managed. To meet the challenges which are outlined in this report and to bring about the necessary improvements, restructuring of coaching delivery by GDAs is necessary, while additional resources are also required. In this regard, the Review Committee recommends that GDAs be located regionally, albeit with flexibility to ensure

that clubs have sufficient access to coaching in both codes. The appointment of a Coaching and Games Manager (reporting to the County Board Secretary) to specifically manage day-to-day operational activities is strongly recommended. Overall financial governance and HR management of coaching and games should remain the responsibility of the County Board Secretary. The Review Committee also recommends that the funding of coaching and games activities in Laois, including the engagement of full-time personnel should be funded by contributions from Laois GAA County Board, Comhairle Laighean and the GAA clubs of Laois (with the County Board determining the scale of the annual payment, taking club size into account).

The Review Committee is very concerned at the current range of activities for which GDAs are responsible and the almost complete lack of input and oversight from any volunteer members of the Association in the county. The recommendations which are outlined in this report are aimed at addressing these shortcomings. In particular, they are aimed at delivering clearer work programmes for GDAs, improved supervision/monitoring of their work, greater input from volunteer members of the Association plus improved governance and oversight of all coaching and games programmes in Laois. The proposed new coaching and games structure for Laois is shown in the schematic in Appendix B at the end of this section of the report.

Laois Coaching Officer and Laois Coaching and Games Committee

In common with all counties, Laois has an elected Coaching Officer plus an appointed Coaching and Games Committee. The Laois Coaching Officer currently provides minimal input to the planning and implementation of coaching and games initiatives and does not attend the monthly meeting which reviews coaching and games activities in the county. He provides an update on relevant coaching and games issues to club delegates at monthly County Board meetings. There is no evidence of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee meeting on a regular basis to plan or review coaching and games programmes in the county. This means that the planning and implementation associated with those programmes rests exclusively with the full-time GDAs, with little input from volunteer Officers/others. This is unacceptable and must change. It is imperative

therefore, that the Coaching Officer and the Coaching and Games Committee take a direct role in setting out appropriate coaching and games programmes for the county, working in tandem with the Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position), with Laois GDAs and with Comhairle Laighean. The Coaching and Games Committee must also provide oversight to ensure that the various programmes are delivered as planned. Appendix C at the end of this section of the report outlines the key attributes required of the Laois Coaching Officer; Appendix D outlines a proposed structure for the Laois Coaching and Games Committee, and Appendix E outlines proposed Terms of Reference for the same committee.

Club Coaching Officer

The feedback received also indicated that not all clubs appoint a Coaching Officer who would act as a liaison person with the designated club GDA. This role could become more effective with a better functioning County Coaching and Games Committee, as it would enable the Club Coaching Officers to meet collectively on a number of occasions each year (with the County Coaching and Games Committee) to discuss/review matters of common interest, all aimed at delivering consistency (and a clear understanding) of all coaching programmes in the county. Appendix D at the end of this section of the report outlines the key attributes of the Club Coaching Officer.

Club Coaching

Feedback from clubs indicated that visits from GDAs are sporadic and must be increased. A lack of regular communications between the GDA and their designated clubs was noted by some clubs and this needs to be improved. Clubs need to understand that the primary role of GDAs when visiting clubs is to upskill the coaches attached to all underage teams, and not to coach club underage teams themselves.

Club/Primary School Contact

Some clubs in Laois appoint a Club/Primary School link person who interacts with the GDA when he visits local National Schools. Funding for this programme is currently provided by the local club and the Laois County Board. It is important for each GDA to have a club contact to interact with for Primary School visits, as the club is then aware when the GDA visits the area. While the Review Committee is happy to see this programme continue, we are aware that it has been less effective in 2017. Nevertheless, it is a matter that should be reviewed to improve the effectiveness of the programme by the Laois Coaching and Games Committee as soon as it is established in 2018.

Comhairle Laighean

Comhairle Laighean provides significant support to

Laois by way of finance, oversight and guidance on both National and Provincial coaching and games programmes which should be rolled out in the county. This is to ensure that Laois is compliant with National and Provincial coaching and games policies. Feedback from clubs and other stakeholders in Laois indicated that Comhairle Laighean should exert a stronger monitoring role over Laois coaching and games programmes and personnel.

Primary Schools

Coaching requirements may vary from school to school, therefore it is necessary for each GDA to agree with the School Principal what is needed (this planning should take place in June each year). An annual Calendar of Primary School visits should be published and issued to schools and clubs at the start of each school year to promote Primary School coaching initiatives. Primary school teachers continue to provide major support for Gaelic games in schools throughout Laois and we wish to acknowledge that support in this strategy report. The Review Committee recommends that Laois GAA provides annual coaching courses (one for each playing code) for Primary Teachers each summer to support the Primary School Gaelic games programme.

Second Level Schools

The current role of GDAs in Second Level Schools is principally to support internal school coaches. However, it is important that the primary coaching role, especially managing Second Level School teams, is undertaken by school staff as GDAs will not be involved with school teams on match days. A meeting at the start of the school year with School Principals is essential to agree the schedule of GDA school visits/activities.

Laois Development Squads

The amount of work which Laois GDAs undertake with Development Squads is not sustainable and requires much greater input from the Coaching Officer and the Coaching and Games Committee. This is particularly relevant in relation to recruiting coaches, recruiting mentors/selectors and providing other support services to ensure that each player achieves as much as possible from his involvement with a Development Squad. Given the number of individuals who have received Award 1 qualifications in both codes, every effort should be made by the Laois Coaching and Games Committee to involve some of these individuals with Development Squads. Ideally, parents should not be appointed as mentors to a squad in which their son is involved.

The Review Committee recommends that Development Squads should initially be organised on



a regional basis. This will ensure that more players gain access to the squads; more players will receive quality coaching (in both codes) and squad mentors have access to a wider group of players before selecting final panels to prepare for the various Provincial and National tournaments. The Review Committee strongly believes that Development Squads should have two clear purposes: (a) to afford as many players as possible access to quality coaching and mentoring which will make them better club players, and (b) to select a squad of players that will represent Laois in the various underage summer tournaments and who will undergo additional coaching and mentoring in preparation for those competitions.

Some clubs spoke of a 'closed shop' attitude to Laois Development Squads. The view was also proffered that the current system means that squads often remain unaltered allowing little scope for new players to be introduced in later years. This must change. It is vital to keep the squad involvement base as wide as possible for as long as possible in order to provide players with a developmentally appropriate GAA experience. The Review Committee recommends that the incoming Laois Coaching and Games Committee reviews the Development Squad system as a matter of urgency.

Go Games Programme

Feedback from clubs indicated some concern with the current Go Games programme. A number cited the distances they travel to play some games as a reason for conceding walk-overs. A further issue noted was some clubs only making the minimum number of players available for Go Games fixtures, meaning that opponents with larger squads found it difficult to give meaningful playing time to all their players. While the Go Games concept was welcomed by all clubs, there is a need to review how the games programme is scheduled and completed in view of the feedback received. The Laois Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee should lead this review with input from GDAs as required.

GAA Cúl Camps

GDAs are currently responsible for the planning and operation of Cúl Camps, but greater input is

required from the Laois Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee. Issues were brought to the attention of the Review Committee concerning a lack of coaching qualifications by some coaches (not GDAs) involved with the Cúl Camps plus what was considered to be inadequate Cúl Camp supervision which raised some health, safety and child welfare concerns. As GDAs are responsible for managing simultaneous Cúl Camps, direct supervision from a designated senior club individual is essential to ensure the comfort, safety and enjoyment of Cúl Camp participants. This is yet another matter for the incoming Laois Coaching and Games Committee to review as a matter of urgency.

Coach Education

The number of individuals in Laois who have undertaken some level of formal coach education is noted in the chart below and demonstrates the success of these programmes in the county. The planning, scheduling and delivery of courses are further tasks for the Laois GDAs to undertake and greater input into all aspects of the planning and scheduling of courses is required from the Laois Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee. In addition, too much is expected of GDAs in relation to the delivery of coach education programmes. Master Tutors, some of whom are from Laois, should be engaged to deliver more of the coach education programmes than at present.

Informal Coach Education Initiative – TURAS (Comhairle Laighean)

The TURAS programme will challenge coaches to engage in lifelong coach education by providing flexible, context-appropriate and bespoke opportunities delivered within their coaching environment. This initiative, developed by Comhairle Laighean, will be rolled out in Laois by its GDAs and all involved as Development Squad coaches. Their role will be underpinned by the TURAS principles (see Appendix G at the end of this section of the report). TURAS provides coaches with Continuing Personal Development opportunities (to complement formal coach education) that provides those operating on the Player Pathway with the skills they need (and the ability to refine and reflect on these).

Referee Recruitment and Education

The issue of refereeing standards was raised by many clubs during the consultation meetings. So too was the level of disrespect shown to referees. In fact, this was cited as the primary reason why it is so difficult to recruit new referees in Laois. The Review Committee recommends the development of a Referee Pathway Development Programme which would see young referees recruited to handle Go Games, then moving to referee underage competitions and finally moving on to referee at adult level. To support Referee Pathway Development, the Laois Coaching and Games Committee should organise training at each level, seeking the support and assistance of Comhairle Laighean as required. This training should also include a module appropriate for umpires (ideally, referees should have their own umpires, especially for adult games). The Review Committee is also strongly of the view that Laois County Board must display a zero-tolerance policy towards disrespect for its referees.

Qualified Coaching Personnel in Laois

GAA records indicate that Laois has the following number of qualified coaching personnel:

Foundation Level – Hurling	373	Total Qualified Coaching Personnel 1,421
Foundation Level – Gaelic Football	513	
Foundation Level – Dual Codes	77	
Gaelic Football Award 1 – Adult	95	
Gaelic Football Award 1 – Youth	85	
Gaelic Football Award 1 – Child	113	
Hurling Award 1 – Adult	70	
Hurling Award 1 – Youth	23	
Hurling Award 1 – Child	72	

Notes

1. We can assume from the details in the chart to the left that individuals who have completed Award 1 courses (in either or both playing codes), may also have earlier completed a Foundation Level course (in either or both playing codes).
2. While the specific details are not known, we can assume that some individuals may have Award 1 qualifications across Adult, Youth and Child in Hurling or Gaelic Football or possibly in both playing codes.
3. It is not known how many individuals with a coaching qualification are currently active in clubs. This needs to be ascertained by the incoming Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.



GAA Respect Initiative

It is important that the GAA Respect Initiative continues to be embedded in all Laois coaching and games programmes.

Underage Games Programmes

While this issue is covered elsewhere in this report, the Review Committee is adamant that unless an adequate games programme is available at all underage levels, the benefit of any coaching initiative will not materialise. In fact, the absence of an adequate games programme will lead (as it is at present) to many young players opting out of playing Gaelic games.

Coaching and Games Presentation to Laois Clubs

Given the number of recommendations relating to coaching and games which are included in this report, the Review Committee strongly recommends that a detailed presentation of the new structures/operation is given to Laois clubs by the end of March 2018 and is led by the Coaching Officer and the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.

SECTION 1: COACHING – GAMES DEVELOPMENT - Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- Greater County Board oversight through its Coaching Officer & the Coaching and Games Committee (P)
- Greater focus on the planning, oversight, delivery, management and review of coaching and games activities and GDA's (P)
- Recruitment of a Coaching & Games Manager (P)
- Preparation of an Annual Coaching Plan (P)
- Monthly Meetings of key Coaching & Games Personnel (P)
- Presentation to Laois clubs on the new coaching structures/operations by the 31st March 2018
- Review of Development Squads, Cúl Camps and Go Games including greater volunteer involvement
- Clearly planned engagement with Primary and Second Level Schools
- Planned and better engagement with clubs
- Continued promotion and delivery of Coach Education
- Referee recruitment drive with an added focus on Referee Education
- Embed the GAA Respect Initiative in all Laois coaching and games activities

Recommended Priority Actions			
Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
<p>1. Coaching Officer / Coaching & Games Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the specific roles/duties of the Laois GAA Coaching Officer (see Appendix C at the end of this section of the report for proposed role/duties). Define the specific duties of the Laois GAA Coaching and Games Committee (see Appendix A at the end of this section of the report for recommended appointments to this Committee). 	Laois GAA County Board	By 31 st January 2018	<p>Laois will have volunteer personnel with the necessary knowledge to assist and support the full-time personnel in the planning and delivery of coaching and games programmes/initiatives in the county.</p> <p>Will enable volunteers to focus on delivering organisational and administrative support to the GDAs, wherever this is necessary (e.g. Development Squads, Go Games, Cúl Camps; Coach Education and Referee Education).</p> <p>The Coaching Officer (who should also Chair the Coaching and Games Committee) will be a key support to the County Secretary and the Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position) in the planning, implementation, delivery and management of coaching and games programmes/initiatives.</p>
<p>2. Laois Coaching and Games Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is strongly recommended that a Coaching and Games Manager be appointed in Laois to manage and oversee the operational delivery of coaching and games programmes in the county, including the management of GDAs. Financial governance and HR management to remain with the County Secretary. A job specification for the role of Coaching and Games Manager to be agreed between Laois GAA County Board and Comhairle Laighean prior to any recruitment process commencing. 	Laois GAA County Board Comhairle Laighean	By 31 st March 2018	<p>Will ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the Coaching and Games Manager are agreed between the primary stakeholders prior to any recruitment process commencing.</p> <p>Will ensure that the role and responsibilities of Laois GDAs and the various coaching programmes are appropriately delivered and managed.</p> <p>Will ensure greater focus on the work of GDAs.</p> <p>Will ensure better governance, oversight and management of coaching and games programmes in Laois.</p> <p>Laois clubs will have a clear stake in coaching and games programmes and personnel through their funding contributions.</p>
<p>3. Laois Coaching and Games Administrators (GDAs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full review is required of the role and responsibilities of Laois GDAs, which will ensure that their primary focus will be on ensuring that the coaching and games programmes (in effect the Annual Coaching Plan) deliver the optimum participation, enjoyment and outcomes for all participants. It is recommended that Laois be split into five geographic areas - North, South, East, West and Central – for coaching and games purposes with each area having its own designated GDA, but with flexibility whereby GDAs could provide some support outside their own region for specific coaching tasks. 	Laois GAA County Board Comhairle Laighean	Process to have commenced no later than 31 st March 2018	<p>Will enable Laois GAA to bring a better focus to the differing challenges of delivering coaching and games programmes in urban and rural environments.</p> <p>Will ensure that each GDA has designated clubs for which he is responsible in terms of their coaching and game's needs, albeit that a different GDA can assist, when required, with specific coaching depending on the playing code involved. This is specifically intended to improve communications between GDAs and clubs.</p> <p>Will ensure that the work of GDAs is more clearly understood by clubs in Laois.</p>



