

C.L.G. Laoise



Comhdháil Bhliantúil



Monday, 14th December, 2020
7.30 p.m.

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C.L.G. Laoise



Standing Orders

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

- 1. Chairperson's Address, Secretary's Report and Financial Statements, including the Report of the Auditor's, have been circulated and only questions from members submitted one week prior to County Convention on Mon 7 December, will be answered and circulated to all members the week before County Convention*
- 2. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment thereto, may speak for 5 minutes but no longer.*
- 3. A Delegate speaking to a Resolution or Amendment shall not exceed 3 minutes.*
- 4. The Proposer of a Resolution, or Amendment, may speak a second time for 5 minutes, before a vote is taken, but no other Delegate may speak a second time to any Resolution or Amendment.*
- 5. The Chairman shall, at any time he considers a matter has been sufficiently discussed, call on the Proposer to reply, after which a vote will be taken.*
- 6. A Delegate may, with the consent of the Chairman, move "that the question be now put" after which, when the Proposer has spoken, a vote must be taken.*

An Clár

1. Adoption of Standing Orders
2. Minutes of 2019 Convention
3. Chairperson's Address
4. Secretary's Report
5. Motions
6. Announcement of Election of Officers
7. Aon Ghnó Eile
8. Moments Silence for Votes of Sympathy

The Annual Convention of Laois GAA was held in Midlands Park Hotel on Monday 9th December 2019.

Cathaoirleach Peadar O'Néil presided at County Convention in Midlands Park Hotel on 09/12/19. The following Coiste Bainistí members were also in attendance: Tomás O'Cleirigh, Mairtín O'Broin, Ciarán O'Conléibhe, Gearóid O'Caomhanach, Tomás Mac Seoin, Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí, Fergal O'Beirn, PS O'Cealaigh, Padraig O'Suilleabháin, Moncha Ní Dhubhsláinne, Labhras O'Faoláin, Dónal O'Gormáin agus Niall Mac Laitimh (Runaí).

Clubs were represented as follows:

N. O'Riain, R. O'Cinnéide & R. Mac Comhaill, Mainistir Laoise; C. Ni Cholmáin, M. Mac an Ghaill & S. Oakley, Anach; SS. O'Conbhuí & M. Ní Sheoirse, Ard Lios Cilchrúis; L. O'Braonáin & P. O'Doinn, Ard Lios Cilín; L. O'Seachnasaigh & M. Ni Ghiolla Phadraig, Baile na Coille; F. O'Cearbhúill & M. O'Gabháin, Baile Fionn; M. O'Murchú, W. Hovendon & S. Hovendon, Baile Uí Laigheanáin; S. O'Deá, Baile Píocas; M. O'Scoláí, P. O'Faoláin & E. Peacóg, Mainistir Baile Ath Róin; A. O'Langtúin, A. O'Braonáin & S. O'Daibhéis, Teach an Bhearra; B. Mac an Ghaill, T. O'Cearbhúill & S. O'Ceallaigh, Buiríos Mór Osraí Cill Choitín; U. Ní Dhonnchaidh, P. O'hOgáin & M. O'Coiléir, Camros; B. Mac Pheadair, M. Mac Pheadair & PS O'Maoleanaigh, Baile an Chaisleáin; S. O'Conraoi, P. Mac Cathail & D. O'Neachtáin, Cluain Fada; P. O'Caomhanach, R. Mac Coimín & C. O'Buacháin, Cloch Balla Cholla; A. O'Riain & L. de Stacaphúil, Coillte; E. O'Conail, D. O'Beacháin & P. O'Conail, Coill na Cúirte; M. Mac Pheadar, S. de Búrca & D. O'Cianaigh, Crochta Ard; S. Strong & P. O'hEoghain, Ioma; M. O'Cleirigh & P. O'Deá, Eiréil; M. Ní Fhaoláin, M. O'Leathlobhair & M. O'Boltúin, Graig Chuilinn; T. O'Fiaich & M. O'Tarpaigh, Cill Cabháin; G. Diring & C. Mhic Hugh, Gleann Uiseann; P. O'hAilche, M. O'Roigne & T. O'Coinnealláin, Coill; P. O'Gormáin, S. Payne & S. O'Conghaile, Mointeach Mílic; S. O'Cearbhúill, M. Mhic Mhideltáin & C. O'Greacháin, Maighean Rátha; A. O'Caomhanach, L. O'Fionnalaigh & P. O'Laoire, Na Diomasaigh; B. O'Rannacháin & S. O'Ceallaigh, Páirc Raithín an Uisce; S. O'Daltúin & P. O'Diarmada, Páirc Raithín an Uisce Tigh Mochua; A. O'Bambrick, D. O'Cleirigh & M. O'Leathlobhair, Cúil an tSudaire; M. O'Nialláin, L. O'Braoin & SP O'Cathaláin, Portlaoise; P. O'Faoláin, N. Ní Fhaoláin & M. Mac Mathúna, Rath Domhnaigh; T. de Barra, R. O'Ceallaigh & M. Mac Giolla Phadraig, Rath Domhnaigh Eiréil; M. O'Leannáin, S. O'Leathlobhair & S. O'Dúlaoich, Ross Fhionnghlaise; T. O'Cearbhúill, P. O'Buaigh & M. O'Beirgin, Seanchua; R. O'Nualláin, C. Ní Fhearail & B. O'Conraoi, Sliabh Bladhma; P. O'Braonáin & D. O'Duibhir, Spinc; M. O'Conaráin, M. O'Mórdha & P. O'Fearail, Naomh Seosamh; L. O'Dubhsláinne, R. Ní Lhorcáin & E. O'Dubhsláinne, Sráidbahile; D. O'Duiginn, S. O'Duiginn & T. Breatnach, Ná Clairsigh; M. O'Céin, P. O'Céin & C. O'Meachair, An Fraoch; S. O'Murchú & D. O'Maoineagh, An Charraig; L. O'Rannacháin, A. Mhic

Dhónaill & M. O’Muilleoir, Tigh Mochua; S. Mac Peaircín, G. Ní Chiarubháin & B. O’hAllúinn, Tromaire.

S. Laibheartaigh (Childrens Officer); S. O’Conbhuí (Referee Administrator); S. O’Meachair (Cumann an mBunscol) & O. O’hAilche (Post Primary Schools).

Leithscéil – S. O’Rannacháin (Uachtaráin).

1. **Standing Orders** were adopted on the proposition of Pilib O’Céin, seconded by Liam O’Braonáin.
2. **Minutes of 2018 Convention** was adopted on the proposition of Liam de Stacaphúil, seconded by Briain O’Rannacháin.
3. **Secretary’s Report** was adopted on the proposition of Robeard Mac Cómhail, seconded by Gavin Diring.
4. **Treasurer’s Report** showing an operating surplus of €222,695 in County Committee A/c and €23,996 in O’Moore Park A/c was adopted on the proposition of Liam O’Braonáin, seconded by Briain O’hAllúinn.
 - An Cisteoir gave a detailed explanation of our financial accounts, explaining both Income and Expenditure Accounts and Schedules to accounts, previous years comparisons, constraints within GPA agreement. He thanked his fellow Executive members for their support with our finances, our main sponsors and fundraising sponsors, our O’Moore Park stewards and gate staff. In particular he mentioned, Kieran Leavy for his support of Punchestown Race Day and Magni Group sponsorship, Laurence Phelan for his endeavours increasing commercial income, Paschal McEvoy for his help on match days, Tom Jones for his assistance on match days and also his family for their understanding in allowing him the time to carry out this role.
5. **Tellers** – the following were appointed and approved by Convention – Seán O’Conghaile, Micheál O’Dubhláinne, Seamas O’Caomhanaigh, Seosamh O’Conbhuí agus Adrainne Mhic Chartaigh.
6. **Election of Officers:** The following officers were elected –
 - Cathaoirleach (Chairman): Peadar O’Néil was elected unopposed, following the withdrawal of Ciaran O’Conléibhe.
 - Leas Chathaoirleach (Vice Chairman): Tomas O’Cléirigh was elected unopposed.
 - Cisteoir (Treasurer): Mairtín O’Broin was elected unopposed.

- Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer): Paschal Mac Fhiobhuí was elected unopposed, following withdrawal of Cianneach Mac Cartaigh.
- Ard Comhairle (Central Council) Delegate: Gearóid O’Caomhanaigh was elected unopposed.
- Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council) Delegates (2): PS O’Ceallaigh & Risteard O’Cinnéide were elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Oiliuna (Coaching): Ferghal O’Beirn was elected unopposed.
- Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish): An Runai informed delegates there was no nomination received for this position and that nominations would be circulated later this week and position filled at January County Committee meeting, which had been designated a Special General Meeting, with voting rights as per County Committee.
- Oifigeach Caidrimh Poibli (P.R.O.): Pól O’Deargáin was elected unopposed, following withdrawal of Padraig O’Suilleabháin.
- Congress Delegates (5): Peadar O’Néil, Niall Mac Laitimh (both automatically elected); Mairtín O’Broin, PS O’Ceallaigh agus Tomas Mac Seoin were elected after vote.
- Leinster Convention Delegates (5): Tomas O’Cléirigh, Seán O’Caollaí, Gearóid O’Caomhanaigh, Ciaran O’Conléibhe, Padraig O’Suilleabháin were elected unopposed.

All elected candidates returned thanks.

7. Chairperson’s Address – P. O’Néil

Cathaoirleach P. O’Néil addressed Convention, thanking Clubs for their attendance and their continued support. He thanked his fellow executive members for their work and commitment to Laois GAA. He acknowledged retiring members here this evening, in particular Tom Jones for in excess of thirty years’ service to Laois GAA in several different capacities, Kieran Leavy for his input to financial income and Pat O’Sullivan for his work in PR and wished him best of luck in his Leinster PR campaign. He thanked our sponsors and in particular Mattie Walsh, MW Hire and his additional sponsorship in securing the naming rights for O’Moore Park; our sub-committees and our volunteers; Michael O’Brien, Fenagh for chairing the Fixture Review Committee and Forum; Laurence Phelan for his work in sourcing additional commercial funding; our Stewards, in particular Andrew Broderick, Danny Gorman, Mick Kelly, Ollie Byrne and Andy Molloy, whom are ever present on match days in the stadium; our groundsman Colm McEvoy and our FAS, TÚS and Community Employment Scheme personnel for their work in the grounds also ac-

knowledging Bosco Ramsbottom for his catering services. He acknowledged the input of our match officials and his concern with ongoing verbal abuse of these officials, which he warned that all reported incidents will be dealt with severely. He informed delegates of his 10 year infrastructural plan for the stadium that will be launched in 2020 and his intention for the stadium to become a “green” stadium through the retro fitting of the stadium floodlights and planting the green areas in the grounds with wild flowers, and that he is exploring grant funding for these projects through Laois Partnership and SEIA. He thanked and acknowledged both Andrew Kavanagh for his contribution to games development prior to his departure during the year and also Tomas Moore our office administrator for his services to Laois GAA who will be leaving in early January and wished both the best of luck in their new careers. He thanked Fergal Byron and his Coaching and Games personnel for their work in games development, stating the significance the appointment of Mike Henchy has brought to this department. He complimented all involved in the completion of the Centre of Excellence which is now fully operational and the role he envisages it will have in developing our young players in both football and hurling. He thanked Central Council, Leinster Council, Sports Capital and Laois Leader / Partnership for their grant funding towards the project. He briefed delegates on Club Crest project to finance lift installation and encouraged all Clubs to participate. On the field of play, he stated it was a memorable year for Laois GAA, with our Footballers gaining back to back promotions and our Hurlers retaining their league status, winning the Joe McDonagh Cup and recording a historic success against Dublin and an outstanding performance against eventual All Ireland champions Tipperary in an All Ireland Senior Hurling quarter final. He congratulated Paddy Purcell, Enda Rowland and Jack Kelly on their awards and nominations and outlined his disgust at the manner in which the Joe McDonagh Cup had been demeaned in the All Stars selection process and RTE’s treatment of Joe McDonagh Cup Player of the Year recipient Paddy Purcell on the presentation evening. He acknowledged and thanked our Inter County squads for their commitment to the County and looked forward in working with our Senior Managers Micheal Quirke and Eddie Brennan and other managers in the coming year. He acknowledged our ongoing implementation of the Strategic Review Report and our ongoing work with integration, with an estimated 10,000 non irish now resident in the county. He stated 2020 was 25th anniversary of Laois Special Olympics and how he intends recognising this milestone. He concluded by asking for Club’s cooperation and patience, stating that he wasn’t infallible, but that he would work his hardest for the betterment of our Clubs and County.

8. PRESENTATIONS:

GAA Injury Fund: An Runai presented power point presentation on recent changes to Injury Fund stating that with effect from 1st December, DWF Claims had been appointed as new claims administrators, replacing Willis Tower Watson. He explained changes to the old system and that the new administration will be completed online and payments made direct to Clubs;

Independent Teams: An Runai introduced Iar Uachtaráin Liam O’Neil, who was going to make a presentation on the guidelines for the formation of Independent Teams. He briefed convention on the correct procedure for constitution of these teams and the guidelines for governance, child safeguarding, finance and registration of independent teams and the possibility of delivering another workshop in this area if required. He concluded in complimenting officers on a successful convention.

Laois GAA Website: P. O’Suilleabháin introduced power point presentation on new Laois Gaa Website which he hoped would be fully operational in early January.

Votes of Sympathy

Votes of Sympathy were extended to the following families:

- Abbeyleix: Bergin Family;
- Arles Kilcruise: Doogue, Kealy, Bolton / Brennan Families;
- Arles Killeen: Power, Dunne, Brennan Families;
- Ballinakill: Dwyer, O'Mara, O'Shaughnessy Families;
- Ballyfin: O'Hara, Cuddy, Quinn, Conroy, Hammersley / Fenton, Keegan,
Byrne, Tynan, Bennett, Hyland, Heffernan Families;
- Ballylinan: Doyle, Behan, Kirwan Families;
- Ballypickas: Whelan Family;
- Ballyroan Abbey: Fitzpatrick, Whelan, Murray, Drennan Families;
- Barrowhouse: Bowden, Burke, Knowles, Smith, Casey, Malone Families;
- Borris in Ossory Kilcotton: Kealy, Hanrahan, Dollard Families;
- Camross: Duggan, Lalor, Dowling, Moore; Dowling, Culleton, Bergin,
Corcoran, Kilmartin, Kavanagh Families;
- Castletown: Mullaney, Doccery, O'Keeffe, Veale Families;
- Clonad: Conroy, McCabe Families;
- Clough Ballacolla: Kavanagh, Hennessy, Maher Families;
- Colt: Dowling, Keyes, Sinnott, McGowan, Parkinson, Scully, Power,
Whealn Families;
- Courtwood: Murphy, O'Connor, Dunne, Tynan, Blanche Families;
- Crettyard: Brophy, Nolan, Magee, Delaney, O'Neill / Brennan Families;
- Errill: Bergin, Healey, Dunne Families;
- Graiguecullen: Byrne, Lawler, Culleton, Brophy, Dooley Families;
- Kilcavan: Hunt, Gorman Families;
- Mountmellick: Coss, Wall, Laffey, Dowling, Glynn Families;
- Mountrath: Gorman, Tobin, Hyland, Middleton, Thompson, Grehan,
Russell Families;
- O'Dempsey's: Terrett, Whelehan, Quinn, Kehoe, O'Leary Families;
- Park Ratheniska: Fingleton, Drennan, Dwyer Families;

Portarlinton: Bolton, Clancy Families;
 Portlaoise: Fingleton, Culleton Families;
 Rathdowney Errill: Cahill, Loughman, Bergin, Delaney, Herthington, Campion Families;
 Rosenallis: Leech, Dunne, Coffey, Warren, Barnett, Murphy, Dooley, Poole, Corr Families;
 Shanahoe: Lalor, Power, headen, Maprembu Families;
 Spink: Gorman, Murphy Families;
 St Joseph's: McCarthy, Nolan, Meaney, Butler, Mangan, Kirwan Families;
 Stradbally: Donohue, Swayne Families;
 The Harps: Lennon, Prior, Prior, Walsh Families;
 The Rock: Dunne, Dowling, Delaney Families;
 Timahoe: Delaney, Dunne, Wall, Mangan Families;
 Trumera: Kirwan, Holland, Delaney, O'Connor, Hosey, Savage Families;



Chairman's Address 2020

2020 has been a year like none other for all, and none more so than Laois G.A.A. The year began with great optimism, we secured the naming rights of the stadium to O'Moore Park with our main Jersey Sponsor M.W. Hire. My sincere thanks to Mattie Walshe and his family for their continued support of Laois G.A.A. Thanks to all our main Sponsors L.O.E.T.B, Magni Group, Laois Shopping Centre, Midlands Park Hotel, Trivium Vet , Copper Face Jacks, Glanbia, Downey's, Joe Mallon Motors and all others that helped out during the year. I would also like to thank Richard Kennedy for his help in bringing Enva on board this year to partner with us in supporting our Development Squads. I would urge all our members to support these businesses as they are always there for us.

After our success in winning the Joe Mc Donagh Cup competition in 2019, the goal for 2020 was to retain our Division 1 status and produce performances in the Leinster Championship. We have achieved retaining our status at premier level by defeating Carlow. In the Leinster Championship we lost to Dublin in Croke Park, while we had a much improved and credible performance against a stong Clare team. The hurlers are in a great position to drive on and with the full commitment of everyone, can do so. In Football we were delighted to appoint Mike Quirke as our new Senior Football Manager. Mike took the reins of a team that had progressed steadily from Division 4 to their now status as a Division 2 team. The goal for our footballers was to retain their status in a competitive Division 2, expand our player pool and push on in the Leinster championship. The Footballers achieved retention of their Division 2 status; all be it in the final few minutes of the competition after a long disruption by Covid 19 restrictions. This was a great fighting result under very difficult circumstances and a very good achievement. We played Longford in Pearse Park to reach a Leinster semi-final place. Once again, the team showed good fighting spirit to come back from 5 points down to win. The prize was a very tough game against Dublin in Croke Park. While going down to a heavy defeat, this will be a learning experience and will stand to the panel going forward. My appreciation goes to all the players and backroom teams involved. We complied fully with Covid guidelines and the safety of our squads and panels were always paramount. I would like to thank our Covid Officers Bryan Breen and Ann Barry, our kitmen, our servicing secretaries and Dr J.P. Campion and Dr Simon Honan for their invaluable service.

Our Under 20 Footballers under Eddie Kinsella's guidance reached the Leinster Final against Dublin for a second year in a row. While success eluded us once again, this was another tremendous achievement. I am delighted that Eddie will be staying on for 2020 and we should have optimism for the future.

Our Under 20 Hurlers under Manager Enda Lyons had a very good championship opener against Carlow and at present the rest of the competition is paused due to Covid restrictions.

Our minor footballers under Manager Mark Bates have been training hard and were ready for action prior to Covid shut down. Training for both teams has been restrictive and I compliment all players for persevering.

