

Runaí Annual Report

Introduction

I am pleased to present my annual report for 2021, my 4th such report. This report will review the 2021 playing season, as well as the general activities of the Munster Council. The report will also discuss Senior Football Championship Structures, the Split Season and Age Grades.

Background

2021 was another challenging year for Munster GAA as the harsh effects of the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic were felt as strongly as in 2020. The year began where 2020 had ended, with the country in full lockdown. Schools, workplaces and businesses closed as the Country's health system struggled to cope with a major surge in Covid-19 case numbers over the Christmas period. Sport took a back seat too, and all GAA activity was cancelled once more. However, this lockdown had one major difference to previous lockdowns and that was the news emerging of the development of vaccines, which gave hope to us all of a return to normal life at some stage during the year. As an extraordinary mass vaccination programme was rolled out across the State, a return to normality started to become more of a reality than a hope, and GAA Clubs began welcoming players back to training in May, with a full return to games in June. Intercounty games were allowed to commence in April, with the Championship beginning in late May. Games began behind closed doors, but there was a gradual return to crowds as the summer progressed.

Overview of Munster GAA Competitions in 2021

In the Senior Hurling Championship, Luimneach confirmed their status as the dominant force in hurling at present, by winning their third Munster Championship in a row and their third All-Ireland title in 4 years. In Munster, they began their campaign with a victory over Corcaigh in Semple Stadium. This game saw the return of spectators to our games for the first time since February 2020 with just over 2,300 in attendance. On the other side of the draw, Án Clár beat Portlairge in the Quarter Final, and met Tiobráid Árann in the Semi Final. This game was also deemed a spectator 'test event' with just over 2,500 spectators present. Tiobráid Árann went on to win the game and qualify for the Munster Final.

If there was ever a game of 2 halves, the Munster Senior Hurling final of 2021 was it. Tiobráid Árann dominated the first half playing some top class hurling and went in at half time 2.16 to 0.12 ahead. The second half provided us with an astonishing comeback, with Luimneach turning the tables on their great rivals as they embarked on a scoring spree that would see them win the game by 2.29 to 3.21. Just over 5,000 spectators were present at this game as the number of spectators being allowed to attend outdoor sporting event was slowly increasing.

In the Senior Football Championship, normal order was restored following the dramatic events of 2020. Luimneach secured victory over Portlairge at the Quarter Final stage, while Ciarraí accounted for Án Clár. Ciarraí then dethroned Tiobráid Árann in the Semi Final, while Corcaigh made their 5th final in a row and their 8th final appearance since the County's last Munster Championship Final victory in 2012 with victory over Luimneach in the other Semi Final. The Final, played in front of just 2,200 spectators, saw a close fought first quarter, but following the first water break, Ciarraí took total control of the game to win by 4.22 to 1.09, in what was a one sided and disappointing contest.

In the Minor and U-20 competitions, it proved to be an extraordinary year for Corcaigh, as the county won both Minor and both U-20 titles, achieving a quadruple of title for the first time since 2005. Corcaigh won the U-20 Hurling Title beating Luimneach in a very entertaining Final by 1.26 to 1.24, while their Football counterparts beat Tiobráid Árann by 3.20 to 3.10. In Minor Hurling, Corcaigh defeated Portlairge in the final, winning by 1.26 to 1.15, while in the Football Final, Corcaigh were victorious over Luimneach, winning in a hard-fought game by 1.17 to 0.13, with the Rebels pulling away from Luimneach in the last 5 minutes.

Two results of concern in the Minor Championships were Corcaigh's 40 points victory over Án Clár in the Minor Hurling Championship, while the same County had 40 points to spare over Portlairge in the Minor Football Championship. The Minor Hurling result can be seen as a one-off result, as we know from the performance of Án Clár Schools in Munster competitions, that hurling is generally in a good position in the Banner County. However, in Minor Football, it is clear that a structure that pits Corcaigh and Ciarraí against some of the weaker counties in a one-off knockout game is clearly of little use to either county. I expect that 2022 will see the re-introduction of the Round Robin Format, that sees Án Clár, Luimneach, Tiobráid Árann and Portlairge play each other before progressing to play Corcaigh and Kerry. This will give the 4 developing counties 3 competitive games, and these games will better equip them to play Corcaigh and Kerry.