4. Annual Coaching Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an annual coaching and games plan, in conjunction with Comhairle Laighean, which outlines the activities of GDAs covering Clubs; Schools; Development Squads; Go Games; Cúl Camps; Coach Education and Referee Education. 	Laois Coaching and Games Committee (with input from Laois Coaching & Games Manager + GDAs and Comhairle Laighean)	Normally, 31 st December (Annually), however for 2018 plan for 2 nd half of the year to be prepared by 31.03.2018	<p>Sets out a clear calendar of activities covering the primary activities of the GDAs, giving clear visibility to all stakeholders of their work throughout the year.</p> <p>Gives greater visibility to the valuable work undertaken by GDAs in Laois.</p>
5. Monthly Coaching Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be Chaired by the Laois GAA County Board Secretary and be attended by the Laois Coaching Officer, Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position), all GDAs and the Comhairle Laighean Executive responsible for Laois. Review the annual Laois Coaching and Games Plan as to the timeliness and effectiveness of all actions and deal with any issues requiring attention, noting the individual(s) and/or Committee(s) responsible for same and when all actions are due for completion. 	Laois Coaching and Games Committee	Monthly and Ongoing, commencing in January 2018	<p>Will ensure that all Coaching and Games activities in Laois are reviewed on a timely basis with all key personnel responsible for delivering programmes present and all actions noted.</p> <p>Will ensure that the Annual Laois Coaching and Games Plan remains relevant and can be altered, as necessary, to facilitate additional initiatives which may arise from time to time.</p> <p>Will ensure greater governance and accountability in relation to all coaching and games programmes and the GDAs responsible for their delivery.</p> <p>Will enable the Coaching Officer to report monthly to Laois County Board meetings.</p>
6. Presentation to Laois GAA Clubs <p>In view of the number of recommendations specifically relating to coaching and games development which are included in this report, a presentation should be made to Laois clubs on the new structures/operations and be led by the Coaching Officer and the Coaching and Games Committee.</p>	Laois GAA County Board Laois Coaching and Games Comhairle Laighean	By the 31 st March 2018	<p>Will ensure that every club in Laois is aware of the new operational structure of coaching and games in Laois (it is accepted that work is not likely to have started on all the recommendations relating to coaching and games by the date of the presentation)</p> <p>The Coaching Officer and the Coaching and Games Committee will get an early opportunity to engage with Laois clubs on coaching and games matters.</p>

Recommended Other Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. Club Contacts for GDAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Laois clubs shall appoint a Coaching Officer and a Club/School Liaison Officer (who may be the same individual) who will have a key role in liaising with the GDA allocated to the club and school. GDAs shall be responsible for ongoing communications with their designated clubs to keep the Club Coaching Officer briefed on relevant matters. 	Laois GAA Clubs	Elected at the Club AGM (Annually)	<p>Will ensure that Laois GDAs have a contact in every club with whom they can liaise in relation to Club and Primary School visits.</p> <p>The communications between clubs and their respective GDA is enhanced.</p>

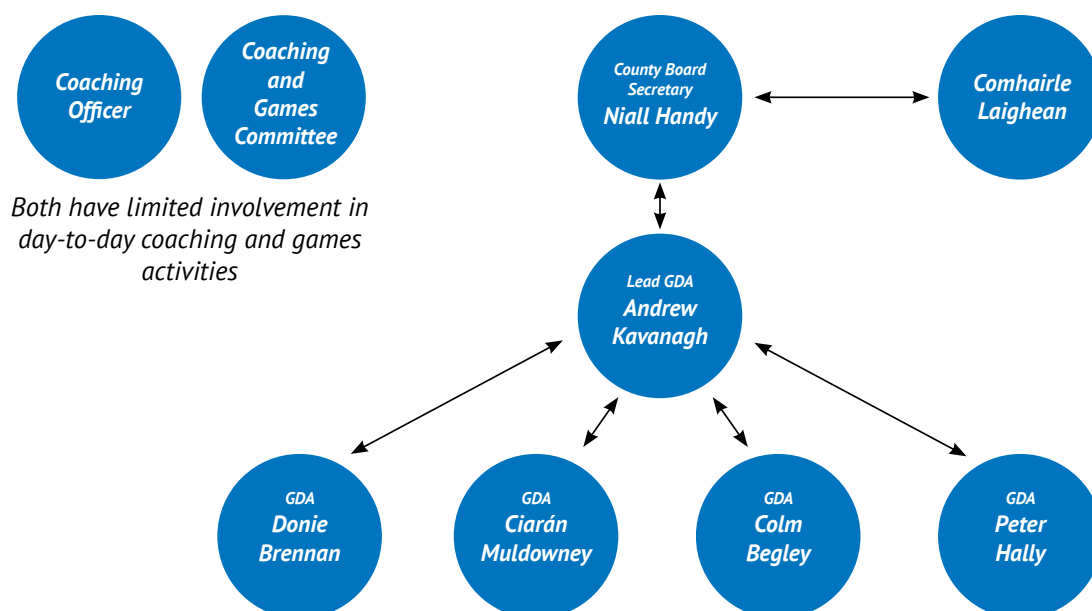
<p>2. Primary Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GDA's should meet with School Principals (in their region) in June each year to plan and agree their activities, as the coaching needs of schools can vary. Each GDA to set out and publish a programme of school visits to be shared with the County Board Secretary, Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position), Coaching Officer and the relevant Club and School contacts. Laois GAA to provide GAA coaching courses (in both codes) to Primary School Teachers each summer to help support the Primary School Gaelic games programme in the county. 	<p>Laois Coaching and Games Committee</p> <p>Laois Cumann na mBunscol</p>	<p>Monthly and Ongoing</p> <p>Summer Term (Teacher Coaching Courses)</p>	<p>Will ensure that Laois GDAs have a clear programme for Primary School visits scheduled throughout the school year and the programme is cognisant of the specific needs of each Primary School.</p> <p>Will ensure that Primary School visits are planned in consultation with each School Principal and local clubs are aware of such visits.</p> <p>Support current and new teachers who wish to promote Gaelic games activities in Laois Primary Schools.</p>
<p>3. Second Level Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting to be held with each School Principal at the start of the school year to plan and agree the activities of the GDA in each Second Level School. Each GDA to set out and publish a programme of school visits to be shared with the County Board Secretary, Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position), Coaching Officer and the relevant School contact. 	<p>Laois Coaching and Games Committee</p>	<p>Monthly and Ongoing</p>	<p>Will ensure that Laois GDAs have a clear programme for Second Level School visits scheduled throughout the school year.</p> <p>Will ensure that all Second Level School visits are planned in consultation with each School Principal and any other school contact(s).</p>
<p>4. Laois Development Squads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois Coaching and Games Committee to have responsibility for selecting/appointing Selectors for all Laois underage Development Squads, consulting with the Coaching and Games Manager and GDAs, as necessary. Laois Coaching and Games Committee to identify qualified coaches (including those with S&C qualifications) to work with GDAs as part of the coaching set-up for each Development Squad. A Laois GDA to be assigned to each Development Squad. One member of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee to be assigned to each underage Development Squad. It is recommended that Development Squads be firstly organised on a regional basis to enable greater numbers to participate and receive quality coaching. The Coaching and Games Committee to determine when final panels are to be selected to prepare for participation in inter-county tournaments. Laois Coaching and Games to set out a clear timetable at the start of the year showing the dates/time of squad sessions, training and fixtures for each Development Squad. Underage fixtures to take account of Development Squad trials, training and games when setting out the annual underage games programmes. 	<p>Laois Coaching and Games Committee</p>	<p>Immediately and Ongoing</p>	<p>Will ensure that the Coaching and Games Committee takes responsibility for all Development Squad personnel appointments (currently far too much is expected of the GDAs in this regard).</p> <p>Will ensure that a member of the Coaching and Games Committee takes a hands-on role with each Development Squad (the appointee, though, would not be a Selector).</p> <p>While GDAs would continue to coach squads, the involvement of other qualified coaches to each squad is essential to spread the work-load, especially as an initial regional approach is recommended. The target should be to <u>lessen</u> the GDA coaching involvement in preference to having qualified volunteer coaches involved (both playing codes).</p> <p>Regional squads (initially) will ensure greater access to more players than at present and ensure that a greater number of young participants get an opportunity to receive quality coaching which in turn will help them to become better club players.</p> <p>Players will have better exposure to selectors prior to squads being finalised for the annual tournaments.</p> <p>Will ensure that Development Squad activities are better promoted in Laois.</p> <p>Will ensure that there is no clash of underage fixtures and the scheduled Development Squads programme of activities.</p>

<p>5. Go Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on feedback from clubs, a full review of how the Go Games programme is structured and run in Laois is required. The review should also look at the composition of teams (including how full player participation can be achieved in all games) and games scheduling, including how these might be regionalised, at least in the early rounds. The Laois Coaching and Games Committee to have overall responsibility for running the Go Games Programme (after the fixtures have been sanctioned by the County CCCC) with input from Laois GDAs as necessary. 	Laois Coaching and Games Committee	Immediately and Ongoing	<p>Will ensure that there is greater participation by clubs/teams.</p> <p>Will ensure that <u>all</u> children get an opportunity to play in the Go Games programme.</p> <p>Will ensure that the games programme will be cognisant of the distances between clubs, at least in the early (regional) stages.</p> <p>Will ensure that the Go Games programme is run in a timely manner each year.</p> <p>Will ensure that there is greater input/involvement from volunteer members through the Laois Coaching Officer plus the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.</p>
<p>6. GAA Cúl Camps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois Coaching and Games Committee to have overall responsibility for running Cúl Camps, with input from GDAs as necessary. Each Cúl Camp to have a designated Officer/Adult to provide overall supervision and ensure the health, welfare and safety of all the young participants. A Cúl Camps Annual Calendar to be published each year by Laois GAA. Cúl Camp coaches to have a minimum of Foundation Award Qualification and be Garda-vetted. Coaching and Games Manager and GDAs to undertake a detailed post-Cúl Camp review/report which is sent to the Coaching Officer. 	Laois Coaching and Games Committee	Immediately and Ongoing	<p>Will ensure that Cúl Camps are well-planned and organised.</p> <p>Will ensure that Cúl Camps receive appropriate promotion in Laois.</p> <p>Will ensure that Cúl Camps are appropriately run and supervised, with the health, safety and welfare of all young participants a priority.</p> <p>Will ensure that all Cúl Camps coaches have an appropriate coaching qualification and are Garda vetted.</p> <p>Will ensure that there is greater input/involvement from volunteer members through the Laois Coaching Officer plus the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.</p> <p>Will ensure that an immediate post-Cúl Camp review identifies issues for attention.</p>