Our minor hurlers went out in their opening game to Offaly, this was unfortunate, and the team didn't do themselves justice on the day. This panel had put in serious work under manager Liam Dunne with the experienced Derek Mc Grath assisting along with the backroom team. The work that has been done by this group will stand to them as they move into adult teams and I want to thank everyone for all the work they put in. I want to pay special thanks to Tom Brennan who helped co-ordinate the team and attended every session along with Derek travelling from Waterford each night.

I must compliment all management teams on their adaption and changing styles of training during Covid particularly in their use of Zoom and Teams seminars.

Thanks to our Football Chairman Laurence Phelan and County Vice Chairman and Hurling Chairman Tom Clear and their committees for their hard work and time in enabling both codes at all grades to function fully..

As they say a moving Army needs to be fed and Bosco Ramsbottom deserves great credit in the way that he serviced all our teams be it at home or away.

A special thanks to Richard Downey Downey's Auto and Anthony Mallon Joe Mallon Motors for their kind sponsorship and supply of Team Kit vans and Hurling Courtesy Car.

I want to thank Alan Langton Juvenile Chairman and Sean Connolly Juvenile Secretary for their work with our Juvenile sections. This has been very difficult to try and implement their games programmes and they are still in the balance at the time of writing this.

Fergal Byron our Coaching Officer has given a comprehensive report on the great work being done with Development squads, Schools Coaching and delivery of Coach Education. I wish to compliment Mike Henchy Games Manager and his team for all their dedication. Thanks to Peter Hally and best of luck to him in his decision to change career path.

In March we were unsure if there would be any local Championships due to Covid lockdowns etc. Our Leagues fell by the wayside. We then got the green light that there would be an 11-week window for Local Championships. A meeting was arranged with all Club Chairman and it was agreed to give the 11 full weeks to clubs in order to facilitate all players in their preparation for Championships. Due to the structures and the fact that almost every club had dual players the schedule was put in place to finish all competitions on alternative weekends by October 4th, with exception of Senior Football in order to allow the County teams get some preparations.

Following this, Croke Park then allowed competitions commence two weeks earlier than originally notified, this again was discussed with clubs and it was felt that fixtures would remain as fixed to give clubs a better run in for Championship. Unfortunately, the night our first Senior Football Game was to take place the County was put into local lockdown and we lost a further 3 weekends out of the 11. Our fixtures Committee and County Secretary worked tirelessly to readjust fixtures and we were online to finish all Championships as planned by 11th of October or within days of 11th., but for Croke Park putting a stop to all competitions with immediate effect in the days leading up to this Hurling Finals weekend. This was very disappointing and we as a County felt that having complied with all regulations and having undergone a local lockdown, that if we were given the few days our competitions would have concluded, with Senior Football being the exception. During mid-October with a Level 5 lockdown in for 6 weeks, the CCC has decided to give clubs some certainty, as much as anyone really can during this pandemic and deferred all Championships until hopefully mid-January.

Some people may feel that fixtures could have been tightened up to play Football and Hurling within days of each other. I disagree with these sentiments and while hindsight is always great, I believe that every Hurler and Footballer deserves a fair crack of the whip to compete in both codes, if they so wish. We are a proud dual County competing at the highest level in both codes, one of the very few I must add. Anyone that follows both codes and the efforts a Dual Player and or a Dual Club puts in would be aware of the recovery time players require between games and the need to give as much down time as possible. We also cater for 16 Senior Football teams in our Championship. To put things into context on July 24th. when the green light was given to start, Laois had approximately 160 teams in the draws starting in their various Championships.

I must thank our CCC, County Secretary Niall Handy, Referees Administrator Darren Bracken for their hours of dedication in the administration of our games. I also want to thank all our Referees who officiated in difficult times. To Tom Jones, P.J Kelly, Gerry Kavanagh and Paschal Mc Evoy our Stadium Controllers a special thanks for their plans and actions around enabling us to play our game's. I must also mention the tremendous co-operation from all clubs and supporters that attended and hosted our games when allowed do so. I also want to thank our friends and neighbours adjoining our Stadium for their support and understanding.

Due to the restrictions on Crowd attendances we had to look at alternative ways to get our games to supporters. Our P.R. O. Paul Dargan and his committee did a fantastic job in streaming games and providing online digital programmes. Our thanks also to our local Media and Radio for also highlighting our games to the Clubs and general public.

This year we were once again delighted to be able to host Laois Ladies G.A.A and Camogie finals. Unfortunately, due to Supporter restrictions they didn't get the audience they deserved. It is always a pleasure for Laois G.A.A to showcase the talents of these Girls

and we look forward to continuing in helping to promote both codes. Congratulations to Portlaoise and O Moore's on your Championship success and I may take this opportunity to wish the Laois Camogie team all the best in their All Ireland semi-final game.

During this Covid period our Health and Wellbeing committee under the guidance of Leona Conroy have been extremely active, providing online advice and seminars to player, coaches and parents. This information is invaluable, and I would encourage all clubs to highlight the Health and Wellbeing sub section on our County website.

Our Hearings Committee under Chairman John Hanniffy and Secretary Adrienne Mc Carthy performed their duties in a most professional and balanced manner, and I believe that any person that dealt with them would concur with this.

I want to highlight the excellent workings of the current Executive who have voluntarily given up vast amount of time to Laois G.A.A. There is a good blend of new and experienced people on the Executive which works well for the future of our County. More importantly they are a good working committee with every officer contributing. The introduction of new blood is imperative to the organisation and I welcome and encourage this.

This year pushed the County to the extremes and without the services and contribution of our Secretary Niall Handy and Treasurer Martin Byrne we would be in a very dark place. Our secretary Niall Handy as everyone knows works tirelessly for the County and can regularly be seen in the office at 9 a.m. in the morning and 9 pm at night, Monday to Sunday. Our Treasurer Martin Byrne as a qualified Accountant and he put his professional qualification to use for Laois G.A.A voluntarily as usual and those skills were never more needed than this year. Our team preparation costs are increasing alarmingly with Senior Hurling costing €275,000 and Senior Football costing €250,000 at at last accounts, with 2020 seeing a comparative cost in these figures in a time when sponsorship and revenue is scarce. Finances this year have been decimated as a result of the Covid crisis and 2021 will without doubt be a difficult year financially. Hopefully we may be able to have supporters at games in February and this will help alleviate some of the drop in revenue. I believe our Treasurer and Finance Committee have done a fantastic job to keep the season going.

During all this, we progressed plans to become Irelands first Green Stadium, implementing a Biodiversity, Water Harvesting, Waste and Energy programme. Our new LED Floodlights are an immense asset to the County. We now have L.E.D lighting throughout the stadium and also in the dressing rooms areas. The change in lighting system is projected to give the County an energy cost saving of €12k per year based on usage. Our new murals in the stadium, by Artist Neil O'Dwyer, really enhance the stadium and highlights our Laois Heritage and Culture. Our policy going forward is to re-cycle as much waste as possible. This will involve the assistance and cooperation of all match day supporters throughout our grounds.

I am delighted to say that through various Grant aids from S.E.A.I, Laois Partnership, L.C.D.C, Leader, Croke Park and Leinster GAA funding the whole project has come in within budget and almost cost neutral. Special thanks to Tipp Energy for project managing the development. At this point I want to pay respect to former Laois Partnership C.E.O Anne Goodwin who passed away during the year and was always supportive of Laois G.A.A.

Our Development Officer Ger Slevin has hit the ground running and this can be seen throughout the Stadium and Centre of Excellence. Ger has also been very active with advice and assistance to all Clubs in the County and I know that there are some new developments planned to go forward.

A special thanks to our Groundsman Colm Mc Evoy and his team Adrian Tynan, Dan Sinnott, Eddie Kinsella and Pasty O'Connor for their hard work and dedication in keeping all our grounds in top shape.

I also want to thank Michael Glynn who dedicates above and beyond his time to keeping the Centre of Excellence pristine. Thank to Willie Stackpool, Audrey Kelly and Phil Stack who keep the place ticking over. Thanks to supervisors Mary Fennelly F.A.S., Adrian Mc Donald T.U.S and John Finlay R.S.S for their continued support and help

I wish to thank all our schools and teachers for their assistance and dedication in helping us promote our games. I also want to thank Supt. John Scanlon and the Gardai for their service and assistance during the year. Unfortunately, we lost some Cumann na mBunscol matches and some Cul Camps but on the plus side, we will hopefully double up some fixtures in 2021. This year we were delighted to be able to help some of our Schools host their Graduation Ceremonies in M.W. Hire O Moore park. In 2021 and we will be involved in a new coaching initiative trying to integrate more communities and increase numbers from minorities into our association. Our games manager Mike Hinchey and his coaching staff in association with Laois Integration Network will be organising a foundation Coaching coach to get more people involved.

A special congratulations to Clonaslee St Mamman's on winning the Intermediate Football final and to Ballyroan Abbey and St Lazerian's Abbeyleix on taking victory in minor football and hurling.

I must mention our County Club Draw which has been so successful and necessary for both Club and County, this year the draw achieved revenue just short of 1 million euros in sales with 700,000 going straight back to the clubs. As a former club secretary, I know only too well the importance and value of this finance in doing club business. While I am well aware of the difficulties and struggles in our communities this draw is Laois G.A.A only fundraiser and in order to continue providing the services and maintain our teams to an adequate standard and keep Clubs running it is imperative that it is promoted and is successful.

One thing that has been very difficult during Covid is the passing of some very dedicated G.A.A. people and family members. It was very hard and saddening that I as Chairman of Laois and members of our executive could not give those people and the families the expression of thanks for their services that we would have liked to extend in person. I can assure everyone that our thoughts and prayers were with you and that when the situation allows it, I intend to have a memorial at our county grounds to remember them.

Finally, I want to thank all the clubs of Laois and their officers for their understanding and support in our efforts to keep things going during 2020. Some things didn't work out due to circumstances beyond our control but when things were down, the G.A.A stood up. The participation of 48 clubs providing community services during Covid has been widely acknowledged. The "Do It for Dan" fundraiser was a tremendous effort nationally and praise must go to the organisers and contributors. To Niall, Aishling and Dan I wish you well and please be aware of the joy Dan brought to the thousands of people who were so happy while fundraising for such a worthy cause.

Peadar O Neil
Cathaoirleach Laois C.L.G.

Tuairisc an Runaí 2020

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to our “incorporeal” County Convention, whereby we can all reflect on Laois GAA Club and Inter-County affairs during what has been an extraordinarily strange year.

It has not just been for the GAA, but for society as a whole and not since 1918 has the world witnessed a pandemic of such proportions. Our overwhelming desire is that we will overcome this Covid-19 virus and that we will learn whatever lessons we can in order to minimise the risk of such an occurrence happening again. We are coming to terms with a new way of life and it's how we adjust to this “new normal” that will determine for how long. While there are many more immediate priorities in life at present, we all look forward to a day when our games and your attendance at games can resume to some normality.

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the countless efforts of our volunteers in our GAA Clubs, who have risen to the challenge during the Covid-19 Pandemic and selflessly given of their time to assist the most vulnerable and marginalised in their communities. Our members have come to the fore when needed most in every Club and in every Parish and the positivity in response to such difficulties was a testament to all within the GAA community and is one I am immensely proud of. Being in a position to offer our LOETB Centre of Excellence facilities to the HSE for the duration of most of this crisis has also given us another opportunity to support the great efforts of the HSE and other frontline staff, and we are glad they have taken us up on this offer.

It is surreal to try and write a report on our GAA year with Inter County games activities ongoing and our Club championships postponed for conclusion until in early the new year. Briefly my reflections on the year past -

SENIOR FOOTBALL

O'Byrne Cup – This competition was used on an experimental basis by the incoming management, as a get to know you exercise, and with defeats to Offaly and Meath and a narrow victory over Wexford, we exited this competition. On the recommendation of the National Fixture Review committee, this competition is unlikely to feature again, whilst never considered a prestigious tournament, it certainly did serve a purpose in preparation for Allianz League.

League – Following on from our successive promotions from Division 4 in 2018 and Division 3 in 2019, our participation in Division 2 was a huge step up and the target was basically to secure our status in this Division, although promotion would be bonus territory. In our opening League campaign prior to lockdown, we had competitive wins over Armagh and Clare, a draw with Roscommon and disappointing defeats to Cavan and Kildare. On

resumption of Inter County activities, National CCCC took the decision to complete the league competitions in an effort to provide all counties with games of a competitive nature prior to what was going to be a revised Leinster and All Ireland knockout Football Championship. The competitive nature of Division 2 meant that both promotion and relegation were still in the mix with our final two games to play. However, a disappointing defeat to Westmeath in TEG Cusack Park Mullingar, finished our promotion ambitions and a win against Fermanagh in Brewster Park was now required to avoid relegation. In a remarkable game, Laois were down to fourteen men, losing by six points with five minutes to play and in an unbelievable turnaround for the remainder of the game went on to win by seven points, victory achieved and Division 2 status secured for 2021. Unfortunately success came at a price, with the loss of our captain Kieran Lillis on a red card and automatic suspension meaning he will miss our opening championship game. This result would prove to be a great confidence booster for our upcoming championship aspirations.

The entire GAA League calendar for 2021 still remains unclear as I write this article, with the lateness in completing the 2020 All Ireland series and the ongoing uncertainty with Covid-19 pandemic being the principle reasons. There is speculation on a later spring start to our league competitions, which may see League Divisions split in two, comprising of three games each, with top two teams playing off in semi-finals and bottom two team splaying off in semi-finals for relegation. Whatever format is decided, Division 2 will have a far more competitive nature about it in 2021, with the calibre of teams looking even stronger when you look at Mayo, Meath, Cork and Down, all entering the fray. In the event of the Motion passed at Special Congress 2019 being implemented, a new Tier 2 Football competition, Tailteann Cup, will be introduced comprising of teams from Division 3 and 4 based on 2021 placings, and with the exception of the provincial finalists. This will add further spice to our 2021 league campaign, with retention of our Division 2 league status or reaching a Leinster Championship final ensuring our participation in the All Ireland and Qualifier series, while relegation from Division 2 and failure to reach a Leinster Championship final will result us partaking in the Tailteann Cup.

Championship – For the opening game in our Leinster Championship campaign we travelled to Pearse Park in Longford. In an open game of football we struggled early on, but an improved second half performance, displaying a greater determination and spirit, Laois came away with a two point victory. The win qualified us for a Leinster Senior Football semi-final versus Dublin in Croke Park, a team chasing their tenth Leinster Championship title in a row and sixth All Ireland Championship title in a row, a mammoth task ahead. In the opening half of this game, we were competitive, although our finishing was nowhere clinical enough and it was disappointing to enter half time break seven points down. In the second half, we were overwhelmed, the sky blue wave was relentless in attack with sniper like accuracy, Dublin running out deserving and facile winners to reach yet another Leinster final. In fairness management were brave and decided to take the game to Dublin, rather than enforce a blanket defence and try and potentially minimise the proportion of

a defeat. The panel is young and will certainly learn from the experience and more than understand now the efforts that need to be achieved to reach the standards of an outstanding Dublin team.

I wish to take this opportunity to compliment all our players who committed to our county during the year, particularly those in the latter half of the season whose efforts to play and train in current circumstances indeed merit special thanks. I wish to acknowledge our Covid Supervisor Brian Breen, Dr Simon Honan and the backroom team for their efforts in adherence and compliance to Covid-19 protocols in order to ensure all our players and management preparations were carried out in a safe environment.

I think it is fair to say that this present panel is in transition, with many of the “old” guard still deserving of their place and whom will hopefully continue and the younger brigade, many progressing from our relatively successful Under 20 teams from the past couple of years. Interestingly 46 different players were played across O’Byrne Cup, League and Championship, so management are more than aware of the capabilities of those that made themselves available. I think under the direction of our present management team, they have certainly the potential to be more competitive, in what will be a tough Division 2 league and with the younger player’s commitment to a comprehensive strength and conditioning programme over the coming months, they will hopefully be capable of further progression in the next couple of years.

Thanks - Our Management and backroom team are also deserving of our thanks – Mike Quirke (Manager); Eoin Kearns, Maurice Browne and Maurice Horan (Selectors / Coach); Daniel Nelligan (Goalkeeping Coach); Tom Hargroves (Strength and Conditioning Coach); Brian Breen (Liaison Officer); Liam Delaney, Niall Creery and Richard Dunne (Stats / Performance Analysis); Dr Simon Honan; Sean Gaffney (Physiotherapist) and of course Servicing Secretary Ollie Byrne, who was again ably assisted by Martin Kelly and Pat O’Sullivan.

O’BYRNE CUP

Saturday, 7th December, 2019 Round 1
McCann Park Portarlinton:
Offaly 1-17, Laois 2-12

Saturday, 14th December, 2019 Round 2
Enniscorthy: Laois 1-12, Wexford 1-11

Saturday, 4th January, 2020 Round 3
Pairc Tailteann Navan:
Meath 4-16, Laois 1-15

ALLIANZ FOOTBALL LEAGUE DIVISION 2

Sunday, 26th January, 2020 Round 1

Hyde Park Roscommon:

Laois 2-14, Roscommon 2-14

Saturday, 1st February, 2020 Round 2

MW Hire O'Moore Park:

Laois 0-16, Armagh 0-10

Sunday, 16th February, 2020 Round 3

MW Hire O'Moore Park:

Cavan 3-10, Laois 1-06

Sunday, 23rd February, 2020 Round 4

Cusack Park Ennis: Laois 1-12, Clare 1-11

Saturday, 1st March, 2020 Round 5

MW Hire O'Moore Park:

Kildare 0-15, Laois 0-10

Saturday, 17th. October, 2020 Round 6

TEG Cusack Park Mullingar:

Westmeath 1-18, Laois 0-13

Saturday, 24th. October, 2020 Round 7

Brewster Park:

Laois 3-12, Fermanagh 1-11

LEINSTER SENIOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Sunday, 8th. November, 2020

Quarter Final Pearse Park Longford:

Laois 1-16, Longford 1-14

Sunday, 15th November, 2020

Semi-Final Croke Park:

Dublin 2-23, Laois 0-07

UNDER 20 FOOTBALL

Once again a mini development league was organised pre-championship and Laois participated in the John Kerins Cup, which provided competitive games and allowed all panellists ample game time. Again I believe this was an opportunity lost at National level, for to experiment in playing an All-Ireland “Champions League” style competition, with 8 groups of 4, which would have certainly garnered interest for future fixture proposals, which will inevitably come down the line.

Our championship campaign commenced against Westmeath in MW Hire O’Moore Park on a Monday evening and similar to the previous year, extra time was again required. This ended in a further draw and for the first time in this competition, “Winner on the Day” regulations were enforced and the tie was decided on a penalty shoot-out, which Laois fortunately won. It is a tough way to lose any game and the merits are indeed debatable, but with the Club v County calendar debate ongoing and the need to eliminate replays to provide the “club” time required, it has the potential to become a regular recurrence.