Inter-County Competition	Winner
Senior Hurling	Luimneach
Under 20 Hurling	Corcaigh
Minor Hurling	Corcaigh
Senior Football	Ciarraí
Under 20 Football	Corcaigh
Minor Football	Corcaigh

Table 1: Munster GAA Inter County Champions for 2021

The AIB Club Championships made a welcome return, with the Munster Championships being played in late November and December of 2021. At the time of writing, the finals were not played, but needless to say, the competitions have provided great entertainment and they are a great source of pride and enjoyment for participating clubs.

Overview of Munster Teams in All-Ireland Championships

It was a most successful year for Munster's representatives in the All-Ireland Hurling Championships, while it was a disappointing one on the Football front. Corcaigh began a dominant year for Munster Teams by winning the delayed 2020 All-Ireland Under 20 Hurling Final, beating Áth Cliath in the final. Corcaigh added the 2021 All-Ireland later on in the Summer, defeating Gaillimh in the final, winning by an impressive 4.19 to 2.14. Munster counties have dominated this competition of late, with the All-Ireland title coming to the province each year for the last 10 years. It is also encouraging to see that all 5 Liam MacCarthy Hurling counties in the province have tasted success at this grade during this period. Corcaigh also tasted All-Ireland Minor success for the first time since 2002, by defeating Gaillimh in the final on a score line of 1.23 to 0.12. These 3 victories are a sure sign that the Rebel County is

making great strides in Hurling and their success starved supporters must be hoping that a first Senior Title since 2005 is not that far away.

In Senior Hurling, Luimneach were outstanding in the All-Ireland Championship. Following victory over Portlairge in the All-Ireland Semi Final, they were totally dominant in the final, with a 3.32 to 1.22 victory over Corcaigh, who were appearing in their first final since 2013. These are certainly extraordinary times for Luimneach GAA. From 1973 to 2018, the county experienced heartbreak and dark days, with final losses in 1974, 1980, 1994, 1996 and 2007. But, green shoots were emerging with the implementation of the 'Lifting the Treaty' strategy, and All-Ireland U-21 victories in 2015 and 2017 laid strong foundations for Senior success. The famine for the county ended in 2018 and has been followed since with victories in 2020 and 2021. Declan Hannon has the honour of being only the second person ever, along with Christy Ring, to raise the Liam McCarthy Cup on three occasions.

For Corcaigh, the final loss, and particularly the margin of it, was a difficult pill to swallow. However, with the aforementioned U-20 and Minor All-Ireland successes this year and last, there is the talent and the hope on Leaside that the Rebel County will climb the steps of the Hogan Stand to collect Liam McCarthy in the not-too-distant future. Luimneach capped off a great year with no fewer than 12 thoroughly deserved All-Star awards.

There was disappointment for the province's football representatives. Corcaigh was well defeated by Tír Eoghan in the Minor Football All-Ireland Semi Final, while the Corcaigh U-20 Footballers tasted defeat to eventual All-Ireland Champions, Uíbh Fháilí, also at the Semi Final stage. In the Senior Football competition, hopes were high that Ciarraí could bring Sam Maguire back to the Kingdom for the first time since 2014. However, it was not to be, with the Kingdom suffering an extra time defeat to eventual Champions Tír Eoghan. The Red Hand men showed us all that the Semi Final win wasn't a one-off, as they went on the defeat Maigh Eo in the All-Ireland Final.