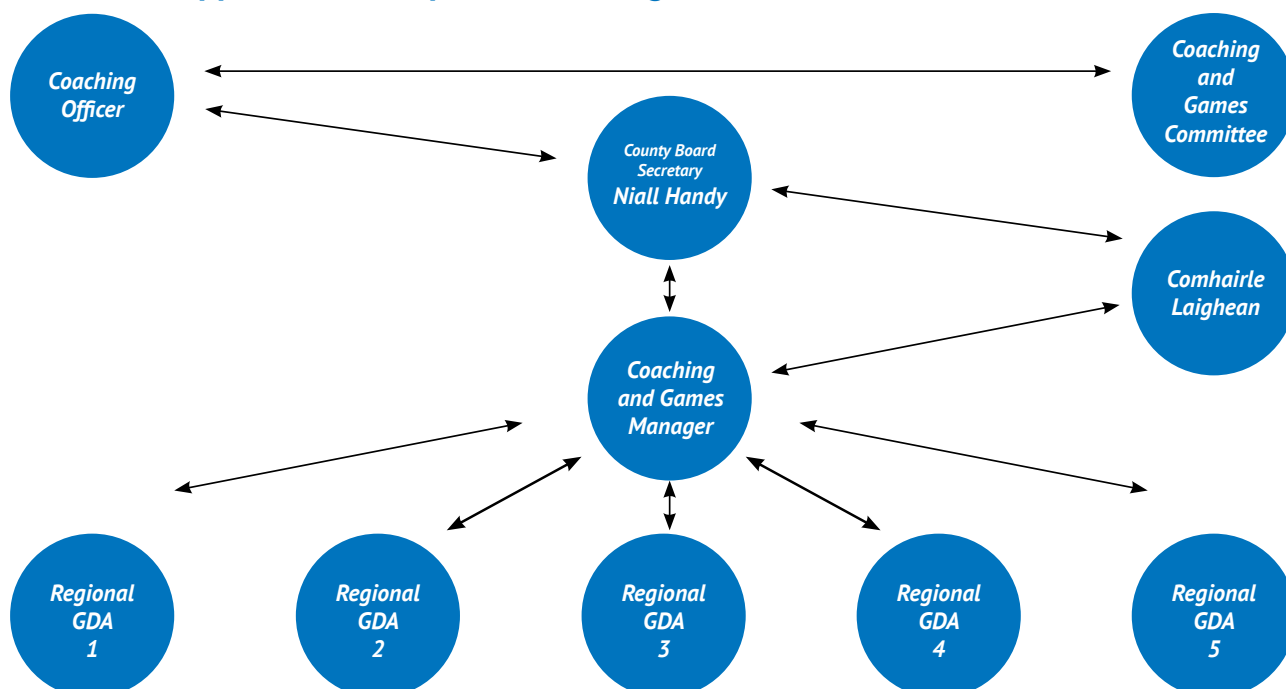


<p>7. Coach Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA will continue to offer Coach Education at Foundation Level, Award 1 plus Award 2 (Child, Youth and Adult). Laois Coaching and Games Committee shall have overall responsibility for Coach Education programmes, with the delivery of courses being undertaken by GDAs. The use of Master Tutors to support the GDAs in the delivery of courses is essential. Post-course follow-up should take place to ascertain where those who have undertaken coach education are being deployed as coaches. Laois Coaching and Games to set a target of every club in Laois having at least four Level 1 Coaches (2 qualified to Youth and 2 qualified to Adult levels) and one Level 2 coach (qualified to Adult level) applicable to each code (that being only relevant to dual clubs). Laois GAA to roll-out the TURAS programme which will challenge coaches to engage in lifelong coach education by providing flexible, context-appropriate and bespoke opportunities delivered within their coaching environment. 	<p>Laois Coaching and Games Committee Comhairle Laighean</p>	<p>Immediately and Ongoing</p>	<p>Will ensure that the key committee in Laois dealing with coaching and games takes responsibility for all Coach Education in the county.</p> <p>Will ensure that GDAs will continue to deliver courses, and be supplemented, as necessary, with Master Tutors.</p> <p>Will ensure that all those undertaking Coach Education courses are using their newly acquired skills to maximum benefit in a GAA club and/or with Development Squads.</p> <p>Will ensure that the Coach Education Programme in Laois is properly promoted (publish a promotional chart) and clubs are informed of when courses are being held at the start of each year.</p> <p>Will ensure that every Laois club is set a target of attaining the minimum target of 4 x Level 1 and 1 x Level 2 coaches being available in every club. This is aimed at helping clubs to improve playing standards across both codes with the individuals also imparting their coaching skills to less qualified (Foundation) coaches in their club.</p> <p>The knowledge and skill of Laois GDAs and Development Squad coaches will be enhanced through their participation in the TURAS education programme.</p>
<p>8. Referee Recruitment and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA to develop a Referee Development Pathway which would see young referees initially recruited to handle Go Games, then moving to referee Underage games and after a period move to referee Adult games (the ongoing recruitment of referees to handle Adult games should also continue). Laois GAA shall hold Referee Training Course (at each level) each year, aimed at both new and existing referees. Laois GAA to operate a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to any club/player showing disrespect to a referee. 	<p>Laois GAA County Board Laois Coaching and Games Committee</p>	<p>Immediately and Ongoing</p>	<p>The Referee Development Pathway will create a clear approach to referee recruitment and development in Laois.</p> <p>It will ensure that Laois referees (both current and new) receive the best available training to undertake the refereeing of games.</p> <p>Referees can aspire to handle games in Laois knowing that the County Board will provide the fullest support possible.</p>
<p>9. GAA Respect Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching and games programmes in Laois shall have the 'GAA Respect Initiative' embedded in all activities with the GDAs playing a key role in promoting respect among all the young players. 	<p>Laois Coaching and Games Committee Laois GDAs</p>	<p>Immediately and Ongoing</p>	<p>Will ensure that young players are taught/coached to have respect for young and old alike while they enjoy playing Gaelic games.</p>
<p>10. Underage Fixture Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is covered under Club Fixtures later in this report. 			

Appendix A - Current Coaching and Games Structure in Laois



Appendix B - Proposed Coaching and Games Structure in Laois



In addition to supporting the various coaching and games programmes noted earlier, individual GDAs have specific skills in other areas which benefit Laois GAA, including its clubs and inter-county squads.

Appendix C - Laois Coaching Officer

It is recommended that the individual who undertakes the role of Laois Coaching Officer be capable of dealing with the various actions noted below.

The Laois Coaching Officer shall:

- Have a passion for coaching and games development as the bedrock for attracting young children to play and enjoy Gaelic games.
- Have knowledge of GAA National and Provincial coaching and games programmes and policies.
- Be the Chairperson of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.
- Hold a monthly meeting of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee, inviting others to attend, as necessary, depending on the business being conducted at each meeting.
- Report to the monthly meeting of the Laois GAA County Board on all relevant coaching and games matters.
- Work closely with the Laois County Board Secretary and the Laois Coaching and Games Manager (proposed new position) in the planning, delivery and management of all coaching and games programmes in the county.
- Attend the monthly review meeting with the County Board Secretary, the Coaching and Games Manager (new position), Comhairle Laighean representative and all full-time coaching and games personnel
- Ensure that individual members of the Coaching and Games Committee undertake specific duties as outlined in the committee's Terms of Reference (see below).
- Engage with Comhairle Laighean and Croke Park, as necessary, on coaching and games matters of relevance to Laois.
- Attend National and Provincial coaching and games Conferences, Workshops, as appropriate, on behalf of Laois.
- Liaise, as necessary, with Laois GAA committees (especially the CCCC in relation to underage games programmes).
- Prepare an Annual Report for inclusion in the Laois County Convention Booklet on behalf of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.

Appendix D - Laois Coaching and Games Committee Members

It is recommended that the composition of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee be as follows:

- Chairperson (who shall also be the Laois Coaching Officer).
- Laois GAA County Board Secretary, Niall Handy.
- Laois Coaching and Games Manager (Proposed new appointment).
- 3 x representatives who shall have a key role engaging with each Laois Underage Hurling Development Squad (this assumes three underage Development Squads). ****
- 3 x representatives who shall have a key role engaging with each Laois Underage Gaelic Football Development Squad (this assumes three underage Development Squads). ****
- 1 x representative who shall have a key role engaging with the Laois Go Games programme (supporting the GDAs).
- 1 x representative who shall have a key role engaging with each Cúl Camps programme (supporting the GDAs).
- 1 x representative of Laois Cumann na mBunscol.
- 1 x representative of Laois Second Level Schools.
- Laois County Board Chairperson to be an ex-Officio member of this Committee.

**** Laois GDAs to attend, as required, especially when specific topics are being discussed (e.g. S&C Programmes).

Meetings shall be held monthly (in advance of County Board meetings) to enable the Coaching Officer to be fully aware of all issues and be in a position to update club delegates at County Board meetings.

The primary role of the Coaching and Games Committee is to plan and oversee all coaching programmes/initiatives in Laois, ensuring they are completed in a timely manner; that participating clubs actively engage with all such programmes and that GDAs deliver/contribute to all programmes in a professional and focused manner to ensure optimum outcomes from all programmes for participating young players.



Appendix E - Laois Coaching & Games Committee – Proposed Terms of Reference

- Have overall responsibility for the planning, delivery and management of all Coaching and Games programmes in Laois and the work of the full-time personnel responsible for delivering those programmes. (Day-to-day responsibility for managing coaching programmes and full-time personnel to remain the responsibility of the County Board Secretary and the Coaching and Games Manager - proposed new position – as noted earlier.)
- The specific areas which shall come under the remit of the Laois Coaching and Games Committee shall be:
 - o Development Squads;
 - o Club Coaching;
 - o Primary School Coaching;
 - o Second Level School Coaching;
 - o Go Games;
 - o Cúl Camps;
 - o Coach Education;
 - o Referee Recruitment and Education;
 - o The GAA Respect Initiative;
- Provide support and guidance on how best to promote the various coaching and games initiatives in Laois on an ongoing basis.
- Individual committee members to have designated responsibility for:
 - o Specific Development Squads;
 - o Go Games;
 - o Cúl Camps;
- Have responsibility for developing the Laois Referee Pathway Development programme including rolling out referee education programmes as required.
- Hold monthly meetings (more often at the discretion of the Committee Chairperson).
- Hold a minimum of two meetings annually with Laois Club Coaching Officers.
- Report monthly, via the Chairperson (i.e. the Laois Coaching Officer), to the Laois County Board on all relevant coaching and games activities.
- Attend National and Provincial Coaching Conferences/Workshops (as many of the committee as is practical).
- Liaise with other Laois GAA committees (especially the CCCC regarding underage games programmes), as necessary.
- Prepare an Annual Report for inclusion in the Laois County Convention Booklet.

Appendix F - Club Coaching Officer

Laois Club Coaching Officers shall:

- Have knowledge and understanding of the annual Laois Coaching and Games Development Plan, especially in so far as it impacts on the club and its young players.
- Liaise and communicate, as necessary, with the club's designated GDA on all coaching and games matters.
- Liaise and communicate, as necessary, with all Primary Schools in the club's catchment area.
- Be responsible for the club's underage coaching programmes, seeking support and guidance from the club's designated GDA, as necessary.
- Seek advice/guidance from the Laois Coaching Officer and Laois Coaching and Games Committee as necessary.
- Attend coaching review meetings on behalf of the club which may be scheduled by the Laois Coaching and Games Committee.
- Promote the fun and enjoyment of playing Gaelic games among the club's young players.

Appendix G - Informal Coach Education Initiative (Comhairle Laighean)

Implementation of Turas Principles & Philosophy

Stage 1 - Academy Squad Coaches.

Stage 2 - Clubs & Schools.

Supporting Laois GAA Coaches to Develop Tomorrow's Players to Play, Stay and Achieve

PHILOSOPHY, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

TURAS, the Irish for journey, was purposefully chosen to reflect the journey that is player and coach development. The TURAS programme will challenge coaches to engage in lifelong coach education by providing flexible, context-appropriate, and bespoke opportunities delivered within their coaching environment.

It is widely recognised that coaches have a preference for informal and self-directed modes of learning. Consequently, it is important that TURAS provides coaches with Continuing Personal Development opportunities (to complement formal coach education) that provide those operating on the Player Pathway with the skills they need (and the ability to refine and reflect on these). Underpinned by the TURAS principles, the establishment of communities of practice within each county as well as peer coaching, mentoring, and facilitated workshops will be the primary focus of TURAS Community of Practice. Therefore, central to the TURAS programme is the inclusion of Academy, Club, and School coaches within the Communities of Practice. The effectiveness of the Player Pathway is enhanced if all stakeholders (e.g., County Board, Schools, Clubs, Coaches at all levels) have similar perceptions (and therefore similar behaviours and reinforcement / support) of all the key elements of development.

The importance of a **shared understanding** among the key stakeholders, at various levels within the system (e.g., Club, School, County), about what they are collectively trying to achieve is central to the TURAS programme.

TURAS Facilitator

- Appointed by Leinster GAA to oversee the TURAS Coach and Player Pathway.
- Manages the appointment of TURAS Talent Development Leaders in each county.
- Oversees, facilitates, and supports the TURAS Talent Development Leaders' Community of Practice across Leinster GAA.
- Supports the TURAS Coach Community of Practice in each county.

TURAS Academy Coaches

- Appointed by each county overseen by TURAS Talent Development Leaders.
- Provides an Academy programme that is underpinned by the TURAS principles.
- Engages in the TURAS Coach Community of Practice as part of their role as an Academy coach.

TURAS Talent Development Leader (Hurling and Football, supported by Games Development Manager)

- Appointed by Leinster GAA to oversee the TURAS Player Pathway in each county.
- Manages the appointment of TURAS Academy Coaches in each county.
- Oversees, facilitates, and supports the Games and Coaching Programme and planning in each county.
- Oversees, facilitates, and supports the TURAS Coach Community of Practice in each county.

Additional Stakeholders

- Club Coaches.
- School Coaches.
- County Board Officers.
- Parents.





Section 2: Competitions – Games – Combined Teams – Discipline – Inter-County Teams

Key Objective: Laois GAA will provide all players in the county with meaningful competitions incorporating a minimum number of games at all levels/grades covering both adult and underage players.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA players play in competitions commensurate with their standard/grade and have a games programme which ensures that each player has the opportunity to play a minimum number of games, especially at underage levels.

Current Fixtures Programme

Feedback from clubs indicated a high level of satisfaction with the way competitions are run by the Laois CCCC (and as outlined in the annual Fixtures Booklet). However, some clubs noted the long gaps that sometimes exist between games, principally at Junior level. It is the responsibility of the Laois GAA County Board to ensure that an appropriate games programme is available to all players, especially at underage levels, in the county. Clubs also have a responsibility to ensure maximum participation by all their players across the various teams and codes.

Competition Structures & Scheduling – Minimum Number of Games

The structure of the senior hurling championship received positive feedback from clubs who lauded the competitiveness of the competition. However, hurling clubs noted that the absence of key players for long periods due to inter-county involvement seriously impacted their club championship preparations. The structure of the senior football championship, on the other hand, received a lot of negative feedback from clubs.

The possibility of having regional teams (i.e. comprising Intermediate & Junior players only) in the Senior Hurling and Senior Football Championships was mentioned on several occasions. This should be considered as part of the review of competition structures.

A lack of games at underage level (including Under 21) was cited as a major problem and was identified as a significant factor in players opting to play other sports instead of Gaelic games or quit playing sport altogether.

While clubs felt that the Go Games programme was well-structured, some were of the view that teams were expected to travel long distances to play games and this sometimes resulted in walkovers being conceded. Organising Go Games regionally in the first instance is recommended as a means of overcoming this dilemma. Another issue noted during the discussions relating to Go Games was that some clubs only bring a minimum number of players to games with the opposing team having to leave many young

players on the side-line as they have a large panel present.

Junior clubs (especially in hurling) were strongly of the view that they are at a major disadvantage when playing the second team of a senior club as the timing of their championship game often meant that senior clubs had access to players who had been regraded even though they continued to play at senior level in league games in the current year (this is principally a championship scheduling issue).