Next up was Kildare in MW Hire O’Moore Park on the Friday evening, again played in torrential conditions and where Laois emerged facile winners and qualify for a successive Leinster U20 Final against Dublin again.

I have to admit I was optimistic that we would be competitive in this final, even though it was Dublin, but quite a number of our 2019 brigade were again eligible and with the experience of last year’s final behind them and more so they were playing well. For the first fifteen minutes of the game that evening in Netwatch Cullen Park, I hadn’t changed my mind. However once Dublin settled after that initial opening period, they outplayed and outscored us to emerge deserving winners. Our performance was disappointing, but the difference in pace and conditioning between the two teams was a little frightening to be honest.

I wish to thank all players who committed to this grade during the last year. There is a significant turnover in players in this grade for 2021, however management have brought together a provisional panel of players whom have committed to an athlete development programme of strength and conditioning remotely over the coming months in an effort to try and “bridge” that gap. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis with regular testing by Pauraic McEvoy and Tom Hargroves.

Further to representations from Laois, as mandated by our County Committee in 2019, this competition reverted from a May / June calendar in 2019, to complete in a February / March period in 2020. The scheduling of the competition was again raised at Congress 2020 in February, with several counties looking for it to revert back to its initial dates, and a decision was postponed until a Special Congress that was due to be held this autumn. As of yet I am none the wiser as to when the 2021 competition will be played, but I do envisage

recommendations down the line for it to revert back to an U19 competition, in line with proposals arising from the Talent Academy & Player Development Review Report, which was chaired by our own Michael Dempsey and released earlier this year. One issue that must be addressed and I believe will be in a form of motion before next Congress, will be where a player who participates in an Allianz League game, will then become ineligible to play for his U20 team in that year's competition. It was an issue that happened internally with some players involved with both Senior and U20 panels this year and no doubt undue pressure was exerted on these players when the decision came to choose a particular grade. Whilst I wouldn't be rushing to incorporate into rule, as the situation may differ from county to county based on population, my opinion is quite clear in that they should play at their own grade first, and I believe it should be a County Executive policy decision.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Eddie Kinsella (Manager) and Tom Byrne, Padraig McMahon and Seamas Lawlor (Selectors / Coach); Pauraic McEvoy (Strength and Condition under tuition of Tom Hargroves); Ross Browne (Physio); Liam Delaney (Performance Analysis) and Tom Scully (Liaison / Logistics) and Johnny Ramsbottom (Kit). The outgoing management will continue with this squad for 2021.

JOHN KERINS CUP

Saturday, 4th. January, 2020 Round 1

Manguard Plus Hawkfield CoE: Kildare 2-17, Laois 1-07

Saturday, 11th, January, 2020 Round 2

LOETB CoE: Meath 0-14, Laois 0-10

Saturday, 18th. January, 2020 Round 3

LOETB CoE: Dublin 2-10, Laois 1-10

EIRGRID LEINSTER UNDER-20 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Monday, 17th. February, 2020 Quarter-Final- AET & Penalties – Laois Win

MW Hire O'Moore Park: Laois 0-13, Westmeath 1-10

Friday 21st. February, 2020 Semi-Final

MW Hire O'Moore Park: Laois 1-07, Kildare 0-07

Friday, 6th. March, 2020 Final

Netwatch Cullen Park Carlow: Dublin 0-18, Laois 0-08

MINOR FOOTBALL

I will have to admit my full sympathy for our Minor Football panel and management team, whom are now preparing and waiting almost 12 months for competitive championship action. It is unfortunate the wait continues due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic, but hopefully again we convene for this Convention, Government restrictions will have relented for our panel to have opened their championship campaign against Carlow in MW Hire O'Moore Park. I wish to thank our players for their perseverance to date and best of luck in their championship campaign.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank our management team for their endeavours to date - Mark Bates (Manager), PJ Dempsey, Alan Abbey and Paddy Travers (Selectors / Coach); Niall Walsh and Mark Delaney (Strength and Conditioning under tuition of Tom Hargroves); Alan Dunne & Pdraig McGuigan (Physio); Eddie Mulligan (Stats); Donna Byrne (Liaison) and Johnny Ramsbotton & Trevor Riordan (Kit).

LEINSTER MINOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

DATE TBC, 2020 Quarter Final

MW Hire O'Moore Park: Laois v Carlow

SENIOR HURLING

Walsh Cup – Unfortunately a competition, our management were not keen on participating in at the time, due to the considerable injury list inherited from club championships. Thankfully Dublin agreed to a postponement of their opening game, allowing some breathing space and whilst experimental sides were played, and following a win against Carlow and defeats to Westmeath and Dublin, it was considered a worthwhile exercise. Similar to its football counterpart, this competition is likely to be consigned to history with the recommendations of the National Fixture Review committee.

League – Naturally our ultimate goal was to maintain our Division 1 status, although qualification for a league quarter final would be taken should the opportunity arise, albeit the restructuring of the Division 1 format for 2020 would make this all the more challenging. Undoubtedly all games in this league are tough, and whilst defeat to Wexford at home, followed by further defeats to Dublin in Parnell Park and Clare in Cusack Park Ennis were disappointing, our performances were certainly encouraging.

Our next game against Carlow in MW Hire O'Moore Park was targeted as the game to ensure retention of our current league status. In hindsight this game should not have been played on the evening in question, monsoon conditions and a game played in the stadium on the previ-

ous night, left the pitch virtually unplayable. However a gutsy display in tough conditions saw Laois in control for most parts of the game, and while a late Carlow rally had those who braved the conditions, on the edge of their seats until the final whistle, Laois lasted out by the narrowest of margins to secure Division 1 status again for 2021. Our final game was transferred to Nowlan Park and although suffering defeat again, the performance was once again encouraging.

Central Council approved a restructuring of Allianz League for 2020 and based on those recommendations, Laois will remain in the same Division 1B for 2021, with Antrim replacing Carlow. At the time of penning this report, the repercussions of Covid-19 pandemic on the GAA 2021 league fixture schedule are as of yet unknown, but the likelihood is of a delayed start to our League campaign. Certainly this will be welcome weather wise, and hopefully the opportunity to compete and play at this level will prove to be of huge benefit to playing in the 2021 Leinster Senior Hurling Championship.

Championship – During lockdown, the prospect of a Leinster Senior Hurling Championship or All Ireland series certainly looked bleak. However where there is a will there is a way and following approval from Government authorities, the GAA Covid-19 Advisory group and CCCC, a pathway was delivered for a return to play for our games. Our Leinster Hurling Championship reverted to a straight knock out competition, with a backdoor in the All Ireland series for beaten provincial quarter and semi-finalists, very similar to the old All Ireland Hurling Championship series a number of years ago.

The revised Leinster Senior Hurling Championship draw, seen us paired with Dublin, this time in Croke Park. I would state that preparing a team in the whole Covid-19 impacted scenario is difficult and in the week of the game, two panellists were ruled out due to being close contacts of confirmed cases, while a number of injuries attained in club championship games also hindered preparation and selection. I wish to acknowledge our Covid Supervisor Ann Barry, Dr John Paul Campion and the backroom team for their support in adherence and compliance to Covid protocols in their efforts to ensure our players and management preparations were carried out in a safe environment.

Our championship game in Croke Park was certainly a surreal experience in such an expansive stadium with no crowd. Whilst under no illusions that we were now playing at the highest level and that we would have to go out of our comfort zone to gain those extra yards, there was a hopeful optimism in the camp that we could repeat last year's heroics. In an open game of hurling, Laois showed how good they could be at stages during the game, however Dublin's first half goal was a killer and turned out to be significant, giving them a nice cushion and ultimately the difference at half time. Although our lads continued to try in vain, we never threatened on goal and a hungrier and fitter Dublin team, with some good impact off the bench, kicked for home with 10 minutes to go and deservedly avenged last year's defeat, the final scoreline possible a little harsh on our own performance.

Our Qualifier game seen us draw Clare in UPMC Nowlan Park Kilkenny, a straight knock-out game with no reprieve for the loser. Laois brought a far greater intensity to this game, than the previous Dublin match, continuing to battle throughout and following a wonderful second half performance, they were denied victory by the narrowest of margin. One would have to say but for one or two dubious refereeing decisions and some silly errors on our behalf, the game was effectively there for the taking and I have no doubt had the game progressed for another five minutes, Laois could well have potentially won this game. Great credit to our players and management for the performance and certainly proves we can be competitive at this grade.

The confirmation of format for Leinster Championship has yet to be confirmed. If our society reverts to some type of normality, it may revert to status quo for 2021, with Laois, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny and Wexford all competing on a Round Robin basis. However with the ongoing uncertainty with Covid-19, there also remains the possibility that the structures applied this year will remain in place for 2021. Whichever format, the Joe McDonagh Cup winner, as a result of a motion passed at Congress 2020, will also be included in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship 2021.

For a Kilkenny man, it must be difficult for Eddie Brennan to understand the reluctance and mindset of so many of our club players to commit to wearing the blue and white jersey of their native county, but unfortunately it continues to be a problem he experiences. One would have expected a queue to join the ranks of the Laois Senior Hurling panel, following on from the joys and tribulations of 2019 Joe McDonagh Cup success and the championship victory over Dublin, however it was not to be, and to make worse some key panellists from the previous year failed to commit for another year. From a county perspective, it is disappointing, as reality is if Laois wish to be serious in challenging the present hurling powers in years to come for provincial honours, we really need all our best hurlers on board and committed to the cause.

In saying that, I must compliment all those players who did commit to our county, and whose efforts to play and train in current circumstances indeed merit special thanks. This present panel are young and talented and under the direction of our current management team have certainly progressed. I believe that with their renewed ambition, their commitment to further conditioning is a necessity, that they are certainly capable of further progression in the next couple of years. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the co-operation and support of our clubs, particularly in the lead up to the Dublin game, where there was compromise with Clubs involved in championship semi-finals and County, with access to players in preparation for both levels.

Our thanks to Eddie Brennan and his backroom team for their outstanding work during the year and for their continued dedication to Laois Hurling, which include Tommy Fitzgerald and Niall Corcoran (Selectors / Coaching), Dave Moriarty (Strength and Conditioning); William Cuddihy and Shane O'Brien (Physiotherapy); Arthur Dunne (Nutrition); Jack Harding, David O'Brien and Diarmuid O Gallchobair (Stats and Analysis), John Paul Campion (Doctor), Pat Delaney and John Kealy (Kit), Ann Barry (Covid Officer & Servicing Secretary).

WALSH CUP

Sunday, 15th December, 2019 Round 2

Netwatch Cullen Park Carlow:

Laois 3-19, Carlow 0-22

Sunday, 5th. January, 2020 Round 3

O’Keeffe Park, Borris in Ossory: Westmeath 2-17, Laois 1-12

Thursday, 9th. January, 2020 Round 1

Parnell Park: Dublin 1-28, Laois 0-17

Allianz Hurling League Division 1B

Sunday, 3rd March, 2020 Round 1

MW Hire O’Moore Park:

Wexford 2-27, Laois 2-16

Sunday, 2nd. February, 2020 Round 2

Parnell Park: Dublin 4-18, Laois 2-17

Sunday, 16th. February, 2020 Round 3

Cusack Park Ennis: Clare 0-17, Laois 0-09

Saturday, 22nd. February, 2020 Round 4

MW Hire O’Moore Park:

Laois 0-15, Carlow 0-14

Sunday, 1st. March, 2020 Round 5

UPMC Nowlan Park:

Kilkenny 3-22, Laois 1-19

Leinster Senior Hurling Championship

Saturday, 24th. October,

2020 Quarter Final

Croke Park: Dublin 2-31, Laois 0-23

All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship

Saturday, 3rd. November, 2020

Qualifier Round 1

UPMC Nowlan Park: Clare 0-27, Laois 3-17

UNDER 20 HURLING

Our opening game in this championship was against Carlow in MW Hire O'Moore Park, which will go down in history as the first game to be played under the recently upgraded LED lighting system in the stadium. Unfortunately this was another grade impacted by Covid-19, with a further two panellists ruled out due to being close contacts on the eve of the game. In fairness preparation for this championship was further hindered by so many players involved in varying grades and codes of internal club championships.

The game itself was an eagerly contested game, an extremely tight affair with a Laois goal mid-way through the second half proving the difference between the two sides. Remarkably this was our first success in this grade of championship since 2012. The win sets up a date with Galway in the Leinster U20 Hurling Championship quarter-final sometime in the near future and likely to be confirmed after lifting of present Level 5 restrictions.

Our thanks to Enda Lyons, in conjunction with his management team of Ollie Hally, Sean Conroy and Gary Moore (Selectors / Coaching), Liam Kelly (Strength and Conditioning), Ruairi Carroll (Physio) and Martina Henneberry (Team Secretary & Covid Supervisor) for their ongoing efforts with this panel.

LEINSTER UNDER-20 FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Wednesday, 21st. October, 2020 Round 1

MW Hire O'Moore Park:

Laois 1-15, Carlow 0-15

Date TBC, Quarter Final

Venue TBC: Laois v Galway

MINOR HURLING

There was great hope for this panel at the outset, arising from progressive results and performances at academy grades, culminating in winning the Arrabawn U15 Hurling Tier 1 Shield final. With what was perceived to be a favourable draw in the Leinster Championship only increasing such expectations. Liam Dunne, involved with the panel at academy grades, was appointed manager and was assisted by recruitment of high profile coach Derek McGrath, with Ollie Quinlan as selector. I must admit that commitment, preparation and training of the panel was excellent and results in a couple of challenge games encouraging.

Our opening championship game was against Offaly in Birr. From experience playing Offaly in any grade should never be underestimated and playing them in their spiritual home of hurling in Birr, all the more so, no matter how many times you have defeated them previously. Whilst competitive for periods of the game, Laois never fulfilled the promise we know they are capable of and were wasteful up front, with a far more committed and determined Offaly team running out deserving winners. It was a disappointing performance and disappointing result and one can only hope that the experience gained here in defeat will go on to serve these lads so much better in the future as they progress to U20 and adult grades.

I wish to thank Tom Brennan in particular for his efforts in persuading Derek McGrath to invest so much of his time into the coaching of this panel and also our management team for their endeavours with this panel - Liam Dunne (Manager), Ollie Quinlan (Selector), Tim Fahey and Connie Conroy (Strength and Conditioning), Mags Fitzpatrick (Physio), James Brennan and Shane Keegan (Stats), James Gilnagh (Kit) and Johnny Fitzpatrick (Team Secretary & Covid Supervisor).

LEINSTER MINOR FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, 17th October, 2020 Round 1
St Brendan's Park Birr:
Offaly 2-18, Laois 0-12

Local Championships

Perhaps one of the easier sections of the report to write this year, with only our Intermediate Football Championship (Clonaslee St Manmans); Junior "C" Hurling Competition (Rosenallis); Minor Football Championship (Ballyroan Abbey); Minor "B" Football (Rosenallis); Minor Hurling Championship (St Lazerian's Abbeyleix) and Minor "B" Hurling (St Fintan's Mountrath) completed and I extend my congratulations to each of these successful teams.

Little did we know on the 12th March, when we were informed of the cessation of all GAA activities, the impact Covid-19 pandemic was going to have on our GAA Club Fixture calendar. To be honest there was a time during this period, that I was resigned to the fact that games activity would not return in 2020 and for the record, I was not too perturbed, as if there was even the slightest chance that a resumption of GAA activities could potentially endanger life or those of our parents or grandparents, it was certainly not worth the risk.

From lockdown, I believe my good friends, in what I will refer to as the "keyboard warrior" sector have become experts in the art of fixture scheduling and have difficulty in understanding how we experienced such difficulty in completing our fixture calendar, even

some failing to understand why we didn't use some initiative and play off the opening three rounds in the hurling championship over a ten day period. I think Club Chairpersons are aware from our meeting prior to our ratification of fixture formats and schedule, that Laois CCC and Management committee intentions from the outset were to try and prioritise our Club games activities for the period allocated and also provide a period for Inter County preparation also. For information purposes on Dual Clubs and Players, I wish to put on record that of the 48 clubs affiliated in Laois, 37 of these Clubs are either a dual club or have dual players competing in the adult grade. I know the frustration of Clubs, Players and Officials from teams remaining in championship competition and the uncertainty as to when we will be able to conclude these games. I appeal for your patience and assure you we will get the opportunity to finish them.

Just a brief outline on our calendar and the obstacles we faced:

In June, the GAA Covid-19 sub-committee issued their "Return to Play" document outlining our "new" GAA season would recommence with Club games activities on week-end of 1st August, which were to be incorporated into an eleven week period and would be followed by Inter County activities commencing mid-October, with Inter County players being allowed resume Inter County training on 14th September.

Our CCC reconvened and our first task was to declare all internal leagues in both codes null and void for 2020. As previously stated, CCC decided to provide a championship calendar for our Clubs, in a format as near to possible, as to what had been agreed by County Committee last November. It was also agreed that both the dual player and club should be protected where possible with games on alternative weekends within this calendar. Effectively we were giving Club championships priority to Inter County league and championship and at the time allowing Senior Footballers 14 days grace prior to commencement of Allianz Football League and Senior Hurlers 21 days grace prior to their opening Leinster Senior Hurling Championship game.

In order to facilitate this, hurling championships were reduced to a five round competition by eliminating quarter final games, whilst amendments to senior football championship posed greater difficulties with 16 teams and 6 rounds to complete, and it was eventually agreed round 3 games would double up with round 3 games in hurling and where a clash of dual players or clubs, games would be played mid-week. These formats and schedule were then circulated to all Clubs and contrary to some reports to Inter County managements. They were discussed at a specially convened meeting of Club Chairpersons in pods and ratified by Laois GAA Management committee in accordance with the powers vested in it by Rule 3.63, TO 2020. This would have seen all club championship games in the county conclude on the weekend of 3rd October. Following this ratification, National CCC announced that club competitions may commence a fortnight earlier. As we had agreed and circulated calendar, it was decided not to change and allow clubs the additional two weeks prepare for championship, easy be wise in hindsight, but probably a mistake.

On Friday 7th August, an evening of the opening round of the Senior Football Championship, we were informed that Laois, along with our neighbours Kildare and Offaly were to again enter into lockdown restrictions, which impacted our GAA activities for another fortnight, incorporating a further three weekends. It was back to the drawing board again and whilst we retrieved a weekend by playing Senior Football Championship mid-week, with fading evening light and necessity now for floodlit venues and the sheer glut of fixtures in all codes and all grades, it was impossible to get back on track. It was decided to conclude as many competitions as possible, with all Club Hurling championship games involving Inter County panellists to be decided on the weekend of the 10th October. The remaining Club Hurling and Football championship games to be played on the weekend of 17th October, with the exception of our Senior Football Championship semi-finals and final now having to be determined at the conclusion of our Inter County activities.