Munster GAA Development Plan

In 2022, Munster GAA will launch a development plan, which will focus on the role of the Provincial Council in the development of the Association across the 6 counties. The plan will focus on areas such as Games Development, Referee Development, Governance, Facilities and Finance. 2020 and 2021 have been very challenging financial years for Munster GAA, with over €10 million lost in gate receipts alone. This is money that would normally be used to assist clubs and counties in their own developments, as well as funding a range of other activities. While this income can't be recovered, we must consider how we allow the Association to keep pace with the required physical development across the province, and not be stunted because of this loss of income. This will require a new financial approach over the next 5 to 10 years.

Top of the Councils priority facility list is the redevelopment of Waterford's Walsh Park. Portlairge GAA urgently needs this venue to be brought to the standard required for major Inter County games. For this to happen, a major injection of finance from Munster GAA and Croke Park will be required. While Munster GAA has already committed €750,000 to the project, a further and sizeable grant will be required. Other projects, such as the *Án Clár* Centre of Excellence, will also require considerable funding to bring the project to completion. The Council needs to be strategic in what it prioritises for funding in the years ahead. For example, as well as the aforementioned projects in Clare and Waterford, do we need to concentrate on funding a network of artificial floodlight pitches across the province? Would such a network assist us to increase activity levels in the months from October to April, when it can be hard to

secure pitches, especially for Post Primary school's games? These are questions we will be asking our counties in 2022 as we put our Development Plan in place. Assuming that crowds return to pre Covid levels, Munster GAA has the financial capacity to help fund such developments.

Senior Football Championship Format

2021 saw a lively and healthy debate on the future structure of the Senior Football Championships. The 'Plan B' option was debated at length at Special Congress, with almost all speakers recognising that change was needed, but for every speaker that spoke in favour of the motion, there was a speaker against. When the vote was taken, the result was 50.6% in favour and 49.4% against. If this was a referendum, we would have had our 'Brexit margin moment', with a very small majority being in favour of a total overhaul of the current format, and an almost equal number being against the proposal.

When asked, I did voice my concerns about the financial projections associated with the Plan B proposal and raised a concern that 7 championship games before progression is too many games. However, in my opinion, the Special Congress vote, was a vote for change, while at the same time a vote for a retention of one key element of the current format, and that is the Provincial Championships.

In my view, the most important Championship reform for many years will take place in the summer of 2022, with the introduction of the Tailteann Cup. What has strangled the current format is the fact that all 32 participants begin and end their campaign in the same competition. This has given many counties an inevitable exit from the Championship after 2 or 3 games, and nothing gained in terms of development and progress.

The Tailteann Cup will give the less successful counties an opportunity for Championship success, and this is the key element that we need in order for true reform to take place. We need less successful counties participating in a competition that means as much for them to win as it does for the teams that compete for the Sam Maguire Cup. To be fair to Plan B, it had good points, and one of those was that all teams did get a chance to compete for Sam Maguire before progressing to the second-tier competition.

2 proposals on Championship reform will be put to Congress in February. The 'Red Proposal' is a tweaked version of the 'Plan B' proposal that was considered at Special Congress. The Provincial Championships take place in the early part of the year, but the winners begin the League Championship with 2 points.

The 'Green Proposal' retains the current Provincial Championships as a key part of the Senior Championship, but places teams in round robin Sam Maguire or Tailteann Cup groups depending on their progress in the Provincial Championships and the Allianz Leagues. It gives all counties a shot at the Sam Maguire competition and gives lower tier counties an opportunity to play a County further up the pecking order in a knockout Championship game. Ultimately, all teams will find their level, and play Championship games at that level.

The Green proposal has elements that will satisfy both sides of the Special Congress Plan B debate. On one hand, it retains the Provincial Championships as a key part of the Championship format, while on the other hand, it also provides Counties with championship games at their level.

A key part of both proposals is the ‘Second Tier Championship’ element. I hope that the Tailteann Cup is a major success in 2022 and that the winning county treasures the title every bit as much as the Sam Maguire winners do each year. A successful Tailteann Cup will mean that we have truly begun the process of Championship reform.