While it was not within the remit of the Strategy Review Committee to identify how any club competition might be restructured, nevertheless, it is very clear from the feedback received that a review of all competitions in Laois is necessary to attempt to deal with the many complex issues which have been raised. The Strategy Committee believes that the review of adult and underage competition structures should be undertaken separately, principally because of the need to focus on providing a greater number of games at some underage levels. A lack of meaningful games is contributing to young players losing interest in playing Gaelic games. It is noted that there is a strong overlap of players at U14/U15/U16 and U16/U17/U18 grades in both codes in many clubs.

We note that at the time of preparing this report, the Laois GAA County Board was considering changes in the way some competitions are being run, principally relating to having revised age groups.

Combined Club Teams

A lack of playing numbers is contributing to a growing number of clubs combining at various grades and in both codes to field teams, especially at underage levels (i.e. from U21 down). This was one of the most common issues raised by clubs in both their response to the Questionnaire and at Club Consultation meetings. Many stand-alone clubs, on the other hand, felt that approval to field a combined team is often granted far too easily, with the winning of a county title often the primary motivation behind a combined team request. The view was also proffered by many clubs that the way in which teams are allowed to combine needs to be urgently reviewed as the clubs involved in a combined team unit can sometimes



ignore obvious geographic considerations. The Strategy Review Committee shares this view and strongly believes that combined teams should be structured geographically as much as possible. Given the number of combined teams that participated in various Laois GAA competitions in 2017 (the details can be viewed in Appendices A and B at the end of this section) and the feedback from clubs, both for and against, the entire combined teams issue should be reviewed as a matter of urgency to ensure that clear conditions attach to all requests and that these are clearly understood by any club prior to applying to be part of a combined team.

The Review Committee (especially the individuals from outside Laois) was very surprised at the number of combined teams (from Under 8 to Adult levels in both codes) which operated in the county in 2017. Combined team are usually referred to as Gaels Team by Laois clubs.

Player Transfers

The issue of player transfers was raised by a number of small clubs who feel that they are sometimes granted far too easily, with the impact being detrimental on the smaller club, many of whom are struggling to field teams at present. While the issue of Player Transfers was not within the remit of the strategic review, given the number of times it was raised by clubs, it should be reviewed specifically for the purpose of clarifying the conditions attached to the player transfer process in Laois for the benefit of all clubs and players.

Player Re-Grading

This is another issue which was raised by some clubs (especially Junior clubs) who feel that some players are allowed to re-grade far too easily. The issue of Player Re-Grading was also not within the remit of the strategic review, but nevertheless, given the number of times it was raised by clubs, it should also be reviewed specifically for the purpose of clarifying the conditions attached to Player Re-Gratings in Laois for the benefit of all clubs and players.

Discipline

Many clubs through their Questionnaire responses and at their consultation meetings expressed serious concerns at the way disciplinary matters are handled by the Laois County Board. The opinion was regularly expressed among club members that there are major inconsistencies in how the GAA Rule Book is applied when dealing with disciplinary matters. This was also mentioned as a reason why referees are frustrated and why referee recruitment is a problem in Laois.

While the Review Committee was not asked to deal specifically with how disciplinary matters are handled in Laois, it is incumbent on us to note the significant level of negativity from clubs in relation to this matter. There is a clear responsibility on the Laois GAA County Board to consider the feedback from clubs in relation to discipline and to take appropriate action in relation to having a much stricter application of the GAA Rule Book applied by the Sub-Committee responsible for dealing with disciplinary matters.

The Sub-Committee which has responsibility for

dealing with disciplinary matters in the county should meet on a regular basis (weekly, if necessary) to deal with any reported disciplinary incidents.

Inter-County Teams

During the strategy review process, members of the committee met with nine inter-county players (across both playing codes). It turned out that separate meetings were held for hurlers and footballers; this was not intentional and was down to meeting scheduling. The feedback from the players was open, honest and frank and it is essential that their views are noted in this report. Although the bulk of the recommended actions in this report were identified by the committee prior to meeting the players, it is worth noting that the players would also have raised many of the same issues. The following were the main points raised by the players (and these are not being attributed to either hurlers or footballers):

Playing for Laois

All nine players spoke of their immense pride in wearing the Laois jersey and representing their county, despite the huge commitments expected of inter-county players. The negative perception from Laois supporters (which the committee would also have noted when engaging with clubs) towards performances at inter-county level disappointed the players and they firmly believe that this is unjustified and unfair.

Player Pathway towards Inter-County Involvement

All the players experienced initial inter-county involvement through development squads. This was regarded as a positive experience. The importance of managing players through a well-structured player pathway programme was noted by all players. This needed to include tracking the progress of individual

players, giving each player appropriate feedback to help him improve and also creating individual training programmes where this might be deemed necessary. The players noted the importance of S&C programmes appropriate to each age level and they acknowledged that improvements have taken place in this area.

Coach Education

The players acknowledged the improvements in coach education in Laois, but stressed the need for continued emphasis on ensuring that future coaches have access to the best tuition available.

Sustaining Players

A strong view was proffered that team management at all levels and codes must adopt the long-term sustaining of players and their development as crucial to creating a solid inter-county future for Laois GAA and not be focused on short-term success.

Inter-County v Club

The demands placed on Laois inter-county players nowadays is huge and is impacting on the amount of time they spend with their clubs. This can lead to resentment among players at club level as they end up playing many games without their inter-county players. The players were strongly of the view that inter-county squad fringe players, especially, should be released to their clubs to play league games. The committee would strongly support this opinion. Better communications between inter-county and club team management was essential. The players welcome the proposals in this report relating to a review of all club competitions.



SECTION 2: COMPETITIONS - GAMES – COMBINED TEAMS – DISCIPLINE – INTER-COUNTY TEAMS

Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- Establish Work Groups (with external Chairpersons) to review all adult and underage competitions – separately (P)
- Establish a Working Group (with an external Chairman) to review the operations of combined teams in Laois (P)
- Laois GAA to consider the negative feedback from clubs relating to their handling of disciplinary matters (P)
- Clarify process/regulations relating to internal Player Transfers
- Clarify process/regulations relating to Player Regradings
- Laois GAA to hold an annual meeting between the two Senior Inter-County Team Managers and Club Team Managers



Recommended Priority Actions			
Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcome
<p>1. Laois Club Competitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board to set up <u>two</u> Working Groups (whose membership shall include individuals with knowledge of both adult and underage competitions) to review <u>every aspect of club competitions, including the structure of those competitions at (a) Adult Level and (b) Underage Level</u>, engaging with clubs as necessary. The review should include a clear target for delivering a minimum number of games for all participants, especially at underage levels. The review should also consider the possibility of Regional teams (comprising of Intermediate and Junior players only) participating in Laois Senior Hurling and Senior Football Championships. <p>**** The Working Groups should be Chaired by external Chairpersons (i.e. from outside Laois).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Working Groups to submit a report with recommendations to the Laois County Board for consideration with a view to having any new arrangements applicable from 2019. <p>See Appendix C at the end of this section of the report for suggested Terms of Reference for both Working Groups.</p>	Laois GAA County Board	To commence immediately and be completed by 31 st July 2018 to afford the Laois GAA County Board sufficient time to consider the recommendations well in advance of implementation in 2019	<p>It will ensure that the structure of all Gaelic games competitions (Adult & Underage) in Laois reflect the needs of clubs and players alike.</p> <p>That GAA players in Laois, and especially at underage levels, have access to a minimum number of games each year (and in both codes, where applicable).</p> <p>The review will take place knowing that new National & Provincial inter-county competition structures commence in 2018 and it is therefore imperative that the impact these may have on Laois club competition structures are taken into consideration when looking at any changes for 2019 and beyond.</p> <p>The review will consider how combined clubs can be facilitated in the various competitions and also the possibility of having regional teams (comprising of Intermediate and Junior players only) participating in Laois Senior Hurling and Senior Football Championships.</p> <p>It will ensure that the fielding of less than 15-a-side teams receives appropriate consideration.</p> <p>The scheduling of club games will give due consideration to the needs of Junior clubs to afford them every opportunity to make progress in their respective championships.</p>
<p>2. Combined Club Teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the extent of the feedback received in relation to this issue, there is an urgent need for the Laois GAA County Board to establish a Working Group to set out clear criteria for allowing combined teams in the future. <p>**** The Working Groups should be Chaired by an individual from outside Laois.</p> <p>**** The Strategy Review Committee stressed the urgency of commencing this review.</p> <p>See Appendices A and B for the full list of club amalgamations in 2017 in both playing codes.</p> <p>See Appendix D at the end of this section of the report for suggested Terms of Reference for the Working Group.</p>	Laois GAA County Board	To be completed by 31 st July 2018 to afford the Laois GAA County Board sufficient time to consider therecommendations well in advance of implementation in 2019.	<p>It will ensure that Laois County Board has clear criteria which is understood by clubs (and built into County Bye-Laws, if necessary) for future requests for combined teams.</p> <p>It will ensure that the fielding of less than 15-a-side teams receives appropriate consideration.</p> <p>It will enable clubs to focus on retaining their own identity (if necessary, by playing in less than 15-a-side competitions) and thus ensure that all their players participate in Laois competitions across both playing codes (the focus being on playing with own club rather than winning with a combined team).</p> <p>It will ensure that where requests for combined teams are being considered that the geography of the clubs involved is deemed to be significant criteria in determining any such requests.</p>

3. Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In view of the feedback from Laois GAA Clubs in relation to how they believe disciplinary matters are addressed in the county, it is incumbent on the Laois GAA County Board to review this feedback and consider if the way in which it deals with disciplinary matters needs to be reviewed. 	Laois GAA County Board	To be addressed immediately	<p>That the Laois GAA County Board deals with disciplinary matters strictly but fairly.</p> <p>That the Laois GAA County Board deals with all reported disciplinary matters in a timely manner.</p>
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Recommended Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcome
1. Player Transfers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board to clarify the procedures/process and regulations being used to adjudicate on internal player transfers from one club to another. 	Laois GAA County Board	31 st January 2018	It will ensure that there is no ambiguity in relation to the process, procedures and regulations being used by Laois GAA to determine the legality of internal club transfers within the county.
2. Player Re-Gradings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board to clarify the procedures/process and regulations being used to adjudicate on Player Re-Gradings. 	Laois GAA County Board	31 st January 2018	It will ensure that there is no ambiguity in relation to the process, procedures and regulations being used by Laois GAA to allow player re-gradings within clubs.
3. Playing for Laois <p>Laois GAA County Board to facilitate a meeting at the start of each year whereby the Laois Senior Hurling and Senior Football Managers hold (separate) meetings with Club Managers (both codes) to outline their plans for the year and when inter-county players will be made available to their clubs (that includes for league games and for training prior to championship games).</p>	Laois GAA County Board	31 st January 2018	It will ensure that there are appropriate communications between inter-county and club management at the top level in both codes thus creating a greater awareness of what is expected of players involved at both club and inter-county levels.





Appendix A: Combined Teams in 2017 - Gaelic Football

Adult Football (4)		Under 21 Football (8)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Crettyard Gaels	Crettyard; Spink	Ballyroan Abbey Gaels	Ballyroan Abbey; Colt; Shanahoe; Clough Ballacolla
Ballyfin Gaels	Ballyfin; Mountmellick; Slieve Bloom; Camross	Killeshin/Crettyard	Killeshin; Crettyard
Mountmellick Gaels	Mountmellick; Kilcavan; Castletown	Emo/Courtwood/The Rock	Emo; Courtwood; The Rock
Clonaslee/St. Manman's Gaels	Clonaslee St. Manman's; Annanough	Park Ratheniska/Spink	Park Ratheniska; Spink
		Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
		Sarsfields	Mountmellick, Kilcavan, Ballyfin, Clonaslee; St. Manman's, Camross
		Na Fianna Óg	Barrowhouse; Arles; Killeen; Arles Kilcruise
		Stradbally Parish Gaels	Stradbally; Annanough; Timahoe
Minor Football (7)		Under 17 Football (6)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Sarsfields	Mountmellick; Kilcavan; Ballyfin	Sarsfields	Mountmellick; Kilcavan; Ballyfin
Ballyroan Abbey Gaels	Ballyroan Abbey; Colt; Shanahoe; Clough Ballacolla	Ballyroan Abbey Gaels	Ballyroan Abbey; Colt; Shanahoe; Clough Ballacolla
Emo/Courtwood/The Rock	Emo; Courtwood; The Rock	Killeshin/Crettyard	Killeshin; Crettyard
Stradbally Parish Gaels	Stradbally; Annanough; Timahoe	Emo/Courtwood/The Rock	Emo; Courtwood; The Rock
Killeshin/Crettyard	Killeshin; Crettyard	Stradbally Parish Gaels	Stradbally; Annanough; Timahoe
Park Ratheniska/Spink	Park Ratheniska; Spink	Park Ratheniska/Spink	Park Ratheniska; Spink
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom		
Under 16 Football (7)		Under 13 & 14 Football (9)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Stradbally Parish Gaels	Stradbally; Annanough; Timahoe	Killeshin/Crettyard	Killeshin; Crettyard
Ballyroan Abbey Gaels	Ballyroan Abbey; Colt; Shanahoe; Clough Ballacolla	Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
Na Fianna Óg	Barrowhouse; Arles Killeen; Arles Kilcruise	Stradbally Parish Gaels	Stradbally; Annanough; Timahoe
Sarsfields	Mountmellick; Kilcavan; Ballyfin; Camross	Na Fianna Óg	Barrowhouse; Arles Killeen; Arles Kilcruise
St. Paul's /The Rock	Emo; Courtwood; The Rock	Sarsfields	Mountmellick; Kilcavan; Ballyfin
Killeshin/Crettyard	Killeshin; Crettyard	Rathdowney Errill Gaels	Rathdowney Errill; Borris-in-Ossory; Kilcotton
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom	Park Ratheniska/Spink	Park Ratheniska; Spink
		St. Paul's	Emo; Courtwood
		Ballyroan Abbey Gaels	Ballyroan Abbey; Colt; Shanahoe
Under 12 Football Go Games (3)		Under 10 Football Go Games (2)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom	Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
St. Paul's	Emo; Courtwood	St. Paul's	Emo; Courtwood
Na Fianna Óg	Barrowhouse; Arles Killeen; Arles Kilcruise	<div>48 Combined Teams in</div> <div>Laois Gaelic Football Competitions (All Grades)</div>	
Under 8 Football Go Games (2)			
Team	Clubs		
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom		
St. Paul's	Emo; Courtwood		