Following a mammoth effort by all involved in Laois GAA and our clubs, our schedule was ready for completion with five adult Finals to be played on the weekend of 10th October, and the remaining three adult Finals were down for decision the following weekend. On Tuesday 6th October, we received notification from headquarters that GAA were ceasing all GAA Club games with immediate effect. The reason outlined was that celebrations after games in numerous different counties and non-compliance with capacity limitations in certain grounds were not in line with Covid-19 restrictions and were impacting in the spread of the virus in communities as a result. Our Chairperson made representation to Croke Park for abstention and leniency in Laois, due to repercussions incurred from the previous internal lockdown and the impact it had on our fixture calendar, and appealed to be allowed play our finals on that weekend. Unfortunately to no avail and we were effectively punished for the misdemeanours of other clubs, outside our county. However I suppose the bottom line is public health trumps every other consideration and I can totally understand where they were coming from with Covid-9 numbers escalating rapidly at the time. With Level 5 restrictions pending until at least 1st December and no further clarity from National GAA on resumption of club games activity, CCC took decision to postpone conclusion of all our adult and underage championship until next January / February period, which while devastating for our players in remaining in club competition, at least provided some certainty on a more definitive date in the calendar.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all Clubs for their co-operation throughout the year. I don't think I was ever in more contact with our Club officials. Whilst as a county, Laois were certainly impacted by this pandemic, but definitely none more so than our Club officials, who rallied their troops early on in the play, when looking after the vulnerable and elderly in their communities. Those same officials then faced the brunt of their members during the midst of this uncertainty with the closure of their club grounds, halls, gyms and walkways during restrictions and when club games activity did resume, they had the unenviable task of distributing match day tickets among their members in games with limited capacity and worse when further restrictions resulted in games being played behind closed

doors. As we have seen in recent weeks there is very little acknowledgement for those people who take on these officer roles in a volunteer capacity, but I do salute you club officers this year for your bravery, support and leadership of your clubs. Again thanks.

2021 is around the corner and while our first task is to endeavour to conclude our 2020 competitions, which fingers crossed we will complete in January and February. Although this pandemic is not gone away, I would be hopeful that our 2021 fixture calendar will resume with our leagues in late March and our championships commencing in mid to late July. For 2021, I don't see any reason to change formats of competitions from what was initially agreed for the 2020 season, providing it is publicly safe to do so.

“Split Season”

If there is to be any good from this pandemic, it may seem that a resolution has been inadvertently found to the ongoing Club versus County crux and scheduling of games, with what now is being referred to as the “split season”. The split season approach was adopted this summer as the Association dealt with the fall out on club and county structures and also the difficulties posed by the pandemic. While the deterioration in Covid-19 cases in the community has necessitated the pausing of club championship activity in recent weeks, the much-heralded success of the decision to play the majority of club competitions before the resumption of the inter-county calendar has provoked a wider debate on the merits of the GAA perhaps adopting this ‘split season’ approach on a permanent basis.

From our perspective in Laois, I believe there was a positive response to being able to play off our club competitions while inter-county activity was suspended before resumption was allowed on September 14, with inter-county games starting again on October 17. In particular, inter-county players being free to dedicate their time to club duty made a big impact. The GAA's Fixture Review Taskforce are currently examining a model that would potentially move the Association into windows of activity that would begin intercounty competitions in the early part of the year, with All-Ireland finals brought forward and inter-county championships being potentially finished as early as July. Basically this would eliminate the present scenario of April being dedicated to club games for Inter County players.

Club league games without intercounty players are free to take place during this time and in the new normal, I would envisage those outside the Inter County match day panel of 26, would also be free to play with their clubs on those weekends. After the All-Irelands are played at an unprecedented earlier time of year, it would leave an uninterrupted window for club championships to then take place in July, August, September and part of October with the provincial club championships starting in mid-October. With the “Electric Picnic” weekend likely to be incorporated into our calendar again, this would leave a potential 14 week period for us to complete our championship calendar, prior to having our champions

in each grade ready to compete in their respective Leinster Club championships in mid-October.

Whilst traditionalists will likely oppose a July calendar for All Ireland finals, in my opinion this is a “no brainer”, and would remove any ambiguity over player availability and help create more regularity and certainty in the planning of a club fixtures programme. This proposed “split season” model is likely to become before Congress in 2021 with a motion to incorporate into rule for 2022 season, but with the continued uncertainty with Covid-19, it is likely National CCC and Management committee will implement it on a trial basis for 2021, in accordance with the powers vested in them by Special Congress.

Fixture Review Task Force – Football Championship Recommendations

This report has been circulated in recent weeks and has received a certain amount of press coverage. The Task Force has brought forward two options for a revised Senior Football Championships, which will possibly go to Congress in 2021 for implementation in 2022. Both proposals are outlined below and merit discussion with our Clubs prior to any decision being taken -

Football Championship Option 1 – 8 Team Provincial Football Championships

The first football Championship option outlined in the original Calendar Review Task Force Report, envisages a provincial structure that has as its starting point with 8 teams in each province.

The question of how to “re-balance” the Provinces was left open in the original Report. The Task Force are recommending that the two options below are discussed as part of the consultation process:

- Option 1 – Bottom 3 seeded teams in Leinster and bottom 1 from Ulster to move to Connacht/Munster (seedings to be based on finishing Allianz League positions);
- Option 2 – A Preliminary Round is introduced in the Leinster and Ulster Championships
 - Leinster – bottom 6 teams per Allianz League finishing positions play against each other in a preliminary Round of the Leinster Championship - the 3 winners continue in the Leinster Championship; the 3 losers are drawn to Munster (2 teams) and Connacht (1 team);
 - Ulster – bottom 2 teams per Allianz League seedings play off against each other in the preliminary round of the Ulster Championship. The winners continue in the Ulster Championship; the losing team participates in the Round Robin Connacht Championship.

The other key features of this proposal are:

- The national football league would retain its current timing and structure. Finishing positions could be used to determine seedings in the Provincial Championships;
- Each provincial championship would consist of 8 teams:
 - Each province to have two groups of four teams, who would be seeded from the National league and who would play each other in a round robin system guaranteeing a minimum of three group stage games for all teams;
 - The winner of each group would progress to the relevant Provincial final, the 2nd and 3rd placed teams (16 in total) would progress to the qualifiers;
 - The fourth placed team in each group would participate in a knock-out Tailteann Cup (if they are a Division 3 or 4 team only).
 - The structure of the All Ireland Qualifiers would be:
 - Qualifiers Rd 1 – 2nd placed teams v 3rd placed teams (8 games)
 - Qualifiers Rd 2 – Winners of Round 1 drawn against each other
 - Qualifiers Rd 3 – Beaten Provincial Finalists v Rd 2 Winners
 - All Ireland Quarter Finals – Provincial Champions v Rd 3 Winners.

A final change to the original report is that New York would play in the Tailteann Cup under this proposal.

Football Championship Option 2 – League structure for Championship

The second new option for the Football Championships would see the repositioning of the National Football League to the Summer months as a basis for the football Championship while playing Provincial Competitions in the February/March period.

The changes suggested for the All Ireland Championships are:

- The 5th placed team in Division 1 rather than the 4th placed team in Division 2 would qualify for the preliminary All Ireland Quarter Finals (Sam Maguire Cup); *Reasoning:* To ensure greater reward for teams who have qualified for Division 1 on merit
- The Tailteann Cup would be expanded to include all Division 3 and 4 teams, with the exception of the top placed teams in Division 3 and 4 (who automatically qualify for the preliminary quarter finals of the Sam Maguire championship);

- This requires the addition of preliminary quarter finals in the Tailteann Cup. *Reasoning:* To ensure all Division 3 and 4 teams (except the Division winners) get a chance to participate in the Tailteann Cup;
- The top team only in Division 3 will be promoted automatically to Division 2 for the following year along with the Tailteann Cup Winners (presuming they are a Division 3 team). If a Division 4 team wins the Tailteann Cup, the 2nd placed team in Division 3 will be the team promoted to Division 2 for the following year;
- The bottom two teams in Division 3 will be relegated (Exception: if one of the bottom two teams wins the Tailteann Cup; in those circumstances, the team that finished 3rd from bottom will be the relegated team);
- The top team in Division 4 will be promoted automatically to Division 3. The 2nd placed team will also be promoted (Exception: if a Division 4 team other than the top two wins the Tailteann Cup, they will be promoted to Division 3 along with the Division 4 winners) *Reasoning:* To ensure greater reward for Division 3 or 4 teams in winning the Tailteann Cup;

In the Provincial Competitions in February and March, the following changes are suggested:

- Leinster Championship to consist of 1 x Round Robin group of 6, 1 x Round Robin group of 5;
- Ulster Championship to consist of 1 x Round Robin group of 5, 1 x Round Robin group of 4

Reasoning: Avoids having to allocate teams to a different province; does not impact on the time needed to play these competitions.

The Tailteann Cup option under this proposal has also been updated:

- To consist of 15 teams (New York and all Division 3 and 4 teams except the Division winners);
- To be played on a knockout basis;
- Preliminary Quarter Finals (7 games plus 1 bye), Quarter Finals, Semi Finals and Final;
- If a Division 3 team, outside of the two automatically promoted teams, wins the Tailteann Cup they will be promoted to Division 2 for the following year; the team 3rd from bottom in Division 2 would be relegated in such a scenario);

Referees and Disciplinary Issues

I want to take this opportunity to thank our Referees and our Match Officials for their assistance and co-operation in completing our Fixture programme to date. Due to the condensed nature of this year's GAA Club season, we have never completed as many games in such a short period of time, sometimes 25 to 30 games on any individual day at the weekend. I have stated before our referees have an onerous task and it is as simple as this without them, we wouldn't have any games. In 2020 they certainly stood up to the mantle, with many doubling up on games and other official duties in the same day, just simply to get the games played.

46 officials completed the annual inservice training induction and also participated in the required Garda Vetting and Code of Best Behaviour early in the year. While other practices which have become normal, such as Rules and Fitness Testing, Referee Assessments and plans for regular dvd meetings on live games incidents were all shelved due to Covid-19 restrictions. These are areas that are essential to the development of our referees and match officials and must be included in our pathway for future Referee development. I do believe there is an onus on a referee in all games to try and at least get the "big" decisions correct and from what I witnessed this year it is an area still open to significant improvement with some of our officials.

Unfortunately, there continues to be an escalation and an increasing lack of respect displayed by some of our Club Officials / Mentors / Supporters and Players towards Referees and their Officials. Our county have dedicated GAA men who are doing their best to serve their county and the association and as stated earlier without them, our games could not continue. The complexity of GAA rules ensures that they will not get every decision right, but they do not deserve the level of verbal and sometimes threatening abuse that is being meted out to them. CCC has tried several means to resolve this ongoing crisis, from fines to individual suspensions and this year decided to adopt a different approach, by suspending club mentors and aggressors in the various clubs reported for this behaviour until they have renewed their Garda Vetting, Code of Best Behaviour course and produced certificate of completion of their respective Coaching course, all requisite I add to being a mentor with an underage team. This information on completion must then to be submitted to our Children's Officer, prior to resuming mentor duties. It is early days but I think it is potentially a method to eradicate such behaviour.

I again make my annual recruitment appeal and I am requesting each Club to least make an honest effort in the coming months to source at least one Referee, who they believe to be both competent and suitable for training next January. There are quite a lot of Clubs whom have no active referee at present and the time is fast approaching where some penalty will have to be imposed on such Clubs.

Our Referee Administrator Darren Bracken and his Committee consisting of Tom Clear, Laurence Phelan, Brian Allen, Vincent Dowling, Alan Langton, Sean Connolly and Jody Conway are also deserving of our thanks for their efforts and I have no hesitation in admitting that this is the most difficult and thankless position in Laois GAA administration. I must also acknowledge Audrey Kelly and Phil Stack in the office for their efforts in administering the work of this committee. This was Darren's first year in his capacity as Referee Administrator and whilst it was without doubt a baptism of fire, he certainly has risen to the challenge and having the co-operation and support of his referee colleagues in ensuring that all scheduled games were played with a match official was a great achievement under the circumstances.

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

MW Hire O’Moore Park in any normal year is one of our main sources of revenue from rental income received from Leinster and Central Council games, as well as our local gate receipts. Unfortunately the Covid-19 crisis ensured that almost all our local club games were played with limited capacities or behind closed doors, resulting in little or no income from gate receipts. While in recent times we have hosted two Leinster Senior Football Championship quarter-finals and an All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship Round 2 game, which in normal years would have created tremendous revenue, but much less in current circumstances. Nevertheless we are thankful for hosting such games and the stadiums exposure for such matches certainly supports MW Hires sponsorship input and also that of our other pitch-side advertisers. I wish to acknowledge the support of our local Gardai when required on match days, our Event Controller Tom Jones, Safety Officer PJ Kelly, Deputy Event Controller Wayne Fox, Chief Stewards Jody Conway, Frontline Stewards Jim Morrin, Connie Dunne, Andrew Broderick, Danny Gorman, Mick Holohan, Eddie Kelly, Mick Kelly, Ollie Byrne and most importantly our numerous voluntary stewards, without whose co-operation and support we wouldn't be able to host such games.

The Management Committee of Laois GAA undertook a major project development in the grounds during the past six months with the stadium becoming the first “Green” GAA stadium in the country. This initiative arose due to the fact that approximately 20 bulbs required to be replaced in our existing floodlights, with an estimated cost of €20k received for such works and potential unavailability of further replacements in the future. Further to investigative works, we contacted SEAI in relation to grant funding for retro-fitting lighting systems, while our Chairperson informed us of potential Leader funding for energy renewable projects. Plans were progressed and Tipperary Energy Agency were engaged to project manage the development, which included the retrofitting and upgrading of floodlighting and stadium lighting to LED and our Chairperson pressed ahead with an application for grant funding towards the same and in also implementing a biodiversity programme into the stadium. We were successful in sourcing funding for the entire project from SEAI,

Leader and both Leinster and Central Council. The tendering process was conducted by Tipp Energy and an award of retrofitting tender was given to Seamus Byrne Electrical Carlow and biodiversity to Colm McEvoy Pitch Maintenance, Brian Gaynor Green Pine Consultants and Neil O'Dwyer Murals.ie. The entire project is now complete at a total cost of almost €400k, with grant funding of €380k being in the process of drawn down, leaving a shortfall of €20k to Laois GAA. The added bonus is an expected annual saving of €12k on our energy bills. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the aforementioned contractors, John Hassett and Chris Noonan Tipperary Energy Agency, Peter O'Neill and Jennie Collier Laois Partnership (Leader) and both Leinster and Central Council for their assistance with this project.

The completion of our "LOETB" Centre of Excellence has proved to be a tremendous benefit for the preparation of our Inter County panels and talent academies, with excellent pitches playable throughout the year and our state of the art gym available for core and development work. Indeed such is the demand for use of the centre during the year, from our clubs, our sister associations camogie and ladies football, post primary schools and third level and other inter county teams, that additional pitches are really required to try and satisfy the demand. I would like to acknowledge the support of Seamus Fitzpatrick and Philip Bowe in Heywood Community School, whose facilities are also available to us when required in such overflow situations. When MW Hire O'Moore Park was out of action due to the floodlighting development, our "LOETB" Centre of Excellence was also successfully used to host floodlit championship games in all grades and codes. Further improvements to the facilities during the year has seen the goalmouth areas on Pitches 1 and 2 astro turfed, installation of a scoreboard to cover Pitch 1 and 2 and purchase of two portable adult goalposts.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our Clubs who supported our Club Crest initiative and I am delighted to announce that 44 of our 48 affiliated Clubs now have their Club Crest adorned along the hallway in the "LOETB" Centre of Excellence, a project which I believe further enhances the new building and importantly returned in excess of €17k. Special thanks to following Clubs – Annanough, St Lazerian's Abbeyleix, Arles Kilcruise, Arles Killeen, Ballinakill, Ballyfin, Ballylinan, Ballyroan Abbey, Barrowhouse, Borris in Ossory, Borris in Ossory Kilcotton, Camross, Castletown, Clonad, Clough Ballacolla, Colt, Colt Shanahoe, Courtwood, Crettyard, Emo, Errill, Graiguecullen, Kilcavan, Killeshin, Mountmellick, O'Dempsey's, Park Ratheniska, Park Ratheniska Timahoe, Portarlington, Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Rathdowney Errill, Rosenallis, Shanahoe, Slieve Bloom, Spink, St Fintan's Mountrath, St Joseph's, Stradbally, The Harps, The Heath, The Rock, Timahoe, Trumera.

There are many future project developments required and need to be reviewed and prioritised in coming months and years, including installation of fibre broadband, replacing old tv recording building on terrace; upgrading and replacement of stand seats; upgrading

and reviewing disability area and essential works required on stand roof. The progression of any of these projects in 2021 will entirely depend on our finances.

I must pay tribute to our Groundsman Colm McEvoy for the pristine condition in which he continues to keep our pitches in both the stadium and training centre. It is common knowledge that we experienced difficulties with the playing surface in MW Hire O'Moore Park earlier in the year due to a nematode problem within the soil structure. It is an issue that requires ongoing treatment and thankfully there has been significant improvement in recent weeks.

Our Caretakers are deserving of our recognition and thanks, Willie Stackpool for ensuring both OMP and CoE grounds are opened and closed for games and training, whilst Mick Glynn supervises the organisation of meetings and cleaning of CoE on a daily basis. I wish to acknowledge the work of our TUS and PCE Group Scheme team, consisting of Adrian Tynan, who retired from the scheme in recent weeks, Dan Sinnott and Eddie Kinsella for their continued upkeep of the stadium during the year. Our Development Officer Ger Slevin is "hands on" in his role and ensures a daily work plan is in place for the entire facility.

Finance

Our financial accounts at the time of writing this article are with our auditors, Mazars, and are unlikely to show a surplus for our 2019/20 Financial Year.

As I have referred to previously it has been an extremely difficult year in relation to our finances and I wish to take this opportunity to thank our many creditors for their co-operation and patience in regard to late payment of their accounts. The "lockdown" arising from the pandemic seen the following planned fundraisers cancelled "GAIN / GLANBIA" Punchestown Race Day in April, "Topcon" Golf Classic in June, Greyhound Race Night in October. The behind closed door nature and at time limited capacities for our internal championships resulted in a deficit of €230k in our Gate Receipts from the previous year. We lost our annual Central Council grant funding for Hurling Development Fund (€40k), Hurley and Helmet Scheme (€12k), Coaching and Games and Talent Academies (€65k) and a shortfall in our Central Council Commercial Income grant of €55k. At present time, I do not know if any of these aforementioned grants will be re-instated for 2021. Our sponsorship income also took a hit, but thankfully all remain committed for 2021. Fortunately we were lucky enough to have our All County Club €130 Draw prior to lockdown, which potentially saved us all from financial disaster and aligned with the unexpected revenue surplus from streaming, and but for both these incomes, the situation would be a lot bleaker. I will admit there were savings incurred insofar as we did not have the same expenditure on our Inter County teams and also through the Government wage subsidy.

