

A Chairde,

My name is David Britton, I am the Head of GAA Handball, a role I commenced in late 2022. GAA Handball welcome the opportunity to address the the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, on the subject of integration within the GAA.

2024 is a flagship year for GAA Handball, not only will we be hosting two world championships in Wallball and 4-Wall, we also celebrate our Centenary as a member of the GAA. GAA Handball is a proud and vibrant sport with a rich history and tradition. At the very core of this history and tradition is our membership to the GAA family.

In early 2022 GAA Handball was integrated into the the National GAA Coaching & Games Development Department. The impact of this integration has seen Handball witness progressive change occur within our organisation. As part of the integration process a structural review of GAA Handball was conducted. The review concluded that new professional structures were required at a staffing level, and that additional changes were required to the volunteer structures, primarily at Ard Comhairle level.

Since the beginning of the integration process GAA Handball has seen the introduction of an entirely new staff team and staffing structure in the last 18 months. The new structure has seen the creation of three Regional Development Officer (RDO) roles to assist clubs and county boards at grass-roots level while developing stronger internal links through Coaching & Games Development, and also external stakeholder relationships with Local Sports Partnerships (LSP's), Schools, Third level and Community groups to help to grow and develop the game.

A new National Head of Handball, Competition & Membership Officer, and Centre Coordinator have been introduced as part of the new structure. Ulster GAA have also introduced a second handball development officer within the province to work alongside the Ulster Development Manager.

The new professional structures within GAA Handball have already witnessed a measurable impact within the last 18 months. Over 300 different Handball programs have been delivered nationwide to just under 20,000 participants.

The recommendations relating to the volunteer structures within GAA Handball, which emanated from the structural review, necessitated a suite of reforms being adopted within GAA Handball's constitution.

In February 2023, at national congress all 13 proposed motions were carried by the membership. The adoption of these reforms has led to a complete restructuring at Ard Comhairle level and has seen the following impacts occur:

New positions on Ard Comhairle have been created including a national treasurer, chair of the national ladies committee, chair of the PRO committee and chair of coaching and games committee. The establishment of eight new sub committees to Ard Comhairle, which include a finance & audit committee, a governance & risk committee, referees & officials committee and a coaching & games development committee. New independent Ard Comhairle members have also been added. As a result of these reforms, GAA Handball will have reached the compliance standards as required by Sport Ireland.

Prior to the implementation of these reforms GAA Handball had faced a number of governance challenges and were struggling to meet the compliance and governance standards as set out by Sport Ireland and the Code for Good Governance in Sport. I am delighted to report that through a combination of hard work and amazing support from the GAA and Sport Ireland, GAA Handball have now reached the compliance standards as required by Sport Ireland.

None of the aforementioned progress would have been possible without the support of the GAA, in particular Tom Ryan, Shane Flanagan and his team and the various different GAA departments which have been invaluable to GAA Handball on our integration journey. GAA Handball would like to acknowledge and thank the GAA family for all their support and help over the last year and a half in helping GAA Handball implement these crucial changes.

I welcome continued collaboration with the Steering Group on Integration to leverage the experience garnered by GAA Handball in our integration process in strengthening the integration process of the Camogie Association, the GAA and the LGFA.