Appendix B: Combined Teams in 2017 – Hurling

Adult Hurling (4)		Under 21 Hurling (5)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Ballinakill Gaels	Ballinakill; Slieve Margy	Ballinakill Gaels	Ballinakill; Park Ratheniska; Slieve Margy
Shanahoe Gaels	Shanahoe; Ballypickas	Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad
Colt Gaels	Colt; Clonad	Na Fianna	Ballyfin; Mountmellick; Clonaslee St. Manman's
Ballyfin Gaels	Ballyfin; Mountmellick	Abbeyleix Gaels	St. Lazarian's Abbeyleix; Ballypickas
		Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
Minor Hurling (4)		Under 17 Hurling (5)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Ballinakill/Park Ratheniska Gaels	Ballinakill; Park Ratheniska; Slieve Margy	Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom	Camross Gaels	Camross; Ballyfin; Mountmellick
Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad; Ballypickas	Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad; Ballypickas
Na Fianna	Ballyfin; Mountmellick	Clough Ballacolla Mountrath	Clough Ballacolla; Mountrath
		Ballinakill/Park Ratheniska Gaels	Ballinakill; Park Ratheniska
Under 16 Hurling (5)		Under 13 & 14 Hurling (4)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Clough Ballacolla/Mountrath	Clough Ballacolla; Mountrath	Park Ratheniska/Timahoe	Park Ratheniska; Timahoe
Ballinakill/Park Ratheniska Gaels	Ballinakill; Park Ratheniska; Slieve Margy	Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
Camross Gaels	Camross; Ballyfin, Mountmellick	Na Fianna	Ballyfin; Mountmellick
Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad; Ballypickas	Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad; Ballypickas
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom		
Under 12 Hurling Go Games (5)		Under 10 Hurling Go Games (4)	
Team	Clubs	Team	Clubs
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom	Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom
Park Ratheniska/Timahoe	Park Ratheniska; Timahoe	Park Ratheniska/Timahoe	Park Ratheniska; Timahoe
Na Fianna	Ballyfin; Mountmellick	St Pauls	Emo; Courtwood
St Pauls	Emo; Courtwood	Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Clonad; Ballypickas
Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Trumera; Clonad; Ballypickas		
Under 8 Hurling Go Games (3)		39 Combined Teams in Laois Hurling Competitions (All Grades)	
Team	Clubs		
Castletown/Slieve Bloom	Castletown; Slieve Bloom		
Park Ratheniska/Timahoe	Park Ratheniska; Timahoe		
Raheen Parish Gaels	Colt; Shanahoe; Clonad; Ballypickas		



Appendix C: Club Competitions Review (Proposed Terms of Reference)

Note – Separate Working Groups are recommended for (a) Adult and (b) Underage competitions including the competition structures. It is a matter for the Laois GAA County Board to determine the composition of both Working Groups and the appointment of Chairpersons from outside Laois is strongly recommended.

1. The review shall consider the structure of all competitions at Adult levels/grades (incl. U21) and at all underage levels down to U8, in both playing codes.
2. The review shall consider what competitions (if any) might be organised for less than 15-a-side teams, where clubs have limited playing resources (to maintain club identity).
3. The review shall consider the scheduling of Junior championship games (both codes) to ensure that every advantage accrues to Junior teams whose top team plays at that level.
4. The review shall consider if specific Junior competitions (in both codes) might be more appropriate for clubs whose top team plays at that level (this would exclude the second team of any club).
5. The review should consider the possibility of allowing regional teams (i.e. comprising Intermediate & Junior players only) to participate in the Laois Senior Hurling & Senior Football Championships.
6. The review shall consider the scheduling of games involving dual clubs.
7. The review shall consider the scheduling of club games where the same clubs are involved with Combined teams.
8. The review shall ensure that GAA players in Laois, and especially at underage levels, have a minimum number of games available to them (in both codes, where applicable).
9. All clubs in Laois shall be consulted by the review committee determining how best this should happen.
10. The Laois CCCC shall be asked to contribute to this review.
11. The report shall consider whether any of its recommendation will impact on Laois County Bye-Laws.
12. The report shall be considered by the Laois County Board at its September 2018 meeting.

Appendix D - Combined Teams Review (Proposed Terms of Reference)

(It is a matter for the Laois GAA County Board to determine the composition of this Working Groups and the appointment of a Chairperson from outside Laois is strongly recommended.)

1. The review shall set out the criteria by which clubs may apply to the County Board to become part of a combined unit to play in Laois GAA competition(s) at Adult levels/grades (incl. U21) and at underage levels/grades down to U8, in both playing codes.
2. The review shall determine the timeline by which clubs must apply to be part of a combined unit in the following year's competition(s).
3. The review shall determine which County Board sub-committee should consider requests to be part of a combined team annually or whether a new committee should be established specifically for this purpose.
4. The review shall consider whether any of its recommendations will impact on Laois County Bye-Laws.
5. The review shall consult all clubs in Laois in determining how best to manage the issue of combined (Gaels) team in the county.
6. The outcome of the review shall be considered by the Laois County Board at its October 2018 meeting.
7. Laois GAA County Board shall have ultimate authority to sanction the creation of any combined teams in all grades and codes.

**** Combined team are usually referred to as Gaels Team by Laois clubs.





Laois GAA
@CLGLaois

Tweets
42.3K

Following
1,507

Followers
23.4K

Likes
2,633

Lists
1

facebook



LT **LAOISTODAY.IE**

Laois
Nationalist

LEINSTER
Express

MIDLANDS
103



LaoisTV



Laois GAA @CLGLaois · Dec 14

Deadline tomorrow.



Leinster GAA @gaaleinster

HUGE interest in the U-13 and U-15 Leagues from ALL 12 counties. This being the season of goodwill we've extended the deadline for entries for the LAST time. Apply at leinstergaa.ie before Friday evening.



Laois GAA @CLGLaois · Dec 13

O'Byrne Cup & Walsh Cup launch took place yesterday.

Laois footballers start their campaign on 30th Dec away v Westmeath, while the Hurlers are also out the same day away to Kildare.

#SupportYourCounty



Laois GAA @CLGLaois · Dec 11

All Laois clubs please take note. Don't miss out.



Leinster GAA @gaaleinster

One Last Chance.

Enquiries still coming in from clubs, so closing date for entry to U-13 & U-15 Cross-County Leagues pushed back to this Wednesday, 13th December.



Laois GAA Retweeted



Laois GAA @CLGLaois · Dec 10

O'Moore Park under a blanket of snow this morning. Leinster Club SFC Final rescheduled for next Sunday.



12



58



155

Section 3: Organisational Structures - Communications – Club/Officer Support

Key Objective: Laois GAA will provide an organisation and support structure to ensure excellence in dealing with its clubs, its inter-county activities and in its relationships with external bodies plus ensuring appropriate governance of the county's finances and infrastructure.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA will excel in the delivery, governance and management of all services - to its club across all their activities; to club and inter-county players; to external bodies and to supporters of Laois GAA.

Laois GAA County Board Officers/Executive

The Review Committee received widespread feedback from clubs on the need to have 'fresh blood' in both Officer and Executive Committee positions on the Laois GAA County Board. It is important to note that the committee does not have a role in determining who is elected to any County Board Officer role or appointed on to the Executive. All clubs in Laois have an opportunity to submit nominations for any Officer position on the County Board to be voted on annually at the Laois GAA County Convention. The Review Committee recommends that the Duties and Responsibilities for each Laois GAA County Board Officer role are reviewed, documented and approved by the County Board.

Laois County Board Delegates

Some concern was expressed at the level of feedback which County Board delegates give to their own club executive and members following County Board meetings. This is a matter which the County Board should consider as a matter of urgency and if necessary, organise a workshop which will outline how an appropriate communications process can be established involving all the relevant parties.

Membership of Laois GAA County Sub-Committees

The membership of some Laois GAA Sub-Committees is predetermined as specific Officers are automatically appointed to those committees. Aside from such appointments, there is a responsibility on the Laois County Board Officers, and in particular on its Chairperson and Secretary, to ensure that every effort is made to appoint individuals to Sub-Committees who may have the potential to take on County Board Officer roles at some stage in the future. It is important that individuals being appointed to any Sub-Committee have both an interest and a knowledge of the specific work of the Sub-Committee to which they are being appointed.

Laois GAA County Sub-Committees Terms of Reference

Although current Laois County Board Sub-Committees have documented Terms of Reference, these need

to be reviewed so as to more clearly define the role, responsibilities and expected outcomes from each Sub-Committee. This in turn will assist the members of any Sub-Committee to more clearly understand what is expected of them. It will also better inform GAA stakeholders in Laois of the work of each County Board Sub-Committee. Each Laois GAA Sub-Committee should submit a summary report on its year's activities to the County Board Secretary for inclusion in the County Convention Booklet.

GAA Clubs in Laois

It is clear from the responses which were submitted by clubs via the Questionnaire that perhaps as many as ten clubs may cease to exist in ten years, or less in some cases. Another worrying statistic is the number of combined teams that participated at underage levels in 2017, clearly indicating that many clubs are unable to field teams on their own. Some clubs have indicated a willingness to merge in order to maintain a viable unit, while others do not appear to be willing to face up to the challenge of rapidly dwindling playing numbers.

The clubs that are clearly under pressure to survive need help now to plan their future. The starting point is a willingness on the part of those clubs, and especially their senior Officers, to accept the seriousness of the situation and to seek guidance. The Strategy Review Committee recommends that the Laois GAA County Board seeks the assistance of Comhairle Laighean in this regard. The role of Comhairle Laighean would be to appoint a number of individuals to meet (separately) with the clubs concerned and review the best options for the future of the club. A merger with a neighbouring club is a possible outcome, but other options might be feasible prior to such a decision having to be made. The Comhairle Laighean representatives at the end of their review will send their recommendations to both the clubs concerned and to the Laois County Board. It is accepted that any decision relating to a club merger is ultimately a matter for an EGM of the clubs concerned.



Laois GAA County Board Communications with its Clubs & Supporters

The Review Committee received much positive feedback from clubs in relation to the quality of engagement which they receive from the County Board office. Laois GAA has its own web site which is very useful when it comes to fixtures and results. News updates, though, are infrequent and this needs to be addressed by the County Board PRO. The web site should be re-designed to make it more appealing in terms of its visual presentation and content.

Lots of positive feedback was received in relation to the Laois Twitter account and particularly in the way it is used to keep patrons updated on match scores and results. Given the number of patrons who now access information via social media, better use should be made of the Laois Twitter Account to provide updates on underage games and to provide news and other relevant information as may be available from time to time.

Laois TV also received lots of positive comments from around the county. It is an excellent service for Laois players and supporters. The service is provided by an independent party and it is unclear if it will continue in 2018 without financial support.

The Review Committee noted that it is some time since Laois GAA produced an Annual Publication (Year Book). Such a publication would afford Laois GAA to highlight the achievements of both the inter-county and club teams in any given year and act as a promotional vehicle to bring all the achievements of Laois GAA to a wider audience.

Communications with Laois Media Outlets

While Laois GAA communicates directly with the clubs of the county through its own publications, its web site and its social media platform, much of the coverage of Gaelic games in Laois comes via Print, Radio, TV and other Social Media platforms. It is imperative therefore that Laois GAA develops a strong and trusting relationship with all sections of the local media. The Laois GAA County Board PRO should

have responsibility for providing relevant news and information to media outlets and be their primary contact. It is particularly incumbent on the Laois GAA County Board to provide briefings to the media prior to inter-county league and championship games, where the cooperation of team management and players is expected.

Officer and Club Support

The feedback from clubs indicated that most have attended Officer training courses in recent years. This is to be welcomed. However, the club feedback also indicated a major challenge in recruiting Officers and committee members at both adult and underage levels. The difficulties in attracting fresh blood into club Officer roles is particularly worrying. This is down to many reasons among them changing lifestyles with people having less time to undertake volunteering due to work and family commitments; the concern that too much responsibility will be landed on senior club Officers plus the never-ending challenge of raising finance to keep the club afloat.

The continuation of Officer training is essential and with excellent assistance now available from Croke Park, these courses must continue and be promoted by the County Board. The attendance of club Officers at such training will help them undertake future club development planning. (Note – access to GAA funding/grants may well be contingent on club Officers undertaking official GAA Club Officer Training Courses).

There is a need for Laois GAA to undertake a promotional drive to support volunteering in GAA clubs.

SECTION 3: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES - COMMUNICATIONS – CLUB/OFFICER SUPPORT

Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- *Comhairle Laighean to support the challenges facing rural clubs (P)*
- *County Board to initiate better communications with clubs on decisions/matters from County Board meetings (P)*
- *County Board to review appointments to Sub-Committees*
- *County Board to review Terms of Reference for each Sub-Committee*
- *Develop stronger relations with all independent media sources (Print, Radio, TV and Social Media) in Laois*
- *Expand the use of social media and other communications sources*
- *Expand the Club Officer Training programme*
- *Laois GAA to establish a promotional drive to attract more volunteers to clubs*



Recommended Priority Action			
Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. GAA Clubs in Laois <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board shall approach Comhairle Laighean seeking their assistance to engage with clubs in the county whose future viability has been identified as a result of the work undertaken by the Strategy Review Committee. 	Laois GAA County Board Comhairle Laighean	Commence immediately and conclude by 31 st October 2018	<p>Those Laois GAA Clubs whose future viability has emerged as part of the Strategic Review will be afforded an opportunity to engage with representatives of Comhairle Laighean to discuss the options for the future of Gaelic games in their parish/district.</p> <p>The Comhairle Laighean representatives will provide recommendations relating to each club.</p> <p>Individual clubs will have the final say as to their future by considering any recommendations at a Club EGM.</p>
2. Club Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board to review how clubs receive feedback from County Board delegates, running a workshop, if necessary, to outline the role of such individuals. 	Laois GAA County Board	28 th February 2018	Will ensure that decisions and other relevant information discussed and decided on at Laois County Board meetings are properly conveyed to Club Officers, the Club Executive and Club Members.