Normally at this time of year, budgets for 2021 would be complete and management reviews complete and appointments in place, but there is a deep frustration in not knowing the level of grant funding that will be available to us for next year and also what, if any progression there is in the “new” GPA deal, which may have significant consequences on our finances as well. The introduction of the “split season” will effectively be a saving insofar as inter-county season will be reduced from potentially a 32 week calendar to possibly 24 weeks. Our increased loan commitment and a review of our revenue and costs clearly show that an increased focus on cost reduction and cost avoidance is needed. We have no option but to “cut our cloth to measure” to ensure we can sustain our activities and remain self-sufficient in the future.

I remember reading an article during the shutdown by Connacht Council CEO John Prenty where he describes of an opportunity now “to halt the runaway train that inter-county teams have become” and “avoid a disaster” for the Association in the near future. One of our Associations most experienced and respected administrators, he asked County Board Officials to reflect on – Do we need to be training as much? Do we need as many people involved in backroom teams? Is the inter-county game the be-all and end-all? If the GAA championships are played like this year, played off in a much shorter period of time, he asks the question – Why can’t we do that every year? He goes on to state that a large part of the reason is the “industry” that has grown up around our inter-county teams, outlining that GAA at inter-county level is a professional game played by amateurs now. He goes on to state – “Look at all the volunteers that run the association on county boards, who are being told by professionals and people involved with teams that they want more and more and more. I think all this pressure and all these demands will take a toll on people’s physical and mental health. And it’s only when something like this pandemic hits that you start to wonder – “What’s it all about! The GAA is just a sport at the end of the day”. He went on to say – “This could come back next year and where will we be then? Anyone who thought the GAA should be semi-professional will have got a rude awakening in the last few weeks. You can’t spend €30m preparing county teams every year and keep going the way we’ve been going. I think we should go back to energising our clubs. The clubs should be the focus of our community right across the country all the time. The values of the GAA are shining through at the moment, clubs helping the vulnerable and people who need help in their communities. That has always happened but now everyone is seeing it, and that will stand the GAA in good stead when this is all over”. I included this article for reflection purposes, and when you think of it there is so much truth in it!

Our All County Club County €130 Draw continues to be our primary fundraising activity and is essential to both our County and Clubs wellbeing. In 2020, our Clubs benefitted to the tune of €732,000, while the County profited to almost €115,000. This Draw continues for 2021, and we have also incorporated a functionality to allow club members or supporters to purchase these tickets online, via www.laoisgaa.ie. Tickets are now available

for collection from Laois GAA Office and I would again appeal for your co-operation in making this your Clubs primary fundraiser for 2021.

Financial Governance is an issue which arisen in other counties and indeed other sports and is an area our treasurer is very conscious of. Central Council has announced in recent weeks the appointment of an Audit and Risk Committee in every county. The objective of this committee is to support the County Treasurer and County Management Committee in all financial matters and its role is primarily one of oversight, whereby it's remit will include the promotion and monitoring of good corporate governance and risk management practices by Laois GAA and all its subsidiaries, which may include anybody that raises funds in the name of Laois GAA. As a follow up to this at club level, I would remind clubs the importance of submitting their annual financial year end accounts to Laois GAA, in accordance with their Club Constitution.

I think we are all grateful that Inter County Gaelic Games returned, primarily for the comfort it provided and morale it built among GAA communities. It gave us something to focus towards and most importantly something to watch. I think we all know elderly people in our community and indeed not so elderly, that it gives them a lift of having games to watch at the weekend. Our Government were primarily involved with GAA headquarters in promoting the All Ireland series and insisting that it must proceed. I would like to acknowledge and thank the government as a whole and in particular the Department of Sport and Sport Ireland for the financial package made available to the GAA. Laois GAA without this support and these funds would literally not have been able to afford to participate in Inter-county competitions in recent months. It is anticipated that some of this funding will also make its way to support our Club units in coming months and whilst we are awaiting official confirmation on this matter, I would envisage it coming in some type of rebate for 2021.

Our Cisteoir Martin Byrne will outline in more detail our income and expenditure in our Financial Accounts in his presentation to Convention. Many of our members and clubs maybe unaware, that Martin is a highly valued member of the GAA National Finance Committee and had a major influence in highlighting the plight of our Clubs and Counties during this pandemic and was instrumental in the distribution of these financial supports. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Martin for his continued expertise and professionalism in this area and also for his commitment and dedication to Laois GAA, all I must state on a volunteer basis.

“Foireann”

The GAA Games Management System or Servasport, as it is probably more referred to, is being replaced with a new system called Foireann (which is the Irish word for Team), with this communication having been circulated to all Club Officers in recent weeks. This system provides basic functionality for registering members and for managing competitions.

It is intended that this new system will bring a better functionality for both Clubs and their members including:

- Online Membership Subscriptions - Clubs can choose to make their Membership Subscriptions available to purchase online from anywhere on their mobile, tablet or desktop device, via the new Games Management System;
- Communications - Simple processes for communicating with individual teams or other contacts are provided. Individual messages can be sent for free in a manner compliant with GDPR and Children First legislation. Functionality will also allow recipients complete their Health
- Scheduling of Club Events – Clubs will have the ability to schedule events (training, matches, fundraisers etc.) for individual teams or group members. Members will have accessibility to let their mentor know if they will be attending and attendance records can be marked by coaches to simplify tracking and to help with contact tracing if required;

The recent regulatory changes (GDPR and Children First Legislation), Covid Guidelines, Insurance and Player Requirement all contribute to the already heavy workload of Club Volunteers. This new Games management System has been designed to ease that workload by providing better technology and simpler processes that have compliance, best practice and efficiency built in. It is intended additional functionality such as Affiliations, Competition Entry, Challenge Game Approvals, Electronic records of Teams, Substitutions and Electronic Match Reports will be delivered on this system in time.

As a Club Secretary or Registrar involved in managing your club’s Membership and Registrations, you will be one of the main beneficiaries of the improvements. Much of the administrative work that you previously had to complete has been automated and there is much less data entry or data validation for you to do. You can choose not to utilise the new functionality, without impacting the existing processes, should you wish to do so.

Further communications with Club Officers will be issued over the coming weeks with specific details on actions required from clubs in advance of November 30th and what is needed to utilise the new system from herein.

Corporate Trusteeship

I know I have referred to the Corporate Trusteeship in previous reports, but another gentle reminder following the Leinster Council Club Audit survey earlier this year. There is now requirement for all Clubs to update their trustees and this is now a genuine option for Clubs when considering appointment of Trustees to Clubs.

The Corporate Trustee is a separate legal entity, a Trust Company, called “Iontaobhas Corparáideach Chumann Lúthchleas Gael Teoranta”, set up by the GAA. The Trust Company holds the property for and on behalf of the Club. Clubs can now opt to hold property through the Corporate Trustee. Holding property through the Corporate Trustee does not affect the ownership in any way but can have advantages in the way of continuous amendments to the title is avoided when trustees die or retire. This will save on Legal costs to the Club. This also takes the pressure off individual Trustees and avoids the publishing of names should court proceedings take place. The Corporate Trustee is optional.

Our new Training Centre is held in this Trust Company and as part of compliance with our A.I.B. loan, O’Moore Park trusteeship is also being transferred into this Trust Company. In future where there is a requirement for change to Club Declaration of Trusts, Provincial and County representation will also be through this Corporate Trust Company. There are three options available to clubs:

OPTION 1 – Clubs may elect to do nothing and to continue to hold Club property through personal Trustees.

OPTION 2 – Clubs may elect to introduce a partial change in that case property is held by a combination of personal trustees and the Corporate Trustee.

OPTION 3 – Clubs may elect to have property held only through the Corporate Trustee.

Should Clubs want to know more information or wish to appoint the Corporate Trustee, they should contact either myself or Michael Reynolds in Leinster Council, prior to making any arrangements with solicitors.

Local Media

Our games in Laois got more than their fair share of coverage during the year and for this I thank our local press - Laois Today, Laois Nationalist and Leinster Express and their various correspondents. Although I may not always be in favour of everything they produce and state, I think once it has been researched and is accurate, that we are indeed fortunate to have press personnel, who are passionate about Gaelic games and play a role in spreading our message and promoting our games. Alf Harvey and Denis Byrne both do a magnificent

job on photographs and enhance the work of the scribes. Our PRO Paul Dargan further compliments this with his match day photo albums which too are very well received.

Laois GAA TV was an initiative from Michael Egan and endorsed by Laois GAA, which following dialogue with Paul Dargan and his committee, we used to front the live streaming of our championship games and which also promoted our games by way of highlight coverage of the games online during the week. I want to take this opportunity to thank Paul Dargan and Michael Egan for firstly making this happen and it had happen to fast, with confirmation of streaming only happening in the days leading into our first championship game. I must say the quality of the service was excellent, with the one exception being the day of Storm Alex, and for this I must compliment John Moynihan All Rounder Sport and his team of various commentators and co-commentators, which included Damien Carter, Killian Whelan and Pat O'Sullivan. In total we streamed almost 50 games, which returned a revenue profit of in excess €55k, which we certainly had not budgeted for at the outset, where the initial intention was just to provide a service for our members to watch their clubs playing. It is an initiative Leinster Council GAA is considering expanding and exploring, and whilst exemption was permitted this year under the unusual circumstances we found ourselves, it has the potential to be inhibited in the future under the terms of the National broadcasting deals.

Our website, www.laoisgaa.ie, was finally been upgraded earlier this year by LD2 and I think and hope is functional for all our GAA requirements. Our Fixture Booklet is an essential requirement for all our Club officials, which as a result of my experiences this year, will now be incorporated and carry the requisite information on our new website, rather than booklet format. The Laois GAA Bible, a vast publication of all Laois GAA Club and Intercounty results up to and including 2019, compiled and researched by John Phelan has also been included in a section of our new website. As previously stated it will also be available for purchase of €130 All Club County Board draw tickets.

We continue to embrace social media with 31,000 Twitter Followers, 12,719 Facebook Fans and 8,597 on Instagram. Almost all our Inter County and local Senior Championship games are carried live on Twitter. Social Media is a powerful communication tool and when used in the appropriate manner it delivers the message to our vast audience, unfortunately however it also provides a platform for self-informed trolls or clowns to insult our players, mentors and officials whom are amateurs and volunteers representing their county to the best of their ability.

I believe the ongoing work of Eoin Culleton in compiling a detailed record analysis of all Laois GAA Intercounty teams is deserving of mention and you will regularly see snippets of his work appearing on twitter during Intercounty season. All our website and social media work is a tribute to the tremendous work of our PRO Paul Dargan and his PR Committee.

Coaching and Games

While Fergal will deal with Coaching and Games more comprehensively later in his report, I would like to pay tribute and acknowledge the work of our Games Manager Mike Henchy and his GDA team consisting of Donie Brennan, Jason Coffey, recent recruit Conor Shannon and not forgetting Peter Hally, who took a career break during the year and intends returning to us in 2021. Since Mike took on this role, he has worked tirelessly on issues arising from the Strategic Review report and comprehensively engaged with Clubs in their Underage sectors in Coach Education and delivery of TURAS Club support programmes.

During lockdown, C & G team adapted rapidly to the new order of things, with their support for Clubs and Coaches shifting seamlessly from the pitch to the PC. It was no easy task, but the uptake from our Club Coaches was exceptional and I hope all benefitted greatly from this experience in a new learning environment.

It amazes me, when your county suffer a loss and you hear the comments from our officials and supporters about getting former sporting heroes involved in our academy squads and intercounty set ups and that this is the answer to all our woes. It is an area that was raised in the Strategic Review document and is an issue I want to put on record in both codes, where a select number of people put together a list of former hurlers and footballers, many who played with our county, and also included quality coaches that we were aware of. From a vast list I think totalling almost 80 potential volunteer coaches and mentors and whom when contacted by our Coaching Officer and or Games Manager, the reply was repetitive, inability to commit or they had already committed to a Club team. When that desire to help out with your county is not forthcoming, it is disappointing and makes life more difficult and is the main reason I want to express a special thanks to our Talent Academy Mentors who did answer the call and whom are working tirelessly with our academies and are charged with bringing forward the next generation in both codes. All our academies have being introduced to athlete development programmes under the tuition of Jason Coffey. My thanks to: U14 Football – Sean O’Shea, Ger Slevin, Fergal Byron, Chris Finn and Brian Brennan; U15 Football - Gordon Lawlor, Eamonn O’Connell, Oisín Cawley and PJ Kelly; U16 Football – Johnny Irwin, Darren Hennessy, Donie Brennan and Mike Henchy; U14 Hurling – Eddie Downey, John Joe Dowling, Shane Maher, Brendan Phelan and Tom Moloney; U15 Hurling - Declan Qualter, Tadgh Doran and Gareth O’Brien; U16 Hurling – Damien Lynch, Dave McKelvey and Matthew Collier.

Our Under 17 Hurling and Football grades, or Minor as more commonly referred to, are proposed to become more player development focused as recommended by the Talent Academy and Player Development Report adopted by Central Council in late 2019. It is planned U17 shall now be the final grade in the player development programme currently known as the academy squad programme and it is intended to build on the success of the Celtic Challenge style format, a successful hurling initiative at U16 grade, and seek to ex-

pand the structure of this programme. The purpose is to provide a more balanced games programme with counties getting the opportunity to participate at their own level and win a national competition at this level. The intention is to provide an increased number of players at this grade, thereby reducing deselection at younger grades, which I'm sure will provoke much debate in our county and counties of similar population or less. If successful, this programme will be the responsibility of Coaching and Games committee.

The schools of Laois both Primary and Secondary deserve our thanks for the work they do to promote our games within their jurisdictions. We have developed an excellent relationship with Cumann na mBunscol who do tremendous work in our primary schools.

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

Sponsors

I wish to extend our sincere gratitude to Mattie Walsh and his company MW Hire Group for their generous sponsorship of all our County teams. MW Hire has been part and parcel of Laois GAA now since 2010 and was renewed last year to include the naming rights for O'Moore Park stadium until 2022. I sincerely hope his company will get the exposure they deserve and desire from our association with them.

Our thanks to Ted Berry and his company The Magni Group for their continued support as our associate jersey sponsor. This sponsorship will also continue for a further three years.

Our Championships and Leagues are kindly sponsored by Laois Shopping Centre and again we are entirely appreciative of Kevin Doyle and his company for their generous sponsorship.

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

Our appreciation and thanks are also extended to –

- O'Neill's, our official gear sponsors, and my thanks to Tony Towell and Carol Carr for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the year. This sponsorship deal is in place until 2022;
- LOETB (Laois Offaly Educational Training Board), sponsors of our Centre of Excellence, a sponsorship package which has been extended to 2021;

- Downey’s Autostop, suppliers of our kit vans in both Football and Hurling and hurling courtesy car and will continue for 2021;
- ENVA, local company joining our sponsorship ranks next year, who will carry their brand on our Talent Academies and I wish to acknowledge Richard Kennedy for his support in sourcing this sponsor;
- Joe Mallon Motors, suppliers of our football courtesy car and will continue for 2021;
- Colgan Sports, for their support of our “Club Laois” shop royalties;
- GAIN / Glanbia, Training Pitch Sponsorship;
- Tom Brennan, Trivium Vet / Q1 Scientific, Training Pitch Sponsorship;
- Cathal Jackson, Training Pitch Sponsorship;

and finally to all companies and persons who contributed to Laois GAA in some type of sponsorship during the past year.

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

Strategic Review 2018-2020

Our Strategic Review was launched in January 2018 and covered the period up to and including this County Convention. I was a strong advocate of this Strategic Review and in acknowledging that there is a lot of good about the GAA in Laois, I believed the review was necessary in that there are a lot 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.

I am delighted to state that a large number of the recommended priority actions highlighted in the Strategic Review have been implemented and in particular in the area of Coaching and Games, which are highlighted later in this Convention report and while that sector have experienced huge difficulties in the past year due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the frameworks are in place and the highlighted actions will be implemented.

It is of course a working document and there is more to be done, and with without doubt the “elephant in the room” being the recommendation for a second club (specifically for juvenile players only) to be established in Portlaoise at the Knockmay/Mountmellick Road side of the town. Laois GAA representatives met with Leinster Urban / Rural Sub Committee in

August 2018 and arising from this meeting, a further meeting which included Club representatives from Portlaoise, Ballyfin, Clonad, Park Ratheniska and The Heath was organised, with the Portlaoise Urban project initiated. This project incorporates the coaching of 2,000 children in primary schools in the Portlaoise environ and in time it was hoped that this will be a feeder unit to all the adult clubs in Portlaoise and environs. Unfortunately Covid-19 scuppered advancement of this project and whilst Clonad were enthusiastic to embrace, I do not believe it has the support of all other the Clubs and whilst this is a longterm project, I am not convinced it is going to be the platform intended to provide all the children in this urban area a club games programme into the future.

I would suggest that a further Strategic Review process be considered to focus our direction on achievable goals and objectives to address the fundamental strategic challenges we are likely to face in the coming months and year.

Independent Teams and Playing Restrictions

Clubs will find a motion before them this evening to amend our Byelaw 7, which effectively deals with “Permission to Play”. Rule 6.8, T.O. 2020, which effectively deals with allowing permissions for players from an exclusive football club play with a dual club, or vice versa, subject to restrictions in County Byelaws, was amended at Congress a number of years ago and as a county we hadn’t updated our Byelaws accordingly. The issue arose during a case taken to the DRA, earlier in the year and it is a matter of just getting our house in order. I think the revised text is explanatory and fair.

Central Council also ratified a guidance document on Independent Teams in late 2019, which related to the responsibilities involved with Independent Teams in regard to governance, finance, child safeguarding and registration. In our society today, the safety of our children and compliance with Child Legislation has never been more important, whilst from my experience finance and governance has always been an issue that has arisen with Independent Teams. This has been incorporated into this Byelaw amendment as well, whereby the onus is now on each Club to make an application on behalf of their players to form an Independent Team or play with an Underage Team, in accordance with Rule 6.8, Exception 1, T.O. 2020. All applications must be agreed by the Adult Club Executives and submitted to CCC before 31 January and must where necessary include agreed Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Designated Liaison Person, Children’s Officer and members of this Independent Team or Underage Club sub-committee.

It has also been decided to tidy up our Transfer Byelaw also, with the only real amendments being the removal of the criteria “Proximity to Club base”, and also to include the wording whereby a player transferring from an exclusive club to a dual club, must transfer for both codes.

Camogie and Ladies Football

I want to acknowledge the role of our sister organisations in their promotion of our games, Ladies Football and Camogie. Both had progressive years, with our Ladies Football just falling short on scoring difference to advance to the semi-finals of the All Ireland LGFA Intermediate Championship, whilst our Laois Camogie team lost out to Antrim in the All Ireland Intermediate Camogie semi-final. In recent years there has been a greater level of co-operation with both associations, both have been afforded the opportunity to play their respective adult county finals in O'Moore Park for the past three years and I want to congratulate their respective senior champions Portlaoise in LGFA and O'Moores in Camogie. Both organisations use our offices for their meetings at no cost. It is a relationship we will continue to promote and allow the use of our facilities whenever available.

