



**TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS**

**AN COMHCHOISTE UM THURASÓIREACHT, CULTÚR, EALAÍONA, SPÓRT  
AGUS MEÁIN**

**Tuarascáil Taistil: Cumann Sacair na hÉireann**

**23 Bealtaine 2023**

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**HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON**

**TOURISM, CULTURE, ARTS, SPORT AND MEDIA**

**Travel Report: Football Association of Ireland**

**23 May 2023**

TCASM/23/11



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media undertook a travel episode to the Football Association of Ireland on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

### Members in attendance

- Deputy Niamh Smyth, Cathaoirleach
- Deputy Chris Andrews
- Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick
- Senator Malcolm Byrne
- Senator Shane Cassells

### Secretariat in attendance

- Laura Pathe, Clerk to the Joint Committee
- Calum Fabb, Policy Advisor to the Joint Committee

### Football Association of Ireland officials in attendance, and capacity in which they attended

- Gerry McAnaney, President
- Jonathan Hill, Chief Executive Officer
- David Courell, Chief Operating Officer
- Marc Canham, Director of Football

- Louise Cassidy, Marketing and Communications Director
- Aoife Rafferty, People and Culture Director
- Ger McDermott, Grassroots Director
- Mark Scanlon, League of Ireland Director
- Barry Gleeson, Director of Operations
- Sean Kavanagh, Commercial Director
- Gerry Egan, Company Secretary
- Eileen Gleeson, Head of Women's Football
- Cathal Dervan, Public Relations and Communications Director

## INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

Members of the Committee met with FAI CEO, Jonathan Hill, alongside President Gerry McAnaney. Mr McAnaney opened the session, welcoming the Members of the Committee, and Mr Hill provided an overview of the day's agenda.

Members met Vera Pauw, then Women's Senior International Team Head Coach.

Members were also introduced to the senior leadership team of the FAI, and received a summary of the different functions of each team member.

## GOVERNANCE REFORM PROGRESS

Members were given an overview of the FAI's governance arrangements, including its organisational structure, including the composition and arrangements of its Board, associated standing committees, and judicial bodies. Discussions were held in relation to the requirement for all National Governing Bodies to meet gender balance quotas within Board structures.

## BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Members were briefed in respect of the FAI's means of supporting leadership in establishing organisational strategy, and the associated delivery of same. It was noted that the organisation's business operations feed into the areas of strategy, governance, legal, people and culture, facilities and infrastructure, club licensing, major events, technology, and the FAI Connect system.

The FAI outlined its business operations priorities for 2023, including the FAI Connect system, governance reform, the bid to host the UEFA 2028 championships, child welfare and safeguarding compliance, and facilities strategy.

## PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Members were briefed on the FAI's role in supporting staff to develop football across Ireland. FAI's people and culture division was discussed as it intersects with the areas of people policies and procedures, staff engagement initiatives, health and wellbeing, learning and development, equality, diversity, and inclusion, values and behaviours, and Football Social Responsibility.

The FAI outlined its people and culture priorities for 2023, including the establishment of particular values and behaviours, reward and recognition structures, learning and development strategies, and progress in equality, diversity, and inclusion. The FAI highlighted its efforts in terms of engaging minoritised communities in football, and noted that the FAI requires diverse staff to reflect the diversity of Irish football teams.

## COMMERCIAL

The delegation was briefed in relation to the FAI's work in growing new and existing revenue streams to achieve the organisation's strategic goals. The FAI discussed its commercial activities in relation to broadcasting, match day, ticketing, Club Ireland and hospitality, and partnerships.

## FOOTBALL

Members were briefed on the broad scope of the FAI's activities across grassroots, national, and international levels, and within the men's and women's game. It was noted that the FAI's core objective is to regularly and consistently produce the highest quality of Irish players for domestic and international football.

The FAI discussed its operations in relation to education and development, the participation of women and girls in football, international and player development, identification and recruitment of talent, and performance support. Football priorities for 2023 were outlined, including activities in relation to the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, the UEFA EURO 2028 championships, and the development of a football pathways plan.

## INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

The delegation was briefed on the FAI's international operations, including those related to match scheduling, team operations, kit and logistical considerations, match operations, safety and security, and medical operations.

The FAI highlighted its international operations priorities for 2023, including qualification for major tournaments and ranking aims for teams, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, the senior men's team, support for League of Ireland, and particular levels of international activity.

## LEAGUE OF IRELAND

The FAI described its activities to support the League of Ireland, including the men's and women's premier divisions, men's first division, ELOI, LOITV, ETB courses, and the League of Ireland academy. The FAI also introduced its League of Ireland branding strategy.

The FAI highlighted the League of Ireland's 2023 priorities, including the Women's President's Cup, the Women's All-Ireland Competition, the League of Ireland Academy development plan and associated certification, new League website, LOI Convention, LOITV upgrades, and a facilities investment plan.

## GRASSROOTS

The delegation was briefed on the FAI's activities in relation to the development of grassroots football, including a core objective of growing participation in football. It was noted that operations in this regard included club development, the participation of women and girls, Football for All, futsal and recreational football, the recruitment, retention, and development of referees, football camps, community and public service remit, and schools and third-level football.

The FAI outlined that among the aims of the grassroots division were to engage youth as early as possible, to weave football into the education system, to ensure that football clubs are part of communities, and to leverage football with a view to furthering social inclusion. Among the FAI's priorities for grassroots football in 2023, as highlighted, are club development, football in schools, growth of participation, the recruitment of volunteers, and development of football pathways.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Members were briefed on the FAI's activities across media, including League of Ireland marketing and communications, campaigns, volunteers, ticketing, digital technologies, and brand and reputation.

It was outlined that the FAI's marketing and communication priorities for 2023 included a roll-out of the FAI's rebrand, digital transformation within the organisation, reputational improvements, and the FIFA Women's World Cup and Legacy Plan.

## WOMEN AND GIRLS

The delegation were updated on the FAI's strategic goals in the area of the participation of women and girls in football, including the development and delivery of programmes in clubs and schools to ensure girls have the chance to play, learn, and enjoy football, the retention and development of young female players through competition structures, and the identification, development, and promotion of female players and coaches through targeted player identification and coach education programmes.

Discussions were held regarding the attraction and retention of women and girls of all ages and abilities, the promotion of gender balance at all game levels, and increasing the profile of the women's game.

## **CONCLUDING MATTERS**

Deputy Niamh Smyth, on behalf of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, thanked CEO Jonathan Hill and President McAnaney for the welcome to the headquarters of the Football Association of Ireland, and expressed thanks to the FAI's Senior Leadership Team for the insights and presentations they had shared with the Members of the Committee.