Recommended Other Actions			
Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. Laois GAA County Board Officers <p>The Duties and Responsibilities of each Laois GAA County Board Officer to be reviewed, documented and approved by the County Board.</p>	Laois GAA County Board	By 31 st March 2018	Laois GAA County Board Officers (including any future Officers) will clearly understand and appreciate the duties and responsibilities of the Officer roles to which they may be appointed.
2. Laois GAA Sub-Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every effort should be made to appoint individuals to County Board Sub-Committees who have both the knowledge and interest to undertake the duties to which they are being appointed. Such appointments should also be seen in the context of succession planning for future Officers roles in Laois GAA. The Terms of Reference for all Laois GAA Sub-Committees should be reviewed as a matter of urgency to more clearly reflect the work of these groups including the expected outcomes. A copy of the revised Terms of Reference should be sent to all clubs. 	<p>Laois GAA County Board and especially its Senior Officers</p> <p>Laois GAA County Board and especially the County Board Chairperson</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>By 31st March 2018</p>	<p>Laois GAA Sub-Committees will comprise of individuals who understand and appreciate the work and outcomes from the group they represent and their responsibilities towards the wider GAA community in Laois.</p> <p>Laois GAA will afford an opportunity to potential Officers of the future to become involved in various aspects of Association's operations in the county and thus gain experience to assume more demanding roles at some stage in the future.</p> <p>Laois GAA stakeholders (especially clubs) will more clearly understand the duties, responsibilities and expected outcomes from all County Board Sub-Committees.</p> <p>The members of each Sub-Committee will also more clearly understand their duties, responsibilities and the expected outcomes from their on-going deliberations.</p>

<p>3. Laois GAA and Social Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successful use of the Laois GAA Twitter Account should be expanded to facilitate underage fixtures / results and provide greater promotion of Laois GAA activities and news. 	<p>Laois GAA PRO and County Communications Sub-Committee</p>	<p>By 31st March 2018</p>	<p>Laois GAA stakeholders will be better informed (instantly) of Association activities in the county, including at underage levels. In addition, County Board news and information is made more accessible to all Laois GAA stakeholders.</p>
<p>4. Laois GAA Web Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Laois GAA web site should be redesigned to improve its functionality, content and visual presentation. A greater emphasis should be placed on using the web site to provide news and information to Laois clubs and stakeholders. 	<p>Laois GAA PRO and County Communications Sub-Committee</p>	<p>By 31st August 2018</p>	<p>The Laois County Board web site will be the 'go to' location for information on GAA activities in the county, be that fixtures/results or other relevant news on County Board activities/announcements.</p> <p>The redesigned web site will afford Laois GAA an enhanced opportunity to promote the activities of current and potential sponsors.</p>
<p>5. Laois TV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While accepting that it is not possible for Laois GAA to guarantee the viability of Laois TV, nevertheless, keeping the service active should be explored by the County Board in discussions with the current Service Provider. 	<p>Laois GAA County Board and Laois GAA PRO</p>	<p>By 31st March 2018</p>	<p>Laois TV becomes a viable service (including financially) and will provide GAA stakeholders with the highlights of major games in the county on an on-going basis.</p>
<p>6. Annual Publication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Laois PRO and County Communications Sub-Committee should explore the possibility of publishing an annual of the GAA activities in Laois (i.e. a Year Book). 	<p>Laois GAA PRO and County Communications Sub-Committee</p>	<p>By 31st March 2018 (To decide on the viability of publishing a 2018 Year Book)</p>	<p>Laois GAA publishes a Year Book which outlines the highlights of the year across all codes and age groups where the activities of clubs, players, mentors, officials and supporters are acknowledged in print and photos.</p> <p>The Year Book becomes an important promotional vehicle for Laois GAA.</p> <p>The Year Book will enable Laois GAA to work with businesses throughout Laois (including existing competition sponsors) to secure advertising to cover the costs associated with the annual publication.</p>



<p>7. Communications with Laois Media Outlets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Laois GAA County Board shall develop a strong and trusting relationship with all sections of the local media. The Laois GAA County Board PRO shall have responsibility for providing relevant news and information to media outlets and be their primary contact. The Laois GAA County Board PRO shall arrange briefings to the media prior to inter-county league and championship games, where the cooperation of team management and players is expected. 	Laois GAA County Board through its PRO	Ongoing	<p>Improved communications between Laois GAA and all sections of the local media.</p> <p>Laois GAA stakeholders are better informed on county GAA matters.</p> <p>GAA coverage is enhanced in all sections of the local media.</p> <p>Senior team management keep supporters better informed on key developments with their respective squads.</p> <p>The profile of Laois GAA in general is enhanced.</p>
<p>8. Club & Officer Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in tandem with Croke Park, Laois GAA shall ensure that official GAA Officer Training Courses are made available to all clubs in the county. 	Laois GAA County Board (Responsibility to be given to a designated Officer)	Ongoing (Usually scheduled for the Winter and Early Spring periods)	<p>Laois GAA Club Officers (acknowledging that they change every couple of years) will have attended the National GAA Officers Programme as developed and delivered by Croke Park.</p> <p>Laois GAA Club Officers shall can undertake the planning of future club developments as a result of attending this training.</p>
<p>9. Promoting Club Volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA shall undertake a specific promotion aimed at increasing the number of volunteers in clubs, including the need for individuals to take on Officer roles. 	Laois GAA County Board (Responsibility to be given to a designated Officer)	To commence by 30 th April 2018	<p>Laois GAA will develop a successful promotion of the Association in the county to attract additional volunteers to clubs, thus ensuring that their work is respected and appreciated.</p> <p>Volunteers will feel that their club involvement is more greatly appreciated and they will find fulfilment in providing support within their local club and to its various stakeholders.</p>





Section 4: Infrastructure Facilities - Future Development

Key Objective: Laois GAA will continue the on-going redevelopment work at O'Moore Park and the adjoining Training Centre to ensure that both locations provide top-class training and playing facilities for inter-county and club players plus development squads and that patrons and stakeholders will feel both welcomed and safe in comfortable surroundings.

Key Outcome: All Laois GAA stakeholders in attendance at O'Moore Park and at the Laois GAA Training Centre will enjoy excellent facilities to both participate in and enjoy Gaelic games in safe and comfortable surroundings, with the enhanced facilities providing a boost towards the promotion of Gaelic games activities at club and inter-county levels.

Laois GAA Training Centre

The development of the Training Centre received many favourable comments from the clubs of Laois. The building when completed will accommodate a range of facilities for players and administrators and ensure that the primary users of the centre will be provided with the best available facilities. As finance allows, further work at the Training Centre should be undertaken by the County Board, including the building of a small stand structure to facilitate up to 200 patrons (including a small section for wheelchair patrons) attending games or watching training. Upgrading the floodlighting on one of the pitches to better facilitate hurling games should be undertaken when finance is available.

Once the building complex is completed, aside from the obvious benefits to players at all levels, parents and guardians of the young players involved with development squads and underage teams will have a facility to socialise and interact with each other while their children are training. The importance of engaging with and appreciating the efforts of the parents/guardians of young players who wish to become part of Laois inter-county squads cannot be understated.

The move of the Laois GAA County Board administration to the new building (in due course) will ensure that all Laois GAA administration activities will be run and managed from a central hub in the county, making it easily accessible for clubs to attend meetings and conduct on-going business with the County Board.

When the building complex is completed, it should be fully branded to reflect the achievements of Laois GAA teams and individuals since the Association was founded.

O'Moore Park

While redevelopment work at O'Moore Park is ongoing (subject to finance), a few areas need to be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure that the venue continues to be selected to stage major inter-county games. An immediate priority should be the upgrading

of the media centre (Print, Radio, TV & Social Media) at the rear of the stand to reflect the growing number of media personnel covering Gaelic games. It should be noted that financial assistance for this work (including the provision of Wi-Fi) is available at both National & Provincial levels.

The Laois GAA County Board should establish a Sub-Committee specifically for the purpose of setting out a Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park, with particular relevance to patron comfort and safety and how the venue might be utilised for commercial purposes without compromising its primary GAA use. The Sub-Committee should engage with the GAA National Infrastructure Committee for guidance and with other counties who have upgraded their county grounds. Any further work in O'Moore Park should ensure that the venue can be promoted as a family friendly stadium.

The back of the stand facing onto the Training Centre, plus the area beneath the stand, should be used to promote the achievements of Laois GAA teams and players. This would serve as a reminder of the achievements of former Laois teams and players to current and future players at all levels and codes.

Club Facilities

Laois GAA clubs are to be lauded on the quality of facilities throughout the county. It is very evident that clubs have invested heavily in their facilities. Aside from the Laois Training Centre, the availability of suitable floodlighting at some club grounds specifically for hurling would enable better scheduling of hurling competitions in the latter months of the year (the Review Committee is aware of one such development at present).

Some clubs suggested that the Laois GAA County Board should play more championship games at club grounds instead of in O'Moore Park. The Strategy Committee has no role in this regard as it is a matter for the County Board and its CCCC.

SECTION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES - FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- **County Board to set up a Working Group to develop a Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park (P)**
- **Upgrade Media & Wheelchair Facilities in O'Moore Park in the short term**
- **Build 200 Seater Stand with Wheelchair access at the Laois GAA Training Centre (Main Pitch)**
- **Upgrade the floodlighting on one Training Centre pitch for hurling games**
- **Develop a branding strategy for the Training Centre & O'Moore Park to promote Laois GAA achievements**

Recommended Priority Action

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. O'Moore Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board should establish a Sub-Committee specifically for the purpose of setting out a Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park, with particular relevance to patron comfort and safety and how the venue might be utilised for commercial purposes without compromising its primary GAA use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2018 	<p>Laois GAA will develop a Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park which will identify future development opportunities (including commercial) at the primary GAA centre in the county. This should include a target to replace the roof of the stand and the seating in the stand within five years.</p>

Recommended Other Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
2. Laois GAA Training Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan the branding of the Laois Training Centre and its building complex to ensure its reflect the achievements of Laois GAA teams and players to encourage current and future players who will use the facility. Ensure that when the building complex is completed that is it especially used to engage with parents, teachers and those involved with underage games in the county. Build a small stand structure to facilitate up to 200 patrons (including a small section for wheelchair patrons) attending games or watching training. Upgrade the floodlighting on one of the pitches to better facilitate hurling games. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2018 	<p>The Laois GAA Training Centre will play a key role in the promotion of Gaelic games to Laois players at all levels, but especially to underage development squads and the parents of the young players.</p> <p>The branding of the Laois GAA Training Centre will reflect the achievements of the county's teams, players and officials since the Association was founded and such branding will help to encourage others, at all levels, to match and surpass those achievements.</p> <p>When completed, the building complex will afford Laois GAA a better opportunity to entertain guests at games and especially team and competitions sponsors plus the media.</p> <p>A small stand will provide comfort and safety to patrons (including wheelchair users) who will attend games and training at the Laois GAA Training Centre.</p>
3. O'Moore Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade the current media centre (Print, Radio, TV & Social Media) at the rear of the stand to reflect the growing number of media personnel covering Gaelic games. Review the area which currently accommodates wheelchair users to ensure it provides adequate cover from inclement weather. Brand the O'Moore Park Stand (rear and underneath) to reflect the achievements of Laois GAA teams and players in order to encourage current and future players who will use the facility. Any further work in O'Moore Park should ensure that the venue can be promoted as a family friendly stadium. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2018 	<p>National and local media will have facilities in O'Moore Park which will enable them to undertake their duties in an environment where all necessary technology is installed.</p> <p>Wheelchair patrons will have appropriate facilities to enjoy watching Gaelic games.</p> <p>The branding of the O'Moore Park Stand (rear and underneath) will reflect the achievements of the county's team, players and officials since the Association was founded and such branding will help to encourage others, at all levels, to match and surpass those achievements.</p> <p>Laois patrons will see O'Moore Park as a family friendly venue where the comfort and safety of patrons is a priority.</p>





Section 5: Engaging with Other Organisations

Key Objective: Laois GAA will engage with other organisations in the county that operate within the wider GAA family – Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA will engage in a formal manner with the respective governing bodies in the county for Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders at a minimum of once per annum and more often should the need arise.

Access to the Laois GAA Training Centre

This is specifically relevant to Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Laois Cumann na mBunscol.

Both Ladies organisations should be afforded access to the Laois GAA Training Centre on a pre-arranged basis (with the Laois County Secretary) to use the facilities for official games, squad training and squad trials, whenever possible. While every effort will be made by the Laois GAA County Board to accommodate any request, these should be made well in advance of the date(s) required. (It is important to note that the Training Centre is heavily used at present by a variety of Laois GAA teams/squads.)

Laois Cumann na mBunscol should also be afforded access (once pre-arranged) to the Laois GAA Training Centre for games and blitz events. This is an ideal way to promote Laois GAA to new generations of players.

Access to O'Moore Park

This is also specifically relevant to Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Laois Cumann na mBunscol (albeit that Rounders may request to use the pitch – occasionally - for promotional purposes at half-time in a major game).