Na Mairbh

Every year sees the passing of some great GAA people and this year has been no exception. As a people and in particular a GAA community, we do the funeral rituals very well, but so much of what was once the normal has been taken from funerals and has proven to be a source of great difficulty for bereaved families during this pandemic. Simply to be in attendance and to shake hands, a gesture that was so associated in reaching out to the bereaved in times of death, was lost during the year we have experienced. On behalf of Laois GAA I would like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathy to the following families that contributed so much to our association at both club and county and readily come to mind –

Eddie Egan, Arles Kilcruise; Joe Mahon, Breda Deegan, Peter Dunne, Arles Killeen; Timmy Sheehan, Austin Stacks Tralee; Ber Devaney, Ballyfin; Annie Irwin, Darragh Fennell, Ballyroan Abbey; Seanie Hanrahan, Sean Egan, Borris in Ossory; Dan Culleton, Jim Delaney, Camross; Declan Doocey, Castletown; John Fitzpatrick, Clonad; Paddy Cleere, Clough Ballacolla; Lester Ryan, Clara (former Coaching & Games Officer in Laois); Pat Scully, Killeslin; Liz Bolton, Jimmy Scully, Graiguecullen; Paddy Molloy, O'Dempsey's; Paddy Rankin, Park Ratheniska; Christy Smith, Portarlinton; Sean Mullins, Billy Bunyan, Joe Ryan, Portlaoise; Jimmy Rafter, Harry Wynne, Con Browne, Rathdowney Errill; Joe "Barber" Conroy, Noel Conroy, Rosenallis; Tom Delaney, Slieve Bloom; Jim Fitzpatrick, Spink; Danny Delaney (former Laois GAA Vice Chairperson), Brenda Corcoran, Frank Byrne, Stradbally; Freddie Townsend, The Harps; Murt Treacy, Richard Booth, The Heath; John Dalton, Ted Delaney, Jim McDonald, Timahoe; Paddy Doyle, Thurles Sarsfields (former Laois Senior Hurling Manager); and also to the families of the wider GAA community whom have been bereaved during the year by the loss of those dear to them.

Go ndeanfaidh Dia trocaire ar a nanamacha.

Buíochas

As I conclude my review of 2020 and my observations about the state and structures of our games, I want thank all Club Officers, Players and Voluntary workers who have assisted Laois GAA during the year and who continue to keep our organisation in the County on sound footing through their hard work, co-operation and goodwill during this pandemic.

I wish thank my Cathaoirleach Peter O'Neill for his leadership and continued support, while also acknowledging the huge commitment and dedication he has given the Association in the County during the year. Likewise, my fellow Executive Members, CCC, Hearings and our other sub Committees for their advice, help and cooperation during the year, each in their own right through their tireless effort and work ethic greatly contribute to the smooth running of the Association within the County. All sub Committee reports are outlined later in this booklet. I want to put on record that all members of our Executive give their time and travel on a voluntary basis and in our present Chairperson's term of office have completed capital projects on behalf of Laois GAA estimated to be in the tune of €4.5 million. These projects were passed by Laois County Committee and all with the view of having the infrastructure at our disposal to progress the development of all our players. I have no doubt in stating that the present Executive Committee is perhaps one of the best working committees I have experienced and with the aforementioned expenditure on capital development projects and spend on inter-county teams, as you will see from the balance sheet, I do be in dismay at times to hear comments expressed in regard to their lack of ambition, no progression and that they are holding the county back.

Our Office Administrator Audrey Kelly, joined us just prior to lockdown and I say special thanks to her for her work, particularly in dealing with Referee appointments and reports. Unfortunately due to the circumstances we find ourselves Audrey is on furlough at present and we looking forward to her return in the near future. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of Phil Stack, whom is with us on a Leader scheme, to our office administration.

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

In conclusion, I wish you all an enjoyable and successful 2021 and please stay safe.

Le meas

Niall Mac Laitimh

Runaí CLG Laoise, Nollaig 2020

Roll of Honour & Outstanding Games 2020

Laois Shopping Centre Senior Hurling Championship Final

Borris in Ossory Kilcotton v Clough Ballacolla

Laois Shopping Centre Premier Intermediate Hurling Championship Final

Portlaoise v The Harps

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate Hurling Championship Final

Rathdowney Errill v Trumera

Laois Shopping Centre Junior Hurling Championship S/Finals

The Harps v Castletown
Portlaoise v St Lazerian's Abbeyleix

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B" Hurling Championship S/Finals

Portlaoise v The Harps
Camross v Rathdowney Errill

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "C" Hurling Championship Final

Rosenallis 1-11
Clough-Ballacolla 1-10

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Hurling Championship Final

Abbeyleix St Lazerian's 1-15
The Harps 1-09

Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Hurling Championship Final

St Fintan's Mountrath 1-14
Ballinakill Ballypickas 1-08

Laois Shopping Centre Senior Football Championship S/Finals

Ballyfin v Portarlington
Graiguecullen v Emo

Laois Shopping Centre Intermediate Football Championship Final

Clonastee St Manmans 1-13
Crettyard 1-10

Laois Shopping Centre Junior Football Championship S/Finals

Portlaoise v The Heath
Ballyroan Abbey v Park Ratheniska

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "B" Football Championship Final

Graiguecullen v Spink

Laois Shopping Centre Junior "C" Football Championship Final

Colt v Kilcotton

Midlands Park Hotel U17 Football Championship Final

Ballyroan Abbey 2-09
Portlaoise 0-06

Midlands Park Hotel U17 "B" Football Competition Final

Rosenallis 2-13
Ballylinan 2-03

JUVENILE COMPETITIONS

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football Championship Round 5

Portarlinton v St Joseph's
Portlaoise v Stradbally Parish Gaels
Ballylinan v St Pauls

Midlands Park Hotel U15 Football Championship S/Finals & Final

First Team v Fourth Team
Second Team v Third Team

Midlands Park Hotel U15 "B" Football Competition S/Finals & Final

Ballyroan Abbey v Mountmellick
Gaels
Killeshin v O'Dempsey's

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Round 2

Tony Byrne Park St Joseph's v
O'Dempseys
To be confirmed Na Fianna Og v
Stradbally Parish Gaels
Killeshin GAA Killeshin v
Portarlinton

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Round 7

McCann Park Portarlinton v
Stradbally Parish Gaels
To be confirmed Na Fianna Og v
Portlaoise
Killeshin GAA Killeshin v
O'Dempseys

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship S/Finals & Final

First Team v Fourth Team
Second Team v Third Team

Midlands Park Hotel U13 Football Championship Shield S/Finals & Final

Fifth Team Bye
Sixth Team v Seventh Team

Midlands Park Hotel U13 "B" Football Competition Round 2

Kilcavan The Rock v Mountmellick

Midlands Park Hotel U13 "B" Football Competition Quarter Finals

Park Ratheniska Spink v Winner
Mountmellick / Kilcavan The Rock
The Harps v Ballyroan Abbey

Midlands Park Hotel U13 "B" Football Competition S/Finals & Final

Ballylinan v The Harps or Ballyroan
Abbey
Graiguecullen v Park Ratheniska
Spink or Winner Mountmellick / Kilcavan
The Rock

Midlands Park Hotel U13 "B" Football Competition Shield S/Finals & Final

St Pauls v The Heath / Mountmellick /
Kilcavan The Rock
The Heath / Mountmellick / Kilcavan The
Rock v Rosenallis

Midlands Park Hotel U13 "C" Football Competition Round 5

Ballyfin GAA Ballyfin Gaels v
Cromogue

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Football
Competition Round**

Colt GAA

Cromogue v Clonaslee St Manmans

Ballyfin GAA Ballyfin

Gaels v Castletown

Crettyard Crettyard v Clough-

Ballacolla

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Football
Competition Final**

Group Winner v Group Runner-up

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Football
Competition Shield Final**

Group Third v Group Fourth

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 Hurling
Championship Final**

Camross v Clough Ballacolla

**Midlands Park Hotel U15 “B” Hurling
Competition S/ Finals & Final**

Portarlinton v Park Ratheniska

Timahoe

St Fintan’s Mountrath v Raheen Parish

Gaels

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Championship Quarter Finals**

Castletown v Rathdowney Errill

Clough Ballacolla v Na Fianna

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 Hurling
Championship S/Finals & Final**

The Harps v Castletown or

Rathdowney Errill

Portlaoise v Clough Ballacolla or Na

Fianna

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Hurling
Championship Quarter Finals**

St Fintan’s Mountrath v Rosenallis

Borris in Ossory Kilcotton v St

Lazerian’s Abbeyleix

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “B” Hurling
Championship S/Finals & Final**

Camross v St Fintan’s Mountrath or

Rosenallis

Park Ratheniska Timahoe v Borris in

Ossory or St Lazerian’s Abbeyleix

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Hurling
Competition S/ Finals & Final**

Portarlinton v Clonad

St Pauls v Ballinakill Ballypickas

**Midlands Park Hotel U13 “C” Hurling
Championship Shield Final**

Raithin Og v Na Fianna

Sub - Committees Reports

Coiste Na nÓg Laoise Annual Report 2020

On behalf of the Laois GAA Juvenile Committee, I would like to thank everybody who contributed to making the best of what has been a challenging year for everyone involved in sport. From early on, we all had fears that sport was likely to be heavily curtailed by Covid-19 but very few could have envisaged that most of underage competitions would not get completed in the calendar year.

The only championships/competitions completed were at the minor grade and congratulations to all the winners. Considering the stop start nature of events, it is very difficult to draw conclusions as to what lessons can be learned, but a few observations are worth noting. Firstly, for the good of Laois Gaelic Football and Hurling, we need to get as many players as possible consistently playing at a high level. This will require a change of mindset from our clubs. We also need to be innovative in framing our competitions where a possible 3 tier approach should be considered. While the traditional underage competitions should continue as normal, it may be time to complement them with two other levels to support player development and retention.

A starting point is the work done by Mike Henchy and his GDA team on promoting divisional games which exposes players on a regular basis to a higher standard. We should also not forget the smaller clubs and put games in place to enable them to hold onto every player and thus broaden their player base. More players participating in underage competitions, each aspiring to a higher standard of play, can only help strengthen our adult club and county teams over the longer term. Cross border development leagues that are run to augment rather than replace our competitions may well be the future.

At this point I would like to thank Midlands Park Hotel who sponsor the underage competitions. They have been through a tough year and I strongly urge that all our members and their families support them in the year ahead as Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of both community and supporting local business.

I also like to express my gratitude to everybody who helped at officiating games during the year in what continues to be a difficult and thankless job. I wish to acknowledge the outgoing committee chaired by Alan Langton. Also, thanks to Barry Murphy, Alan Hartnett, David O'Brien, Brian Scully and former chairman Danny Gorman, who worked on getting the grading right. The workload of the juvenile committee is eased by Niall Handy who takes on the brunt of the day to day work. Also, I like to thank the GDAs who organise the go games activities and summer camps.

Best wishes for the year ahead to all our players, parents, coaches, team mentors and club officers and I sincerely hope 2021 will be better year for all of us.

Seán O Conghaile
Runaí Coiste Na nÓg Laoise

Development Officer Report 2020

Club delegates and fellow officers, it is indeed a great honour as County Development Officer of C.L.G. Laoise, to present my annual report to Convention County 2020.

I would firstly like to take this opportunity to show my appreciation to all the clubs and fellow county board officers, for the commitment, dedication and, support shown to me during my first year as County Development Officer. It has been a year like no other as we experienced the COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted normal life as we were once accustomed to.

The role of the Development Officer and The Planning, Physical Development and Health & Safety Committee continues to evolve as the responsibilities become increasingly vast and varied. The Committee's responsibilities for 2020 included; upgrade, development and maintenance of Pairc Ui Mhordha and the Centre of Excellence (COE), assisting and supporting clubs with their club development grant applications, co-ordinating the new 3-year Strategic Club Planning Programmes, education and training, and ensuring all clubs complete their risk assessment/safety statements to ensure the health and safety standards within all GAA grounds throughout Laois are fit for purpose.

Pairc Ui Mhordha/ Centre of Excellence (COE)

It was an extremely busy year around Pairc Ui Mhordha and the Centre of Excellence (COE). After an initial review back in December 2019, we intended to complete 12 projects in 12 months that would enhance the experience of both players and supporters, and this target will be achieved before year-end. The main project completed was the installation of the new LED lighting both inside and outside the stadium which will lead to substantial savings going forward. I would like to thank all those involved in this project especially John Hassett from Tipperary Energy (www.tippenergy.ie) for their project management, Shay Byrne, Electrical Engineer Contractors (www.sbe.ie) for their installation work, and special thanks to the Leader programme (www.laoispartnership.ie) and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI – www.seai.ie) as the project would not have been achievable without their help, guidance and support which was very much appreciated.

In conjunction with the upgrade of lighting a biodiversity plan was also commissioned and is currently being implemented. It is our intention in Laois GAA that Pairc Ui Mhordha becomes a green stadium and biodiversity plays an important role within that process. We value biodiversity for many reasons, some utilitarian, some intrinsic. This means we value biodiversity both for what it provides to humans and for the value it has in its own right. Utilitarian values include the many basic needs humans obtain from biodiversity, such as food, fuel, shelter, and medicine. Further, ecosystems provide crucial services such as pol-

mination, seed dispersal, climate regulation, water purification, nutrient cycling, and control of agricultural pests. We would ask all those attending games in the future to embrace our green stadium.

Other projects that were completed were – Astro-turf was fitted in the goal areas on pitch 1 and pitch 2, a new scoreboard was installed in the COE (this will be fully fitted between pitch 1 and pitch 2 over the winter months), stand area and seating were power hosed and cleaned (many thanks for the clubs who sent in volunteers to facilitate this), murals on both sides of the stand, clubs crests erected in COE building, steps of the stand, stiles, dressing rooms and, tunnel areas were all painted and new signage was erected around the stadium.

I would sincerely like to thank all the voluntary stewards who made themselves available throughout the year. I would also like to thank Tom Jones, Event Controller, PJ Kelly, Health and Safety Officer and to our Chief Steward, Jody Conway for all their help and dedication during the year. Special thanks to Andrew Broderick, Danny Gorman and, the other gate staff and, Willie Stackpool for his continuous commitment. It is no easy task to execute a match day plan with so many variables to be encountered so well done to all concerned.

I would like to thank Colm McEvoy and the personnel employed on both the C.E. Group Scheme and Tús Programme for their exemplary work that is being done daily to ensure that the highest standards are been maintained. We have a wonderful facility in Laois but the work to maintain the standards we strive for takes a huge commitment and we are most grateful for the efforts from all those concerned.

Lastly, Adrian Tynan left us recently, I would like to thank Adrian for his work over the years.

Club Development Grant Application

I have been in contact with numerous clubs (hurling, football, and rounders) throughout 2020 concerning funding. Unfortunately, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Croke Park circulated correspondence that the grants process has been put on hold for the foreseeable future. I would like to acknowledge and compliment all those club delegates and volunteers that have shown great vision and leadership in taking on the purchase of land and development projects at their clubs. This is no easy task as fundraising events have become more difficult due to the restrictions implemented by the Government.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the volunteers and staff of Comhairle Laighean, in particular, Michael Reynolds (CEO) for their advice and support throughout 2020.

Club Strategic Development Plan

Three clubs had shown a keen interest in starting the club's strategic plan process in November but as a result of the restriction on the numbers that can meet collectively this process has been on hold.

This Strategic Plan aims to set ambitious yet achievable goals and objectives to grow your club by addressing the fundamental strategic challenges your club faces and fully exploit the opportunities available within your community.

This process results in five high-level strategic goals:

1. To improve opportunities for participating in Gaelic games in your community.
2. To develop our volunteers and administrators within your club
3. To govern and administer our affairs more efficiently.
4. To communicate GAA messages better to your members and supporters.
5. To protect and grow your club.

I would strongly urge every club to put a 'Strategic Club Development Plan' in place for your club. It would encourage best practice in all areas of your club and would enhance the experience of all playing and non-playing members.

I would like to acknowledge the club planning facilitators, Liam O'Neill (Trumera) and Pat Leogue (Portlaoise), your expertise and time are invaluable, and your availability is very much appreciated.

Education and Training

Croke Park intended to have continued their work on the consolidation of training for club officers and members during 2020. However, with the number of lockdowns, the restriction on movement, and the numbers allowed to meet collectively our 'Creating a Safer Club' course on the 30th of March was cancelled and all other training courses were put on hold. It is now their intention to facilitate these courses online and the dates for 2021 which will be circulated in due course.

Health and Safety

On the instruction from Comhairle Laighean, all clubs were requested to complete a risk assessment/safety statement on their club grounds on the June Bank Holiday weekend

in 2020. I would like to thank all clubs who completed and forwarded their documentation. While this may have been an onerous task it is extremely beneficial for the safety of your club and its members.

We visited numerous clubs throughout 2020 and we hope that the advice given was both helpful and beneficial. I would also like to acknowledge the guidance from Comhairle Laighean and Croke Park on various health and safety queries throughout the year. Their expertise was invaluable to some of our clubs in Laois and their input was very much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank Niall Handy and the staff in the COE for their help and assistance throughout the year. They were always very receptive and supportive of what I was trying to achieve.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh agus fanaigí slán.

Le meas,

Gerard Slevin
County Development Officer

Coiste Éisteachta (Hearings Committee) Report 2020

As with everything in 2020 it wasn't a normal year for the Hearings Committee. The year got off to a quiet start with our last hearing taking place early in November 2019 with our next task being the appeals to decisions on transfers issued by the Competitions Control Committee (C.C.C.). We heard these on 4th March 2020 just before everything changed when everything was forced to come to a complete stop. In total we had 5 appeals to the C.C.C. decisions which we could uphold, overrule or refer back to the C.C.C. Of these 3 were upheld and 2 referred back to the C.C.C. On the same night as the transfer appeal hearings we had 1 appeal in relation to a team grading which we heard and took the decision to refer back to the C.C.C.

Following the long break we were all delighted to see the return to training and games albeit with new restrictions. Once the games got underway the disciplinary notices were issued and hearing requests started to come in. In total we received 11 requests for hearings this year which were heard and decisions issued based on the evidence provided and always in accordance with the rules of an Treoraí Oifigiúil. In all cases we were not aware what penalty had been issued by the C.C.C. The number of hearings requested this year obviously decreased dramatically by 63% in line with the huge decrease in the number of games. All hearings were in relation to disciplinary action taken against players with the exception of 2, one of which related to a club and the other to a club official. This decrease is obviously in line with the restricted number of supporters who were in attendance at games this year. Following our decision in 3 of the hearings requested by players those players appealed our decision to the Leinster Hearings Committee, 1 was submitted for rehearing which was duly heard and a decision issued and the other 2 will be heard early in 2021. A summary of the cases are as follows:-

Players – 9 Hearings Requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 5 received a One Match Suspension.• 1 had Red Card Infraction Reduced to Yellow Card Infraction.• 3 cases were not heard as they were deemed out of order.
Officials/Supporters – 1 Hearing Requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received a 2 match suspension.
Club – 1 Hearing Requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hearing was not held after request was ruled out of order.

