
The Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media invites you, to a meeting in public session to discuss the ‘integration of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and Camogie Association with the Gaelic Athletic Association’.

At the meeting, you will be invited to make an opening statement of **no more than 3** minutes in duration in relation to the above matter, and the opening statement(s) will be followed by questions to the witnesses by the Members of the Committee.

Cathaoirleach, agus a Chairde,

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to address your committee. I am here as the recently appointed Uachtaráin of the Camogie Association. The Camogie Association was founded in 1904 and celebrates its 120th anniversary this year. We have a membership of over 120,000 spread over 720 clubs in Ireland and across the world.

We are a volunteer led organisation, in the main operating within the Club, County, Provincial structures. The overall supreme governing council of the association is the Ard Chomhairle which I chair. Operational head office functions are delivered by a staff of 20 personnel led by our Ard Stiurthoir/CEO Sinead McNulty.

Integration with the GAA and the LGFA has been on the agenda within the Camogie Association for decades. We have been consistently in favour of integration and steadfast in our belief that the new combined and fully integrated singular Gaelic Games Association will be a stronger, more balanced association. It will more appropriately reflect modern Irish society and will be better positioned to ensure the equitable development of Camogie, Hurling, Ladies Football and Gaelic Football into the future.

There are challenges involved but nothing that is insurmountable. The decision of the Steering Group to recommend that we use the existing GAA legal entity for the new integrated association significantly reduces the complexities of the task ahead.

The challenges of integration are often condensed into the three F’s – fixtures, facilities and finance. It is worth noting these three challenges already exist for our separate organisations and will exist for the combined organisation. Integrating does not of itself exacerbate or alleviate any of them. We have no less facilities the day after integration than we had the day before. We have no more fixtures the day after than the day before. Our combined finances are the same the day after as they were the day before. We do need to tackle all three areas and I firmly believe that as a combined, integrated, single organisation we will be significantly better positioned to tackle them than we are now. We should not use these challenges as reasons to delay integration – in fact we should recognise that the faster we complete the integration process the more quickly we will be able to set about resolving these long standing issues. Collectively we can improve our facilities, increase our financial capacity and reduce fixture congestion.

The Sport Ireland Women in Sport policy has clearly identified the gaps that continue to exist between Male and Female participation and continuation rates in sport. Whilst 97% of primary school going girls participate in weekly sports this drops to 80% in secondary school. Targeted interventions are needed to maintain participation and Camogie certainly has a role to play in providing girls with a continuity of opportunities to participate in their school,

parish, town and village. I believe that every child in every school, every parish, every town should have access to Camogie, Hurling, Ladies Football and Gaelic Football. With your help our integrated singular Gaelic Games organisation can ensure that this happens.

I appreciate your time and am happy to take any questions.