Laois GAA (with the support of Croke Park) occasionally accommodates the playing of Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football league games prior to Allianz GAA National League games (both codes) in O'Moore Park. The Strategy Review Committee strongly supports this development and encourages its continuation.

Both Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football organisations in Laois should be afforded access to O'Moore Park for a minimum of one day annually to play their major county finals at the primary GAA venue in the county. Aside from the players being able to use the excellent facilities and being shown due respect by the GAA, supporters from the competing teams can avail of covered/seated accommodation to view the games.

Laois Cumann na mBunscol should also be afforded access (once pre-arranged) to O'Moore Park for games and blitz events. This is an ideal way to promote Laois GAA to new generations of players.

Meetings between Laois GAA and other Organisations

Laois GAA should meet with the senior officers of Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders (separately) at least annually to discuss matters of mutual interest and, in particular, concerning access to both the Laois GAA Training Centre and O'Moore Park.

It is expected that meetings will take place, as necessary, between the Laois GAA County Board and Laois Cumann na mBunscol to review matters of common interest to both bodies.

One-Club Model

Clubs are encouraged to adopt the One-Club Model which aims to facilitate the joint operation of Mens and Ladies activities in GAA Clubs.

Laois GAA Web Site

Laois GAA should allow Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Cumann na mBunscol access to its web site to promote their activities. All content shall be provided to the website administrator by each individual organisation.

Laois GAA Annual Publication

Should Laois GAA publish a Year Book, Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Cumann na mBunscol should be afforded an opportunity to provide content, including photographs.

SECTION 5: ENGAGING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS - Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- Access to the Laois GAA Training Centre for Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Cumann na mBunscol
- Access to O'Moore Park for Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football and Cumann na mBunscol
- Access to Laois GAA web site to Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Cumann na mBunscol



Recommended Actions			
Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
<p>1. Access to the Laois GAA Training Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA shall enable access (provided it is pre-arranged) to both the Camogie & Ladies Gaelic Football organisations to the Laois GAA Training Centre, on the basis that such access can be accommodated within the scheduling roster at any given time. Laois GAA County Board shall enable access to Laois Cumann na mBunscol to the Laois GAA Training Centre, once it has been pre-arranged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2018 	<p>Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football, shall, if requested, get access to the Laois GAA Training Centre provided it has been pre-arranged by engaging (separately) with the Laois GAA County Secretary and such access can be facilitated within the existing scheduled use of the facility.</p> <p>The efforts of Laois Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football shall be acknowledged by the GAA County Board by affording access to the Training Centre.</p> <p>Laois Cumann na mBunscol shall have access to the Laois GAA Training Centre for games and blitz events which will act as an important promotional vehicle for the next generation of Laois GAA players.</p>
<p>2. Access to O'Moore Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA shall continue (with the approval of Croke Park) the playing of Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football league games (if so requested by either organisations) prior to the playing of GAA National Leagues games (both codes). Laois GAA shall grant access to O'Moore Park to Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football, if so requested, for the playing of their respective major County Finals. Laois GAA County Board shall enable access to Laois Cumann na mBunscol to O'Moore Park, once it has been pre-arranged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018 	<p>Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football, shall, if requested, be granted access to O'Moore Park (provided it has been sought by both organisations – separately - with the Laois GAA County Secretary) for the playing of their major County Finals.</p> <p>Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football, shall, if requested, be granted access to O'Moore Park for the playing of National League games as curtain-raiser to Allianz National Hurling or Football League games (provided permission has been granted by Croke Park).</p> <p>The efforts of Laois Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football to promote and support both organisations shall be acknowledged by the GAA County Board by affording access them access to O'Moore Park.</p> <p>Laois Cumann na mBunscol shall have access to O'Moore Park for games and blitz events which will act as an important promotional vehicle for the next generation of Laois GAA players.</p>
<p>3. Meetings with other Organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA shall facilitate meetings with Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders plus Laois Cumann na mBunscol as necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018 	<p>Laois Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Laois Cumann na mBunscol meet with Laois GAA County Board Officers (separately) to review matters of concern.</p>
<p>4. One-Club Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clubs are encouraged to adopt the One-Club Model which aims to facilitate the joint operation of Men and Ladies activities in GAA Clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018 	<p>Those clubs who wish to adopt the One-Club Model will join with others around the country that have completed the process.</p>
<p>5. Access to Laois GAA Web Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA shall facilitate access to its web site to Laois Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders organisations plus Laois Cumann na mBunscol, if so requested, to promote their activities (on the basis that the individual organisations are responsible for supplying the content in the required format to the web site administrator). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018 	<p>Laois Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Laois Cumann na mBunscol are afforded an opportunity, if so requested, to promote their activities on the Laois GAA web site (on the basis that the individual organisations are responsible for supplying the content in the required format to the web site administrator).</p>

<p>6. Access to Laois GAA Annual Publication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should Laois GAA decide to publish a Year Book, it shall facilitate access to the publication to Laois Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders organisations plus Laois Cumann na mBunscol, if so requested, to promote their activities (on the basis that the individual organisations are responsible for supplying the content in the required format). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2018 	<p>Laois Camogie, Ladies Gaelic Football, Handball, Rounders and Laois Cumann na mBunscol are afforded an opportunity, if so requested, to be included in the Laois GAA Year Book to outline their activities including achievements (on the basis that the individual organisations are responsible for supplying the content in the required format).</p>
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Section 6: Funding - Sponsorship - Financial Excellence

Key Objective: Laois GAA will ensure that through the professional way it runs and manages its activities, that it attracts sufficient funding, including sponsorship, to support day-to-day operations plus infrastructure development and that its activities are governed by appropriate governance in all aspects.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA will be recognised as an organisation that provides exceptional governance and professionalism in the planning, delivery and management of its activities and especially in the oversight and management of its finances resources.

Funding

Like all counties, Laois GAA income comes from multiple sources, but principally from the following – Croke Park (central GAA sponsorships, media rights, team expenses plus grants, etc.); Comhairle Laighean (team expenses plus coaching and infrastructure grants); Laois Inter-County teams and competition sponsors; Laois club gate receipts; and the Laois County Board Draw. The Strategy Review Committee notes the positive feedback from clubs in relation to the way Laois GAA manages its finances.

Additional finance will be needed to maintain day-to-day operations at current levels plus the funding of further infrastructural projects. While Laois GAA clubs spoke positively about their on-going support for the County Board Draw, they indicated that they would find it extremely challenging to provide any additional funding.

Laois GAA County Board should explore new fund-raising ventures to raise further finance for the major capital projects outlined. It also needs to establish its own unique selling point as the primary sporting and community based organisation in the county. Among the possible new funding sources might be:

- Capital Sports Grant.
- Explore the possibility of hosting a major event in O'Moore Park.
- Review existing team and competitions sponsorships to ensure that the way the commercial arrangements have been developed are beneficial to both individual sponsors and the County Board. (Note – existing sponsorship contracts would not be impacted by any review.) The primary purpose of the review would be to identify any gaps in the Laois portfolio of activities which might be available to be sponsored, particularly where they relate to community and health related sporting activities.
- Targeted fund-raising specifically focused on funding the development of the new Laois GAA Training Centre and further upgrading at O'Moore Park. This could include:
 - o Direct engagement with the Laois 'diaspora' outside the county and the country.

- o A significant fund-raising function to be held at a major Laois venue (or possibly in Croke Park).

- Naming rights for O'Moore Park and the Laois GAA Training Centre.

To further explore the fund-raising possibilities which might arise from the above, Laois GAA County Board should establish a Fundraising Sub-Committee. Its role shall specifically relate to raising finance for capital expenditure projects, including the Laois GAA Training Centre and O'Moore Park. This Sub-Committee should be chaired by an individual nominated by but independent of the County Board. The Sub-Committee membership should also include individuals who are not directly involved with Laois GAA in addition to some existing County Board Officers/members (specifically the County Board Treasurer) and club representatives.

The Strategy Review Committee acknowledges the on-going fund-raising projects by the Laois GAA County Board and the support it receives from clubs and supporters in the county and elsewhere.

Sponsorship

Laois is fortunate to have many loyal sponsors of both inter-county teams and club competitions. Continued support for these sponsors is essential.

Notwithstanding current sponsorships which are in place, the Strategy Review Committee recommends that a full review of all current arrangements be undertaken. This is necessary to ascertain what further sponsorship opportunities might exist. It is not being suggested that any existing sponsorship contracts should be changed.

Financial Excellence

The integrity of any County Board or Club depends on the ability of its Officers to provide appropriate governance of its activities and particularly the provision of an annual financial report.

County Boards are obliged to have their accounts audited each year and submit them to Croke Park. This ensures that all aspects of its financial governance are conducted in the required professional manner. The responsibility on the County Board Treasurer is now greater than ever in all counties as income and expenditure has grown significantly. This is especially relevant when it comes to the handling of cash at club and inter-county games. Laois is very fortunate that its current County Board Treasurer is an individual of exceptional financial ability and this is especially the reason why the financial governance of the Laois

County Board's finances has been so successful in recent times.

Appropriate financial governance in GAA clubs is equally applicable. This can be challenging in clubs where it may be difficult to elect someone who has sufficient knowledge to take on the role of Club Treasurer. Once again, this emphasises the importance of Club Treasurers undertaking the GAA Club Officer Training Programme. As County Boards are ultimately responsible for all clubs in their county, it would be good practice for all Laois clubs to submit a copy of their annual accounts to the County Board Treasurer by the end of February each year. This is an obvious way of ensuring that there is appropriate governance in all Laois GAA clubs in the running of their operations.



SECTION 6: FUNDING - SPONSORSHIP - FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE

Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- Laois GAA to establish a specific fund-raising Working Group to raise funds for capital projects
- Laois GAA to review existing sponsorship agreements to help identify further opportunities
- Laois GAA Clubs to submit their annual accounts to the County Board by the end of February each year

Recommended Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
<p>1. Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In view of the costs associated with the development of the Laois GAA Training Centre, O'Moore Park and further capital projects in the future, Laois GAA County Board should establish a specific fund-raising Sub-Committee with a clear remit to develop new sources of funding to cover the costs associated with capital projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From early 2018 	<p>A Sub-Committee is established comprising of individuals with a passionate interest in Laois GAA who are committed to seeing the completion of the Laois GAA Training Centre and further upgrading at O'Moore Park and with a specific remit to identify a range of fund-raising ventures to support such projects.</p> <p>The remit of the Sub-Committee will also focus on future capital projects, especially relating to the Ten-Year Plan for O'Moore Park (noted elsewhere in this report).</p> <p>Committed volunteers provide guidance and support to the Laois GAA County Board in the development of new fund-raising ventures.</p> <p>A new relationship is created with Laois 'diaspora' outside the county and the country in seeking new funding for the proposed development projects.</p>
<p>2. Sponsorships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board to review all existing team and competition sponsorships with a view to exploring if further opportunities might exist around the community plus health and welfare aspects of Gaelic games or indeed any other areas which might be identified as part of the review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From early 2018 	<p>New sponsorships opportunities are identified for Gaelic games in Laois.</p> <p>Existing sponsors continue to be supported and appreciated.</p>
<p>3. Financial Excellence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA Clubs shall submit a copy of their Annual Accounts to the Treasurer of the County Board. (While there is no compulsion of clubs to submit their annual accounts, it would ensure that the County Board is aware of any financial challenges facing clubs and having up to date financial information can also be beneficial in relation to obtaining developments grants from Comhairle Laighean). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of February each year 	<p>Laois GAA County Board has visibility of the financial health of its clubs.</p> <p>Laois GAA County Board, through its Treasurer, can assist clubs who made require guidance on any financial matter.</p>





Section 7: Urbanisation - Rural De-Population - Community Integration

Key Objective: The unique challenges of expanding urban areas plus the decline in rural population is particularly relevant in County Laois. Laois GAA County Board recognises the contrasting difficulties which this poses for its clubs and it will ensure that its policies are cognisant of these challenges. It will also recognise the need to promote community inclusion in the clubs of the county, particularly in view of the growing number of non-Irish nationals who now reside in the county.

Key Outcome: Laois GAA will recognise the contrasting challenges of its clubs in urban and rural environments by ensuring that its policies and initiatives are cognisant of the needs of those operating in those different environments. It shall also promote and support greater integration in communities at the heart of GAA clubs by encouraging non-Irish nationals to become involved in their local GAA club.

Urbanisation

Based on the Laois Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 the following will comprise the primary urban areas in the county:

- Portlaoise/Mountmellick/Portarlinton (covering most of the North-East of the county) – the biggest individual urban area in Laois.
- Mountrath (this is edging close to the North-East area).
- Ballylinan.
- Graiguecullen/Killeslin (both the Ballylinan and the Graiguecullen/Killeslin areas are in the South-East of the county).

In view of the strategies and targets which are set out in the Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023, we can expect most of the economic development in Laois during that period to be primarily focused in the above urban areas. That will most likely see clubs in those areas benefiting from growing numbers. This will create its own challenges and opportunities in terms of recruiting additional volunteers to support a growing range of activities in the affected clubs.

Larger centres of population in Laois will also create challenges for the County Board who must ensure that there is an appropriate balance in the allocation of resources, especially relating to GDA activities in urban and rural clubs. This issue will require clear direction from the Laois Coaching & Games Committee.

During the review process with clubs, the issue of establishing a second club in Portlaoise was raised on many occasions. It should be noted that an attempt to establish another club in Portlaoise some years ago ended in failure after a couple of years. It is equally important to note that four clubs currently operate within Portlaoise Parish – Portlaoise, The Heath, Park Ratheniska and Clonad (while Ballyfin is close to Portlaoise town also). It is worth noting in the region of 6,000 non-Irish nationals reside in Portlaoise and the challenge of engaging with that large community

by the GAA is significant. The Strategy Review Committee recommends that a second club should be established in Portlaoise (catering for underage teams only for the foreseeable future) and be located in the Knockmay/Mountmellick Road side of the town. Strong leadership will be required from the Laois GAA County Board if this is to happen, while Comhairle Laighean should also be asked to support the proposed new juvenile club by way of funding and resources.