In the case of all Appeals and Hearings individual members of the C.H.C. excused themselves if there were any perceived conflicts of interest. All those in attendance at appeals or hearings also have the opportunity to object to any member of the C.H.C.

Our proposal to hold an information meeting facilitated by the C.H.C. for all Club Officers in 2020 did not take place due to the Covid-19 restrictions and unfortunately at this moment in time we are unable to commit to arranging anything for 2021. However, I would urge any Club Officer who is unsure of or would like clarification on any procedure or rule in relation to the Appeal or Hearing process to feel free to contact me at any time. I cannot claim to have all the answers as I learn new aspects of the rules every year however I am happy to seek clarification and assist any club's where I can. By sharing knowledge we can all learn more every year.

I would like to thank all of the individual players and club representatives for their courteous co-operation in their dealings with the C.H.C. this year and for their full compliance with the Covid-19 guidelines while in attendance at hearings. Also, thanks to the representatives of the C.C.C. for their courtesy and consideration in their attendance at these hearings. My sincere thanks to all the referees who replied so promptly and professionally when clarification of their reports was requested to assist the committee in reaching their decisions. I would also like to acknowledge the role of Niall Handy and our new Administrator, Audrey Kelly in the preparation of paperwork and for liaising with referees when clarification of their reports was requested. Their assistance in this regard is very much appreciated.

My biggest thanks must go to the members of this year's C.H.C, Glen Brennan, Seamus Campion, Micheál Condron, Sheila Devoy, John Kelly, Michael Lennon and Alex Stenson who gave so generously of their time and responded to my requests for attendance at hearings so promptly. It was a pleasure working with you all again in 2020! And finally on behalf of all of the committee I would like to thank John Hanniffy our Chairman for his guidance and leadership and in particular for the way in which he conducts all hearings to ensure fair procedures are followed.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy Christmas. I look forward to the completion of the 2020 Championship in the New Year and hopefully a return to all aspects of the GAA life we have missed so much this year at some time in the near future!

Le meas

Adrainne Mhic Cárthaigh

Runaí

Coiste Éisteachta Laoise 2020

Public Relations & Marketing Committee Report 2020

In what has been a year like no other we look back and reflect on a very busy and successful year for Laois GAA in so many aspects. Myself and the PR committee have maintained an exceptionally busy year. We had so many challenges put in front of us to overcome, establish and redevelop what we do to promote the games, players, fans, friends and family who are all part of Laois GAA and most importantly bring the games to you who couldn't join us on match days.

This is my first year as PRO and on the executive committee, a proud moment for myself and my family. I was very proud to follow in my grandfathers history of being part of Laois GAA. Having being involved on the PR Committee for the past number of years I was very lucky to have some great people on the committee. It has being my privilege to have worked with everyone on this committee and I can't thank them enough for doing so much for me and Laois GAA. I would like to thank Wayne Fox (Trumera) for always being there when we needed him to be the voice of MW Hire O'Moore Park and match day scoreboard. Eoin Culliton (Mountmellick) for maintaining our Twitter feed on match days throughout the year and his amazing wealth of knowledge with Laois GAA Bible. Philip Henneberry (Clough Ballacolla) for being part of our match day operations, we wish you continued success in your studies and look forward to your return from the UK. Oonagh Maher for her amazing help in so many ways. Oonagh has travelled the country to so many locations to maintain our social media feed on match days. Thanks for all your support Oonagh.

Bryan and Evan Lawler for helping me through so many match days on scoreboard and operations who were always there and willing to help, two very proud Laois GAA men. Thanks to Michael Egan for always being part of the committee and helping to bring the games of Laois to people all over the world with Laois GAA TV. To the one and only Pat O'Sullivan for always being there no matter where or what was required, his years of experience have guided me and helped me make everything possible. Not only did he maintain his role with the senior football panel, updated our social media accounts on match days and this year he was one of our leading commentators on Laois GAA TV. Thank you kindly Pat for all you have done for Laois GAA and personally from myself. Finally I wish to thank my fiancée and soon to be wife Joan Cullen for putting up with my madness, late nights, phone calls, rants and ravings, driving the length and breath of the country with me to support all Laois teams. From doing the scoreboard, social media and being on camera duty Joan has done it all. Many people will not know Joan but she is equally proud of all the players, managements and teams of Laois GAA. She has put up with my moments of sheer disappointment, tears and joys of being a Laois man and I couldn't have done this role without her by my side.

We worked this year with the press and media on so many different occasion's. Again in a year like no other the mediums of print, radio and online were key in promoting our games and bringing the news to each Laois fan. I would like to thank the Staff of the Leinster

Express, the Laois Nationalist, Laois Today and Midlands Radio. The success on the field of our senior football and hurling teams brought me in contact with so many of the media to help with photoshoots or media interviews or promotional events. The national media always thanked us for our warm welcome to MW Hire O'Moore Park and always spoke so highly of the welcome they received from the grounds staff, stewards and PR committee. It was all very good but while very demanding it was also satisfying when we received positive feedback. Our relationship with the media has grown in strength both locally and nationally. We communicate and work together to bring the games of Laois to everyone all over the world.

At the start of my year we took on the redevelopment of our website www.laoisgaa.ie and we have successfully upgraded the website throughout the year. We were lucky to have the help of John Haughney from Leinster Council to do this year. The development of the new site allowed us to do so much more but also make it mobile friendly and most importantly allowed us to create Laois GAA TV Streaming. With games behind closed doors or limited attendance we had sleepless nights to create, build and stream the games to the people of Laois all over the world. It was

extremely testing to build but thanks to the help of John Moynihan of All Rounder Sports we created what was an amazing platform to bring the games to people from Borris in Ossory to Brisbane, Portlaoise to Portugal and Graiguecullen to Germany. The first weekend alone we had people logged on from every county in Ireland and all over the world. We had thousands of people log on for games in all codes. The kind messages we received from people all around the world made up for the challenges that we faced with every broadcast. Thanks to all our commentators and co commentators who helped during the games, so many of you helped out and you made it possible but also professional in every way. We were ahead of all other counties in our production and that's down to all your hard work and involvement. We stood in the wind and rain on many a night but thankfully we still managed to stream the games to the people we missed and couldn't attend the games.

Our social media account followers have increased immensely over the year. With games behind closed doors our committee were always on hand to bring the scores of games to you. We are very lucky to have such a diaspora of proud Laois people living all over the world and we loved hearing from them on match days and receiving their stories and pictures. Our accounts again helped alongside Laois GAA TV to bring you both club and inter county games. The clubs of Laois did a huge job in also bringing updates, news and bringing the communities together with support groups throughout this pandemic. Meeting so many clubs throughout the year I would like to thank all their officials, stewards, supporters and fans who helped us over the year. The people of our clubs are what makes it all possible and this year the workload has doubled for the officers so well done to them all.

I would sincerely like to thank all teams, management and backroom staff of each team for making me feel part of the teams on match days. I was very lucky to be part of some memorable occasions and in particular I would like to thank Mike Quirke, Eddie Brennan, Enda Lyons and the wonderful Eddie Kinsella. Thanks to all the backroom teams for helping

me out on match days. With so many people involved I do apologise, I can't mention you all but I would like to thank the wonderful Anne Barry and my good friend Bryan Breen for supporting me through this year.

In conclusion I would like to thank the following: The players at every level because without your efforts on the Hurling and football fields we would have nothing to report or promote.

To the Managers of all the teams both at county and club level thanks for your courtesies and time.

To all our sponsors who have supported us and continue to take pride in Laois GAA we all appreciate everything you do. To Matty Walsh a special mention for your support and vision in supporting Laois GAA and making MW Hire O'Moore Park one of the best stadiums in the country. It was wonderful to work with you on so many levels.

To all the club secretaries and officers for your assistance and cooperation in particular on match days a sincere thank you.

To County Secretary Niall Handy, Audrey our administrator and my fellow county board officials for your support and advice I thank you kindly. To the stewards, Willie Stackpool, Bosco Catering and all the people behind the scenes that make match day possible in the wonderful stadium of MW Hire O'Moore Park, thank you all.

To everyone in my own club Graiguecullen GAA thanks for all your support. We are a proud club with so many great Laois people involved now and in the past. I was very lucky this year to share the pitch in the Leinster Football championship with 5 other members of our club which was a very proud moment for us all.

I have been truly blessed by the unique and diverse committee that willingly volunteered to come on board this year. Each with their own area of expertise and people whom I have relied on constantly. Thank you again.

Finally I have to thank my fiancée, my parents and family for my love of GAA. I started my speech at convention last year saying how proud I hoped my late grandad would be looking down on me. His stories of playing football with Laois live in me, my journeys each week to Portlaoise to dance class with Gabrielle Lynam for over 20 years, visits to the Late Stephen Conroy home in Camross for music, song and dance in the barn, travelling the world dancing I was representing my family, county and people of Graiguecullen and this all instilled my love to be a proud Laois man.

Paul Dargan

Laois GAA P.R.O.

Coaching and Games Report 2020

Introduction

As we come to the end of what has been a difficult and challenging year for everyone involved in the GAA particularly the kids and youths of our Association who I feel have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic in many ways but especially their activities within our Association. I hope that 2021 can be a better year for everyone but especially for the youth of our Association.

I would like to continue by thanking Mike Henchy and his team for their hard work and efforts during the year they also faced very challenging times and had to adapt and change and find new ways to engage with our members and as usual Mike and his team stepped up to that challenge. At the beginning of the year there were great plans in place across all sectors of our remit from Primary to Secondary School engagement, from Club's to Academy Squad's but all of this also came crashing to halt when Covid-19 hit. Overnight our activity and engagement across all of these sectors came to an abrupt stop but Mike and his Team quickly put a plan in place and over the course of the following months planned and delivered some really good online training and activity through the Team Platform which covered a wide range of activities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the clubs and their members for their engagement and attendance at these very professionally put together Webinars. Thanks to Mike Henchy, Jason Coffey, Donnie Brennan and Peter Halley for all their work and professional approach during these tough times.

Unfortunately, during the Covid-19 pandemic and the uncertainty that it brought we lost a very valuable member of our coaching staff Peter Halley. During his time with Laois Peter did a very good job and was highly thought of by everyone that had the pleasure of engaging with him. I would like to personally thank Peter on behalf of Laois GAA and the clubs of Laois for his hard work and dedication and we wish him every success in his current career and we would hope to see Peter back with us at some point in the future.

As one door closes for someone another door opens for someone else so I would like to welcome our new GDA Conor Shannon who joined the team in October this year. Conor is from Lisdoonvarna Co Clare and arrives to us off the back of achieving a 1.1 in Sport Science from UL. Conor's responsibilities will include but are not limited to, the hurling clubs, the hurling Development Academies, the Go Games program and our social media campaigns.

Covid 19

On March 12th this year all planned coaching and games activities ceased. Alternative forms of communication and engagement with our clubs were required. This arrived in the form of county and club based virtual webinars. Having received training and advice from

Leinster GAA, the department rolled out a selection of virtual workshops, namely Nursery Development, Coaching Officer Roles and Responsibilities, Conditioning the GAA Player, Building Player Resilience and Injury Prevention. A selection of club-based Player Pathway webinars also took place, the focus on outlining the coaching and organizational structure around how to implement a successful player pathway. The engagement from the Laois GAA public was very satisfying, with over 60 people tuning in to most events.

With the reintroduction of the level 3 followed by the level 5 restrictions, we are again back working with clubs on the player pathway process. Since September our GDAs have been and continue to work in primary schools across the county, offering a vital service currently to the children they engage with. A special word of thanks to all our primary schools who have supported our work in great numbers. Their recognition of the importance of sport for the physical, mental and social wellbeing of the children must be acknowledged

The pandemic has ultimately meant that we have lost out on activities this year, the projects effected include, the TURAS club support program, Easter Camps, LOETB training and additional educational support to our Development Academy players, formal and all informal coach education planned workshops, two weeks of Cul Camps, Halloween Camps and Divisional games. Despite this, the Coaching and Games department remain extremely active and are available to every club to offer any support required.

Looking for to 2021, the department have plans in place to cater for all the areas concerned, the plans have been outlined to allow for Covid restrictions in terms of when the projects may potentially take place.

Primary Schools

The Primary school sector has been one of the highlights of 2020, as noted above our GDAs are actively coaching in schools across the county. Every school in the county were contacted on numerous occasions, at present our GDAs are visiting 23 schools on a weekly basis. The visits have amounted to an engagement with over 1,200 children ranging in age from 5 to 12. The GDAs focus on physical and skill development with variances of activity based on the age group they are working with. The primary school visits will continue into 2021, with the hope being that more schools will take up the opportunity for GAA coaching.

A decision was made at Provincial level that the Club/School link program was to be suspended for the for the first and second school terms, with the project due for review in January. The program certainty offers a great opportunity for clubs to recruit and retain young players. Further information on the program will be communicated with clubs when a decision is announced in the new year.

Post Primary Schools

Prior to Covid 19, the Post Primary sector was a hotbed of activity, this came in the form of S&C development and direct coaching. Before everything came to a stop, the GDAs had engaged with 350 players in a coaching capacity with the numbers taking part in the S&C work at 180. At the beginning of the new school year, it is not possible to play school games, this has had an impact on the GDA engagement with this sector. Currently the GDAs are working in one school, where they completed the TY coach education program. It is hoped that games will return in January 2021, when/if this happens will mean that the GDAs will become very active in this sector once more. It must be noted that the department rate the engagement with this sector as essential and crucial for the development of our players.

Cúl Camps

Once the Cul Camps got the go ahead from Government, the department set about developing a structure that catered for the restrictions posed by Covid 19. The complete organizational structure had to review and reshape to meet these demands. Undoubtedly, prior to the commencement of the camps there was an air of nervous excitement about how the camps would work out. They were a major success. A total of 31 camps were organized to take place from July 20th to August 21st based in club grounds across the county. The return of application for coaching roles was greater by at least 20% from that of 2019, perhaps a sign of the times but also an indication that there is interest among our young people to get involved in coaching.

The first three weeks of the camps saw 1,270 children take part across 17 camps. The feedback from parents was very positive, citing that the camps were one of the few things the children had to look forward to all summer. With the introduction of the 3 weeks lockdown for Laois, the last two weeks of the camps had to be cancelled. This had an impact on 855 children who were due to attend camps in 14 different clubs. This was extremely disappointing for all stakeholders, none more so than the children who missed out. The numbers were down from 3,385 in 2019, this was to be expected and fell in line with the average decrease in numbers across the Province.

A huge word of thanks must go to all the Cul Camp coaches, they were exceptional in the way they engaged with a rigorous training program prior to the camps and how professional they were on the ground. Going into the unknown, certainly in week one, they all played their part in ensuring Laois GAA could provide the best service possible under the restrictions imposed.

Another word of thanks must go to the host clubs, who had everything in place in terms of what was asked from them. Once again, any requested or arrangements that were to be made were carried out.

Coach Education

Formal and Informal coach education certainly suffered from the onset of Covid. At the exact time in March the department was in the process of working to complete several Foundation levels courses. These were all postponed. An Award 1 child/youth football course was completed just in time. Twenty people received certs in the last few weeks to recognize their completion. The postponed Foundation courses are in the process of being completed. An online theory-based module was followed up with practical's that took place across weekends in September. The people involved are now completing their safeguarding online and will receive their certs in the coming weeks. Unfortunately, practical's planned for October once again had to be postponed. Hopefully the outstanding courses will be completed in early 2021 and that additional courses can be planned for new coaches arriving into the system.

Award 1 and Award 2 courses are on hold for now. The GAA are in the planning stages of looking at the possible development of Award 1 to an online platform, once again for the theory only. Information on all formal coach education will be communicated with the clubs when information becomes available.

Informal coach education will continue online as we near the end of 2020 and approach 2021. Plans are in place to roll out the events and once again clubs will be informed of the offerings in due course. The webinars will range from Season Planning to additional S&C related information.

Academy Squads










Covid 19 once again had a huge impact on this area. In March the GAA decided to cancel all Academy activity for 2020, with all funding being withheld. This meant that online engagement with the players was the only option to stay in contact with the players. A decision was made to focus on the players physical development, from here Jason Coffey created programs and challenges for the players to complete at home during the lockdown. Jason was inundated with feedback and questions from parents which was extremely positive.

The hope was Divisional games could take place in October and November for U14, U15 and U16 players this year and that an S&C offering would be available outdoors in Heywood. However, the second lockdown put pay to this, and the engagement returned to online webinars. Currently each age group are invited to log onto a webinar each week to be provided with the work they can do from now until January 2021.

The 2020 season started well, Divisional Championships were played at U14 and U15 were all completed before Christmas allowing for the Academies to start training early in 2020. Numerous coaching and S&C sessions were completed with the players buying into the work being carried out. With the 2020 season cancelled, the attention now turns to

2021. We await confirmation from a National and Provincial level as to how the Academy structures will take shape in 2021. Details will be released to all clubs once confirmation is received.

LAOIS GAA COACHING AND GAMES PARTICIPATION NUMBERS OCTOBER 2019-2020

YEAR	DATE RANGE	ACTIVITY	NO. OF CHILDREN	AGE RANGE	GDA SUPPORT
 2019	Oct Mid Term	Halloween Camps	120	6-13	Organise and implement
 2019	Oct- Nov	Divisional Championships	450	13-15	Organise and implement
 2019	Oct- Nov	Portlaoise Town School League	250	8-12	Organise and implement
 2019	Oct- Nov	Primary School Support	1200	5-12	Coach and Teacher Training
 2019/2020	Oct 2019- Mar 2019	Post Primary Support Post Primary Support	350 180	12-18 12-18	Direct Coaching Coaching S&C
 2020	Feb	Portlaoise Town School League	200	7-9	Organise and implement
 2020	July-Aug	Cúl Camps	1270	6-13	2 weeks cancelled -855 kids
 2020	Aug-Sep	Go Games	2500	6-11	Organise and implement
 2020	Feb/Mar - Sept- Oct	Club Games	2400	13-17	Club and support education

Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me during the year, I would also like to thank the clubs for their continued support of myself and our GDA's and I would like to wish all of our players in every age group from Nursery to Adult in both Hurling and Football every success in the coming year.

I hope our GDA's are in a position to deliver more face to face coaching and education to all of our players around the county and all of the club and academy squad coaches that give up so much of their time to help develop the young players within our clubs and our academy squads.

For the moment please stay safe and healthy everyone and together we will overcome this Pandemic.

Mise Sa Spórt

Fearghal Ó Beirn
Coaching Officer Laois GAA

Children's Officer Annual Statement 2020

In 2020 we experienced a global pandemic that affected all aspects of life in Ireland. The members of the GAA in our communities stepped up during this time by helping their communities, neighbours. This showed the power of the GAA as a community organisation. Well done to all.

