



## Opening Statement

Ref JCM-I-1860

### Club Player representatives

Good afternoon,

We are pleased to be here today, on behalf of our club, Cuala, to discuss the Integration of the Camogie Association, the GAA and the LGFA with the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media. To introduce ourselves, my name is Cormac Spain and today I am here, along with Aisling Groarke to represent and give a perspective from current players on this integration.

Our club, Cuala is based in Dalkey in South County Dublin and serves a wide community from Blackrock through Dun Laoghaire, to Shankill. We currently have circa 3,500 active members, placing us as one of the larger clubs in the county. Our club is very proud of our community and its members, and over the years we have built a wonderful environment, instilling Gaelic Games and its rich culture.

In terms of how we have seen integration in our own club, Cuala has adopted what is called the 'One Club' model for over 10 years. This has proven to be extremely successful, with all club members, both male and female, reaping the benefits of an inclusive club setup. There is equity across all our members, our club registration fees are non-discriminatory and logistically, all players, both male and female, are treated equally and are granted the same resources. In essence, despite having members from three different administrations (GAA, LGFA and Camogie association) the club can still successfully function as one unit. We have one Club Executive that is comprised of half female, half male.

Through a strong ethos focused on teamwork and inclusion, we see ourselves as a club of equals in terms of branding and communication with one sponsorship model for the club. In our experience as players, there are a multitude of benefits associated with integration:

1. **Player Welfare** - while our club offers equal opportunity to all players, male and female, the often intricate logistics of three separate administrations means that often players, particularly female players, find themselves having to commit to one sport over another, or in some cases, dropping out of sport. There are real challenges faced by female dual players - at juvenile level through to adult. We have encountered hugely unfair choices with some of our female adult teams with regard to matches. As have other clubs in the country.

Integration would allow for player welfare to be looked after under one alliance, allowing pitches to be allocated fairly, games to be scheduled appropriately and in turn creating more opportunities for players.

2. **Administration for Club Volunteers** - As players, we see the crucial value of volunteers. We rely on volunteers to complete endless paperwork, collect fees and registrations, as well as being coaches, players, administrators, physios and so on. However, with different forms of administration, including processes, per association as well as different courses being run and separate resources being distributed - the varying demands on our volunteers are unsustainable. Integration would hopefully reduce this current intricacy and allow for sustainability and growth.

3. **Equity** - Integration across all codes would allow for all clubs to follow a 'One Club' model that sees equity for all members - Allowing for members to access club facilities, resources and coaching through an equal and inclusive practice as one unit. Such an inclusive practice will showcase clubs as more attractive to potential new members while also retaining current members. In 2018, 32% of Cuala members were female. As of 2024, with a continuing rise in membership 50% of our members are female and 50% are male.

There will be challenges associated with Integration however we believe that the benefits heavily outweigh any potential hurdles and see this integration as crucial and necessary in order to allow Gaelic Games to thrive while looking after its members.

We'd like to thank you for your time today as well as thank you for providing an opportunity to allow a players perspective within this significant discussion.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.