In the Coaching and Games section of this report there is a recommendation regarding regionalising GDA resources. That would envisage one of the GDA's having responsibility for central Laois covering Portlaoise and the clubs surrounding the town. It will ultimately be a matter for the Laois Coaching and Games Committee to determine which clubs comprise the Central Laois region.

Rural Laois

Rural depopulation is having a detrimental impact on the fate of many rural GAA clubs. For several rural Laois clubs their survival is rapidly becoming an issue of real concern. The Strategy Review Committee estimates that based on feedback from clubs that as many as ten have reason to be concerned as to their future. Those clubs ultimately have two options – disappear altogether or amalgamate, accepting that the latter option is not be an ideal outcome for any GAA club. The section of this report titled 'Organisation Structures - Communications - Support' recommends how Laois GAA should address the issue of any club whose survival is threatened. It is important to note that some very successful amalgamations have taken place in Laois in the recent past and these would not have been achieved without strong leadership within the clubs concerned.

There can be no question of rural clubs receiving less attention in terms of Coaching & Games activities than their urban counterparts. Again, this is ultimately a matter for the Laois Coaching and Games Committee to address. One significant difference between urban and rural clubs is the immense challenge faced by

rural clubs attempting to field teams on their own at many underage grades. The details shown elsewhere in this report outlining the number of combined underage teams that participated in both codes in 2017 should serve as a serious warning that the underage scene in Laois is facing dramatic changes. Many clubs will never field an underage team on their own again, but club identity might be preserved for a few more years if meaningful competitions can be organised for teams comprising less than fifteen players. The issue of how combined teams are allowed to participate in Laois underage competitions requires urgent scrutiny by the Laois GAA County Board. Combined teams are now a fact of life in Laois, but the way clubs are allowed to combine is not satisfactory and received much negative comment from many clubs in the county.

If Rural Laois is to remain relevant to the many people who wish to live in this environment, the delivery of a proper communications infrastructure, especially broadband, is critical for both commercial and private stakeholders. Good broadband is now an essential lifeline for rural communities in Laois. The Review Committee recommends that the Laois GAA County Board continues to lobby relevant parties for the

delivery of good broadband to all rural areas in the county.

Community Integration

As the GAA is the largest voluntary sporting organisation in Ireland, it is ideally placed to play a key role in promoting greater community integration in the parishes of the country. Laois is now home to a significant number of non-Irish nationals, with few, if any, having any engagement with the GAA. Where non-Irish nationals have become involved with their local GAA club, they are finding great fulfilment learning to play and enjoy Gaelic games. This level of integration helps to break down social barriers with everyone sharing and enjoying sport irrespective of their nationality.

Feedback from Laois GAA clubs demonstrates their commitment to promoting community integration and no barriers exist within the Association in Laois to enable anyone join their local GAA club. It is important, though, that the Laois GAA County Board, continues to promote community integration within the clubs of the county.



SECTION 7: URBANISATION, RURAL DE-POPULATION AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Recommended Actions - (P) = Priority Actions

- *Comhairle Laighean to support the challenges facing rural clubs (P)*
- *Laois GAA to review the Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 for its relevance to future GAA policies*
- *Laois GAA to continue the promotion of community integration in the clubs of the county.*

Recommended Priority Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. Rural Laois <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is clear from the feedback which the Strategy Review Committee has received that some rural GAA clubs in Laois are facing an uncertain future. A recommendation is included in the section of this report titled 'Organisational Structures - Communications - Support' whereby the Laois GAA County Board will seek assistance from Comhairle Laighean to engage with the clubs concerned and establish a future pathway for those club, including the possibility of amalgamating with a neighbouring club. Given the number of clubs in grave difficulty, this matter is extremely urgent. 	Laois GAA County Board Comhairle Laighean	From early 2018 – to be completed by 31 st October 2018	Those Laois GAA Clubs whose future viability has emerged as part of the Strategic Review will be afforded an opportunity to engage with representatives of Comhairle Laighean to discuss the options for the future of Gaelic games in their parish/district. The Comhairle Laighean representatives will provide recommendations relating to each club. Individual clubs will have the final say as to their future by considering any recommendations at a Club EGM.
2. Urbanisation - Portlaoise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A second club (specifically for juvenile players only) should be established in Portlaoise at the Knockmay/Mountmellick Road side of the town. This club would be feeder unit (in time) to the adult clubs in Portlaoise and environs. 	Laois GAA County Board Laois Coaching & Games Committee	To be established in 2018 with a view to participating in 2019 competitions	A second GAA club in Portlaoise will be specifically aimed at attracting young players, enabling more children to play Gaelic games in a part of the largest urban area in Laois which is currently underserved regarding access to Gaelic games. The new juvenile club will enable more children to enjoy and play Gaelic games and it will provide a social benefit in the area where it is proposed to be established.

Recommended Other Actions

Action Required	Task Owner	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
1. Urbanisation - General <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA should review the Local Authority County Development Plan 2017-2023 (including meeting the Local Authority to discuss same) and be cognisant of what is being proposed when developing its own policies and initiatives. 	Laois GAA County Board Laois Coaching & Games Committee Laois GAA County Board & Comhairle Laighean	From early 2018	The Laois GAA County Board will be fully aware of the Local Authority's for economic and infrastructure developments in the county and in the process, ensure that its own policies and initiatives are cognisant of such developments
2. Community Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board and its clubs shall welcome anyone who wishes to be part of the GAA community in the urban and rural parishes of the county. 	Laois GAA County Board Laois GAA Clubs	Ongoing	Laois GAA County Board is to the forefront in welcoming and embracing people of all cultures and backgrounds to be part of the GAA community in the clubs of the county. Everyone in Laois will feel welcomed and have their talents appreciated by GAA communities in Laois.
3. Broadband Delivery in Rural Laois <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laois GAA County Board shall lobby the relevant parties for the delivery of good broadband to all rural areas in the county. 	Laois GAA County Board	Immediately	Ensure that an appropriate communications infrastructure is available in rural Laois to support commercial and private users, making it attractive for people to live in such environments.



Appendix A

The following individuals were consulted as part of the Strategy Review:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gerry Kavanagh (Chairman) Sean Mortimer (Vice-Chairman) Niall Handy (Secretary) Martin Byrne (Treasurer) Brian Allen (Coiste na nÓg Chairman & Árd Comhairle Delegate) Tom Clear (PRO) Pat O'Sullivan (Coaching Officer) Danny Gorman (Coiste na nÓg/Referees Administrator) PJ. Kelly (Development Officer) Tom Jones (Leinster Council Delegate) Andrew Kavanagh (Lead GDA) Donal Brennan (GDA) Ciaran Muldowney (GDA) Colm Begley (GDA) Pater Hally (GDA) Tomás Moore (Referee's Administration Secretary) Liam O'Neill (Iar-Uachtarán Cumann Lúthchleas Gael) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Niall Collins Ross Munnelly Colm Begley (Senior Football Panel) James Kelly (Senior Football Panel) Evan O'Carroll (Senior Football Panel) Stephen Attride (Senior Football Panel) David Conway (Senior Football Panel) Enda Rowland (Senior Hurling Panel) Ross King (Senior Hurling Panel) Leigh Bergin (Senior Hurling Panel) Neil Foyle (Senior Hurling Panel) Seamus Plunkett (Portlaoise) Pat Critchley (Portlaoise) Barney O'Connor (Laois Camogie) Phil O'Keeffe (Laois Ladies Gaelic Football) Michael O'Loughlin (Ladies Gaelic Football) ** Mick O'Keeffe (Teneo Sports) Sean O'Brien (Teneo Sports) <p>** Written submission sent to the Strategy Review Committee</p>
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Summary of Attendees at Club Consultation Meetings

Consultation Attendees - Gender	Number	%
Male	418	86.2%
Female	67	13.8%
Total	485	100.0%

Consultation Attendees - Age Profile	Number	%
Under 20	7	1.4%
Aged 20 - 40	156	32.2%
Aged 40-60	269	55.5%
Aged 60+	53	10.9%
Total	485	100.0%

Including the members of the Strategy Review Committee, 520 individuals contributed to the creation of this Strategy Review and Action Plan.



Appendix B - Club Questionnaire and Club Consultation Summary

Club Name	Questionnaire Returned	Consultation Held	Committee Member	Facilitator (If Any)	Total Attendance	Male	Female	U20	20-40	40-60	60+
Abbeyleix	Yes	Yes	Steven Miller	Steven Miller	12	11	1	0	4	8	0
Annanough	Yes	Yes	John Kelly	Mark. Delaney	10	7	3	0	3	6	1
Arles Kilcruise	Yes	Yes	David O'Brien	Liam Ahern	12	8	4	0	5	6	1
Arles Killeen	Yes	Yes	Ger Slevin	Ger Slevin	12	9	3	0	6	6	0
Ballinakill	Yes	Yes	Ger Slevin	Ger Slevin	7	6	1	0	2	3	2
Ballyfin	No	Yes	Liam Delaney	Tommy Fitzgerald	17	15	2	0	6	11	0
Ballylinan	Yes	Yes	John Kelly	Darach Kennedy	17	16	1	0	4	9	4
Ballypickas	Yes	Yes	Nickey Brennan	Colm Clear	15	10	5	1	2	8	4
Ballyroan Abbey	Yes	Yes	Maurice Deegan	Noel Delaney	17	16	1	0	2	15	0
Barrowhouse	Yes	Yes	John Kelly	Darach Kennedy	11	9	2	0	2	8	1
Borris in Ossory-Kilcotton	No	Yes	Ger Slevin	Ger Slevin	12	9	3	0	7	5	0
Camross	Yes	Yes	Richard Kennedy	Richard Kennedy	15	12	3	0	4	11	0
Castletown	No	Yes	Richard Kennedy	Liam O'Neill	14	11	3	0	9	4	1
Clonad	Yes	No	No Club Consultation Held		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clonaslee St. Manman's	No	No	No Club Consultation Held		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Castletown	No	Yes	Richard Kennedy	Liam O'Neill	14	11	3	0	9	4	1
Clough Ballacolla	Yes	Yes	Liam Delaney	Tommy Fitzgerald	7	7	0	0	0	4	3
Colt	Yes	Yes	Shane Maher	Shane Maher	16	15	1	1	7	8	0
Courtwood	Yes	Yes	Shane Maher	Shane Maher	11	11	0	0	4	5	2
Crettyard	Yes	Yes	Richard Kennedy	Liam O'Neill	10	7	3	1	2	7	0
Emo	No	Yes	Eamonn Jackman	Connie Conroy	15	14	1	0	8	6	1
Graiguenacullen	Yes	Yes	Kieran Keogh	Donal Kiely	12	9	3	0	5	5	2
Kilcavan	Yes	No	No Club Consultation Held		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Killeslin	No	Yes	Liam Delaney	Tommy Fitzgerald	10	9	1	0	1	8	1
Kyle	Yes	Yes	Eamonn Jackman	Eamonn Jackman	21	21	0	3	6	9	3
Mountmellick	No	Yes	Kieran Keogh	Donal Kiely	6	6	0	0	3	3	0
O'Dempsey's	Yes	Yes	Shane Maher	Shane Maher	7	6	1	0	4	3	0
Park Ratheniska	Yes	Yes	Maurice Deegan	John Kelly	12	12	0	0	3	7	2
Portarlinton	Yes	Yes	Nickey Brennan	Colm Clear	9	5	4	0	1	5	3
Portlaoise	Yes	Yes	Nickey Brennan	Colm Clear	22	16	6	1	8	9	4
Rathdowney Errill	Yes	Yes	Steven Miller	Steven Miller	9	9	0	0	0	7	2
Rosenallis	Yes	Yes	Nickey Brennan	Colm Clear	17	14	3	0	2	12	3
Shanahoe	No	Yes	David O'Brien	Liam Ahern	6	6	0	0	2	2	2
Slieve Bloom	Yes	Yes	Liam Delaney	Tommy Fitzgerald	14	12	2	0	5	9	0
Slieve Margy	No	Yes	Attended the St. Joseph's Club Consultation		1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Spink	Yes	Yes	Kieran Keogh	Donal Kiely	12	12	0	0	1	10	1
St Fintan's Mountrath	Yes	Yes	Michael Dempsey	Michael Dempsey	12	11	1	0	9	2	1
St Josephs	Yes	Yes	David O'Brien	Liam Ahern	8	8	0	0	0	8	0
Stradbally	Yes	Yes	Tommy Lanigan	Tommy Lanigan	9	9	0	0	3	3	3
The Harps	No	Yes	Michael Dempsey	Michael Dempsey	14	14	0	0	8	6	0
The Heath	Yes	Yes	Steven Miller	Steven Miller	14	12	2	0	4	7	3
The Rock	Yes	Yes	Tommy Lanigan	Tommy Lanigan	12	10	2	0	1	11	0
Timahoe	Yes	Yes	Tommy Lanigan	Tommy Lanigan	9	8	1	0	2	6	1
Trumera	Yes	Yes	Michael Dempsey	Michael Dempsey	5	4	1	0	2	2	1
TOTALS					485	418	67	7	156	269	53

Summary - Club Questionnaire	No.	%
Club Questionnaires Completed	33	75.0%
Club Questionnaires Not Returned	11	25.0%
Total Clubs	44	100.0%
Summary - Club Consultations	No.	%
Club Consultations Held	41	93.2%
Club Consultations Not Held	3	6.8%
Total Clubs	44	100.0%

Consultation Attendees - Gender	No.	%
Male	418	86.2%
Female	67	13.8%
Total	485	100.0%
Consultation Attendees - Age Profile	No.	%
Under 20	7	1.4%
Aged 20 - 40	156	32.2%
Aged 40-60	269	55.5%
Aged 60+	53	10.9%
Total	485	100.0%





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