We did not get to play a lot of our games, we did not get to support our players at local games, county games, school games etc. We missed socialising after games where we normally have post game chats. It has been a difficult year over all. However we did get to play games at championship level for all ages where we finished 2020 with a small number of games being carried forward to 2021. I want to thank all players, management, clubs and supporters for assisting in Covid protocols to ensure that we were all safe during this difficult time.

Through my department in Laois GAA we trained in face to face safeguarding workshops 373 coaches, officials, and club camp coaches. The safeguarding course is also available on-line for all clubs where the club can book this session for 18 persons to attend. I would advise all clubs to book these sessions as soon as possible in 2021. When we are allowed to complete this training in face to face sessions we will plan sessions centrally again.

For 2021 it is now in rule that no coach can be appointed to a club or county without having first completed all relevant paperwork and training central to role.

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

Also we have secured a Children's Officer email address and this should be used by all clubs as this is the only method of approved communication in line with good governance and GDPR rule for communication especially of persons personal data.

A disappointing aspect of 2020 for me is the use of negative / abusive language on the side-lines in games in Laois. Even though we had less games the reports for negative language did not decrease to the same extent. One referee even noted that it was the worse he had heard. I would implore all clubs to ensure that this behaviour is not accepted and that any club where this behaviour occurs manage it in accordance with the Safe Guarding protocols. We need to remember that our players / mentors / officials do not deserve / expect to be a recipient of any abuse and it is not necessary. As a parent would you accept your child being verbally abused? Would you allow them to be in the environment where verbal aggression is ok? If no is the answer to these questions then we need to better manage our behaviour better at games, training sessions and stop this negative behaviour. There is no place in the GAA (and our sister organisations or any other sporting environment) for this behaviour.

Seamas Lahart
Children's Officer

AGM

The AGM for the 2019/20 year took place on Thursday, September 5th 2019, in the Midlands Park Hotel.

60 schools took part in Cumann Na mBunscol Laoise competitions throughout the year with thirty-eight schools present at the AGM. The 2020/2021 AGM could not take place this September due to Covid-19 Restrictions.

Leagues 2019/20

Cumann na mBunscol activities were greatly affected by Covid-19 and the closure of schools after the 12th March 2020.

Our Boys and Girls Football Leagues took place in September and October of 2019. Hurling and camogie competitions were arranged for April and May 2020 with fifty-three teams entering the hurling and forty-two entering the camogie.

We arranged the 2019 football leagues for the months of September and October. Sixty one teams entered our boys' football and forty-eight teams entered our girls' football.

- Each team received a minimum of five games.
- The finals of all our boys' and girls' football divisions were played in O' Moore Park, Portlaoise. We were lucky to get these played in O'Moore Park because of weather and pitch conditions. The original dates for the finals were postponed until after the Halloween break and the decision was very welcome from Laois GAA.

We continued with our new format for all divisions (using championships and shields in each division), which increased participation in semi-final and final days. This again, was very successful and for the most part, was received very positively by schools throughout the county. We have now changed all codes to this format.

Hurling and Camogie Leagues could not be played because of school closures due to Covid-19.

Rounders

Our Rounders blitzes were also a casualty of Covid-19 in 2020.

Table Quiz

Our annual Table Quiz took place in the Holy Family Senior School, Portlaoise and was again a great success. This took place just before school closures so we were very lucky that school could take part in this.

Handball

Three Schools (Cullohill NS, Mayo NS and The Holy Family Senior School) had entered last year but competitions could not take place due to Covid-19. The same three schools have entered for this year in the hope that competitions will be able to go ahead.

Representative Games

There were no development squads, INTO Mini Sevens or half time representative games this year due to the postponement of inter county games and restrictions

Plans for 2021

We are currently awaiting advice from the National Cumann na mBunscol Committee on the possibility of having any Cumann na mBunscol activities for the remainder of the 2020/2021 school year.

Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Laois GAA and the many clubs throughout the county for use of their facilities and continued support throughout the years.

Martin Carroll

Rúnaí
Cumann na mBunscol Laoise

Laois Membership Registration Report 2020

Club	Registered 2020	Unregistered 2020	Full	Youth	Honorary	Social	Adult	U21	Minor	Juvenile
Abbeyleix St Lazarians	343	0	104	212	7	20	56	39	0	207
Annanough	146	100	79	65	0	2	48	15	5	58
Arles/Kilcruise	139	43	87	52	0	0	42	14	1	51
Arles/Killeen	130	200	88	42	0	0	43	1	2	37
Ballinakill	224	0	119	105	0	0	67	31	4	101
Ballyfin	422	146	188	202	2	30	59	27	1	200
Ballylinan	286	349	90	168	1	27	39	13	0	113
Ballypickas	140	54	76	63	1	0	45	11	6	57
Ballyroan Abbey	475	13	243	230	0	2	115	76	11	214
Barrowhouse	331	55	209	113	4	5	37	14	1	97
Borris In Ossory	116	25	109	1	6	0	44	12	1	0
Borris in Ossory Kilcotton	118	98	0	118	0	0	0	0	0	118
Camross	348	20	220	120	6	2	76	21	4	116
Castletown	340	1	181	158	0	1	69	19	9	138
Clonad	164	168	66	83	0	15	40	10	5	78
Clonaslee St Manmans	260	30	151	109	0	0	113	24	26	83
Clough-Ballacolla	219	17	136	83	0	0	77	25	8	75
Colt Shanahoe	230	6	179	40	9	2	96	22	3	37
Colt/St Fintan's	153	70	82	53	6	12	36	8	2	50
Courtwood	178	62	81	96	1	0	33	12	4	91
Crettyard	204	266	48	89	0	67	30	7	3	80
Emo	163	0	144	19	0	0	44	21	2	11
Errill	102	1	99	2	0	1	36	4	2	0
Graigucullen	281	919	111	118	23	29	40	11	2	100
Kilcavan	289	84	132	140	4	13	47	17	0	118
Kilcotton	113	16	95	5	7	6	46	7	5	0
Killeshin	292	143	131	152	0	9	52	23	9	135
Kyle	75	67	46	24	0	5	28	3	1	23
Mountmellick	328	25	145	152	27	4	74	32	0	140
O'Dempseys	510	360	234	250	0	26	61	14	9	187
Park Ratheniska	332	0	136	196	0	0	48	25	18	158
Portarlinton	433	290	186	209	38	0	18	24	1	178
Portlaoise	866	833	409	435	1	21	131	68	15	409
Rathdowney	106	84	97	9	0	0	42	24	9	0
Rathdowney Errill	153	0	2	151	0	0	0	0	3	148
Rosenallis	349	0	171	177	1	0	37	10	24	148
Shanahoe	151	0	102	48	1	0	56	15	3	42
Slieve Bloom	78	66	66	12	0	0	27	11	0	12
Spink	348	0	88	208	10	42	42	28	26	168
St Fintan's Mountrath	279	75	53	135	0	91	9	6	4	116
St Joseph's	386	8	197	132	12	45	86	43	15	114
Stradbally	118	523	100	11	7	0	42	15	6	4
The Harps	182	449	57	112	11	2	28	13	10	84
The Heath	378	314	160	205	13	0	58	19	2	172
The Rock	355	1	169	180	0	6	72	14	4	159
Timahoe	244	13	121	118	0	5	31	14	1	110
Trumera	135	0	70	64	0	1	32	9	6	57
Totals	12106	8245	5864	5553	198	491	2352	871	275	4879

Tuairisc Oifigeach Cultúr & Gaeilge CLG Laoise

Cruinniú Chinn Bhliana CLG Laoise 2020

As Oifigeach Cultúr & Gaeilge I am Cathaoirleach of the Scór Committee and preside over the allocation of Gaeltacht scholarships. There wasn't much to preside over in 2020 due to the pandemic, however we did get to hold Laois Scór before the lockdown although there was scant participation on February 28th at the Centre of Excellence. We were represented in the Leinster semi final by Ballyfin in Aithriseireacht/Scéalíocht, Amhránaíocht Aonair and Bailéad Ghrúpa, and in Ceol Uirlise by Kilcavan and they all gave great performances in Clonroche, Co Wexford on Sunday March 8th 2020

Courtwood had qualified for Tráth na gCeist but that too fell foul of Lockdown. We had organised Scór na bPaisti for Errill on April 25th but alas, the rest is history. As I have stated in previous years it is my opinion that beyond the Scór na bPáisti age group Scór is in serious decline, if not worse. I would like to thank the Committee: Michael Martin (Runai), Christine Kealy (PRO), Paddy Connolly, John Paul Nevin, Monica Middleton, Donal Deegan, Siobhan Byron, Julia Stapleton, Mick Lillis and Jody Conway.

I would like to request that clubs, promote the usage of our native language in the day to day business of your club. I am available to help your Club's Officers if required. I am reminding you again in the run up to your club's Annual General Meeting to present a little of all reports 'as Gaeilge'. Thank you to my fellow County Board Officers, Officers of the clubs of Laois agus an foireann san Oifig.

Monica Bn Uí Dhubhshláine

Referee Administrator Report

We began our year by holding our annual Inservice course, which all referees have to complete in order to be allowed officiate games during the year. Our Inservice training was facilitated by Mick Sheridan from Kildare and 46 Referees attended on the night of February 10th. 2020. That number might sound a lot, but it still leaves us very short in our Referee pool, considering the amount of fixtures that take place throughout the year, which in a normal year often numbers near 2,000 games.

We had planned to hold our Fitness and Rules Testing on the 25th. March. In Fitness Testing we had intended lowering the test target from 15 (yoyo test) the previous year, in an effort to increase the pool of referees that could officiate at the higher grade in both codes in 2020. We also intended to have regular review meetings in each code whereby we would show referees review clips of incidents in games, which was successful in 2019 and referees found very beneficial.

Unfortunately our year was to face a huge disruption with the announcement that all GAA activities were to cease immediately because of the Covid 19 Pandemic virus, which saw our entire country enter in to a lockdown for nearly three months. At the time it looked as if we would not see any games activity, but as restrictions began to lift, club training was allowed to return as long as HSE and Return to Play guidelines were followed. In July, it was announced that full contact could take place, so our club championships were pencilled into commence the end of July. The decision was also taken by CCC, for the 2020 League competitions to be declared null and void.

Prior to resumption, all referees had to complete an e-learning online education module and health questionnaire and agree to abide by the return to play guidelines to be able to officiate at games. In fairness the majority of referees made themselves available, but unfortunately some were unable to return due to the potential risk factor involved. Due to the lockdown restrictions, our referees also had to deal with the new football rules introduced at Congress in February and without the league competition for experience, they were thrown in at the deep end and straight into championship to find their feet. In fairness they did very well implementing the new rules, which as usual are not quite as clear as they seem.

We then faced another setback, when only a few weeks into our championships, Laois found ourselves in another lockdown with our neighbours Kildare and Offaly, which placed our fixture list under even more pressure. On the resumption of games, the majority of our fixtures had to be played at floodlit venues or at weekends, due to fading light in the evenings. This placed a huge amount of pressure on our referees, with sometimes in excess of 25 games being played each Saturday and Sunday. Thankfully by virtue of the huge effort from our referees, no fixture had to be cancelled. Prior to our Hurling finals weekend, our club championship programme was again halted and the schedule for completion of our club games is still unknown.

I would appeal to all clubs to make it their aim of providing at least ONE referee to add to our already low pool of referees. Out of the 46 we started with and a few more persuaded back during the year to help us out, we lost more to retirement and the Covid 19 pandemic. We also need to take a zero tolerance on verbal abuse towards our referees, it is an issue they face on a daily basis and until this practice is eradicated, it will be difficult to recruit new officials.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our referees who put their shoulder to the wheel and made sure no fixtures had to be cancelled, particularly on days when over 30 games were scheduled. I wish to thank the County Board and in particular Niall and Audrey in the office, for all their help and support. Thanks again to our appointments committee, Vincent Dowling, Sean Connolly, Alan Langton, Tom Clear, Brian Allen, Laurence Phelan and Jody Conway, whom in challenging times got through a lot of work to make sure all fixtures had a referee appointed. Finally thanks to our referee assessors, who got to games despite the pandemic and assisted our referees by assessing them during games.

Yours in sport

Darren Bracken

Referee Administrator

Ainmniúcháin (Nominations)

Cathaoirleach (Chairperson):

Peter O'Neill (Outgoing); Kieran Leavy.

Cisteoir (Treasurer):

Martin Byrne (Outgoing).

Leas Cathaoirleach (Vice Chairperson):

Tom Clear (Outgoing); Bryan Breen.

Leas Cisteoir (Asst. Treasurer):

Paschal McEvoy (Outgoing).

Oifigeach Oiliúna (Coaching Officer):

Fergal Byron (Outgoing).

Oifigeach Cultir agus Gaeilge (Cultural and Irish Officer):

Monica Delaney (Outgoing).

Oifigeach Caidrimh Poiblí (P.R.O.):

Paul Dargan (Outgoing).

Comhairle Laighean (Leinster Council Delegate x 2):

PJ Kelly; Richard Kennedy (both Outgoing); Brian Allen.

Ard Comhairle (Central Council Delegate):

Gerry Kavanagh (Outgoing).

Congress Delegates (3 to be elected):

Cathaoirleach, Runaí & outgoing Ard Comhairle Delegate automatically attend;
Brian Allen; Martin Byrne; Kieran Leavy.

Leinster Convention Delegates (as decided by Leinster Management on 12/11/20 for 2021):

Cathaoirleach, Runaí & outgoing Comhairle Laighean Delegate automatically attend.

Na Rúin (Motions)

(A) Amend Laois GAA Byelaw No. 8 (Transfers) as follows (changes in italic) –

6. Transfers

- A. There shall be two distinct Club “designations” – Urban and Rural. This will allow the CCC to distinguish between Transfers and Attachment to First Clubs to and from - (i) Urban to Rural Clubs, (ii) Rural to Rural Clubs and (iii) Rural to Urban Clubs.
- B. Portlaoise GAA Club will be designated an “Urban” Club and all other Clubs in Laois will be designated “Rural”.
- C. Requests for transfer shall not be considered unless submitted to the County Secretary before January 31st in any year. Exception : In the case of an Urban to Rural Transfer, an application may be granted provided the player has not participated in Club Competition (including U12 Go Games) in the year in which the Transfer / Attachment to First Clubs is sought.
- D. *In the event of Player from an exclusive football or hurling Club successfully transferring to a Dual Club participating in both codes, he shall play both codes with that Club and cannot participate in the other code with either an exclusive football or hurling Club.*
- E. The C.C.C. shall process and make initial decisions on all applications for Transfer within the county, in a timely manner with consideration to the commencement of competitions (Riail 6.5, T.O. 2020). Such decisions shall reflect the ethos of the Association as outlined in Riail 6.1,T.O. 2020 and give due consideration to the negative effect, if any, it may have on the player’s First Club.

Other Relevant Connection: The Guidelines and Criteria which will assist the CCC in its deliberations and which shall constitute “other relevant connection” for the purposes of Bye-Law 5, 6 and 7 are as follows (Exception being where CCC may after due consideration deem the application to be exceptional circumstances) -

(i). Urban to Rural Transfer

A player from a designated Urban Club may, at any time, transfer to, any Rural Club without the necessity of meeting any of the criteria and / or exceptions usually associated with such Transfers, provided the player has not participated in Club Competition (including U12 Go Games) in the year in which the Transfer / Attachment to First Clubs is sought.

(ii). Rural to Rural Transfer

- a) *Permanent Residence - An adult player or juvenile player from a family moving to a new place of Permanent Residence, which is within the Catchment Area of the Club to which he wishes to transfer. In such cases the onus of proof of new permanent residence shall be on the applicant for transfer.*
- b) Parentage Rule – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which his Parent was a Player in Adult Competition or a Club Officer or Member, who over a reasonable period of time, made a proven contribution to that Club. Such criteria shall also apply for Transfer applications within Club catchment areas, and /or where other exceptional circumstances may be considered.
- c) Primary School – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area where he is presently attending or has attended Primary School. The Primary School rule will only be taken into consideration where the player has been attending this school or has attended for at least one full school year.

(iii). Rural to Urban Transfer

- a) Permanent Residence - An adult player or juvenile player from a family moving to a new place of Permanent Residence, which is within the Catchment Area of the Urban Club to which he wishes to transfer. In such cases the onus of proof of new permanent residence shall be on the applicant for transfer
- b) Parentage Rule – A player may apply for a Transfer to a Club in the catchment area in which his Parent was a player in adult competition, or in exceptional circumstances, a Club Officer or Member who, over a reasonable period of time, has made a proven contribution to that Club. Such criteria shall also apply for Transfer applications within Club catchment areas, and /or where other exceptional circumstances may be considered.

(B). Amend Laois GAA Byelaw No. 7 (Permission to Play) as follows –

7. Playing Restrictions (Club)

- (a). Subject to Riail 6.8, (c), T.O. 2020, the CCC shall process and make decisions on applications received on or before January 31st. in any year for permission for an **Adult** player from an exclusively Football Club to play Hurling with a Dual Club or a player from an exclusively Hurling Club to play Football with a Dual Club.

A player from an exclusive Football Club may play Hurling with an exclusive Hurling Club, and vice versa, within their catchment area, or may make application as below.

Applications will be decided based on the following criteria:

- If Rural Club (as determined in Byelaw 6), the player shall be accommodated by another Rural Club within his catchment area;
- If there is no Rural Club with that particular Code within his catchment area, the player shall be accommodated by another Rural Club, adjacent or in nearest proximity to the players First Club;
- Parentage Rule – A player who cannot be facilitated with a particular Code in his First Club, may apply for Permission to play Football or Hurling for a Club in the catchment area in which his Parent was a Player in Adult Competition or a Club Officer or Member, who over a reasonable period of time, made a proven contribution to that Club.

(b). Subject to Riail 6.8, (c), Exception (1), T.O. 2020, the CCC shall process and make decisions on applications received on or before January 31st. in any year for permission for a Club's **Underage (up to including U20 / U21)** players who may be without an Underage Team in a particular Grade or Code or who may be from an exclusive Football Club to wishing to play Hurling with a Dual Club or a player from an exclusive Hurling Club wishing to play Football with a Dual Club.

All applications must be made by a Club on behalf of its players, to play with the same club or independent team. Any exception, for individual players to go to different clubs, shall be decided by the CCC. Application shall be decided in accordance with the Central Council Code, Guideline and directive policy for the regulation of Independent Team and as outlined in Riail 6.8, (c), Exception (1) (a) & (b), T.O. 2020.

Applications will be decided based on the following criteria:

- If Rural Club (as determined in Byelaw 6), the player shall be accommodated by another Rural Club within his catchment area;
- If there is no Rural Club with that particular Code within his catchment area, the player shall be accommodated by another Rural Club, adjacent or in nearest proximity to the players First Club;



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