



GPA Submission to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht

“Integration of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and Camogie Association with the Gaelic Athletic Association.”

1) GPA Integration Journey

The GPA is the representative body for 4,000 male and female Intercounty players in Ireland. Equality was added as an objective of the new Association when we integrated in 2020. Our vision was to “*work towards equal investment, recognition and opportunities*”, and I’m proud to state the GPA has delivered gender equality across all areas of its’ own governance, and supports that we offer players

The GPA believes that Gaelic Games can be a world leader in gender equality. In 2021, we brought the landmark motion to GAA congress calling for the integration of the NGBs, leading to the commencement of the current integration process.

2) Integration Learnings and Best Practice

Reflecting on GPA's integration journey and various academic insights, we believe the NGBs can find essential guidance for their journey. We believed full integration was key to breaking gender barriers and building an inclusive organisation. We've learned the importance of prioritizing equality, leadership, and equal representation in the GPA. And I'm proud to say we have a thriving Integrated Player Representative Body;

Key lessons from our journey was the need to;

- Champion equality in every decision.
- Strong leadership – that helps shape collective vision.
- Ensure equal representation at all levels.
- Thorough planning is essential, including post-merger strategies.
- An equity-based funding model is vital.
- Design an organization that supports both genders equally.

The GPA's successful integration journey serves as a model. Despite relatively limited engagement with the three NGBs during their journey to date, our commitment to meaningful contribution remains firm, and we welcome enhanced engagement. It's important to note that players are not bystanders to the decisions made for our games.

3) Government Leadership in Driving Gender Equality

We believe the government has provided significant leadership on gender equality in Irish sports. We want to thank the government for the equalisation of grant funding for male and female inter-county players. This funding remains a significant recognition from the government of the Intercounty-Players' role and impact on Irish Society. The GPA administers this important funding, which helps us maintain important independence from the NGBs, gather data on players' well-being, and engage players in vital services. The funding continues to provide a direct relationship between the government and the Inter-county players across Ireland. And we remain committed to continuing to support key national policies with respect to health, well-being, and sport participation.

I would like to note that Recent government policies guaranteeing gender representation on boards and ensuring 'Similar Access Requirements' for sporting facilities receiving public funding are again driving recognition and opportunity for females. The GPA is keen to engage in the development of more policies that can enhance the equal treatment of male and female players.

5) Independent, Collective GPA Player Representation

Challenges do persist for female inter-county players, highlighted in the GPA's State of Play report in 2023, stressing the need for agreed minimum standards and funding. Despite aiming to collaborate with associations for interim solutions, limited engagement did lead players to unite in the United for Equality campaign. Responding to this, the first female Player Charter ensuring minimum standards is being implemented in 2024, supported by increased GAA funding. This is greatly welcomed and is a starting point.

We believe incremental progress is crucial to the journey to integration in 2027. We need to continue enhancing support and minimum standards for female players.

I want to emphasise the players' collective right to independent representation, and its importance. The GPA would like see increased formal recognition from the Government and relevant entities, and your support in this endeavour would be greatly appreciated.

6) Conclusion

In, conclusion, The GPA will continue to support progress towards an integrated Association that treats every girl and boy, man and woman in Gaelic Games with equal recognition, investment and opportunity. The key priorities relevant to inter-county players on the integration journey include:

- 1) Striving for the equal treatment of male and female players when it comes to minimum standards and recognition,
- 2) Engagement with players on integration and a vision for one new Gaelic Games Association,
- 3) Key progress milestones such as a 'Similar Access' policy for pitches and joint fixtures calendar,
- 4) Continued progress on equalising the minimum welfare protections such as expenses and medical supports,
- 5) Enhanced recognition of the GPA role in independent, collective player representation, which ultimately helps protect the Amateur Status of Gaelic games.

Many thanks for your time and consideration today.

ENDS