Return to Round Robin Hurling and Split Season

2022 will see the return of the Munster Senior Hurling Round Hurling format, where all 5 competing counties will play each other. This format was hugely popular in 2018 and 2019 and drew huge attendances and TV viewings. This format has done wonders for the promotion of the game, and I have no doubt that our supporters across the province are looking forward to 11 top class Senior Hurling games in April and May.

The split season, first introduced in 2020 due to the Covid crisis, and continued in 2021, will come into full effect in 2022, with both All-Ireland Senior Finals taking place in July. This means an earlier start than supporters and players would normally have expected, with the Munster Senior Hurling Championship starting on the weekend of April 17th, 2022.

The new system is designed to give Clubs an uninterrupted Championship window from June or July, depending on when their County Senior Teams exit their competitions, to October. It will allow clubs to plan their training and their games programme in a methodical manner. While there will be concerns expressed about ending the Inter County season so soon, we also know that a well-structured and meaningful programmes of games at club level is also key to promoting our games across the country.

The clear feedback from Club Players was that the system we had wasn’t working, so the new structure is one we must embrace and give it the best chance possible of succeeding. It is a brave move by the Association to see the traditional September billing for All-Ireland Finals scrapped, but it does show that the mantra about the Club being the centre of the Association, is being lived. This is being done to aid Club fixtures and nothing more and hopefully this move will have the desired effect.

Age Grades. Minor and U-20

In 2018, the Association decided to introduce new age grades, with the traditional U-14, U-16 and U-18 grades being replaced with U-13, U-15 and U-17. This change saw the minor grade drop from U-18 to U-17. This was done to separate adult and underage fixture making, so that fixtures at the minor grade at club and county level could proceed without reference to adult grade fixtures. It was a key part of the Association’s efforts to help solve the difficulties with club fixtures. Players on multiple teams playing at the same time has been one of the reasons why fixture making has been such a difficult task in the GAA.

Coupled with the move to the minor grade at U-17, the U-21 grade at intercounty level was dropped to U-20. The Association is now debating this topic again. Many feel that U-17 is too young for a full scale Inter County All-Ireland Championship, and that this grade should be less about winning and more about development. This is a view that I agree with, and I feel that moving the Minor grade at Intercounty level to U-19 is the correct move. However, in time, consideration will need to be given as to whether there is too large a gap from U-19 to Senior at Intercounty level. However, given the growth in 3rd level GAA activity, there may be no need for any additional Intercounty championship grade, but maybe a requirement for the

introduction of a ‘reserve’ or U-23 non-championship grade, which can be played as curtain raisers to Senior games. Such a grade would provide all players on Senior intercounty panels with games and younger players with a pathway to the Senior team.

Another area of concern being discussed at present, is drop off at club level, as players who exit the U-17 grade may not be ready for the adult grade, or there may not be enough adult teams available in a club to cater for all players exiting the grade. The long-term solution is a grade between U-17 and adult at club level that provides a regular and meaningful programme of games, and not the U-21 championship that was played for many years as a knockout format at the tail end of the year. Many counties have responded to this issue and organised very successful U19 competitions, while also retaining the U-21 grade. While the drop off issue is certainly a concern, going back to minor at U-18 at club level will provide a temporary fix to one problem, but cause others. It would be a retrograde step, whereas a vibrant competition at U-19, will greatly assist with the issue of dropout.

Full Council, Sub-Committees and Workgroups

Just like 2020, the work of the Council and its various sub-committees was hampered during 2021, with most meetings taking place online. In all the Council met on 6 occasions, with the Competitions Control Committee also meeting on 8 occasions. The main purpose of the meetings was to deal with the fallout from the Covid-19 crisis, such as the reorganisation of our various competitions, complete competition draws and adopt new competition regulations etc. A report from each Sub Committee is contained in this convention book. For the record, a list of the members of the Council is contained in table 2, while a list of the Chairperson and Secretary of all the various sub-committees is contained in table 3.

Position	Name
Cathaoirleach	Liam Ó Loineacháin
Runáí/POF	Ciarán Ó Lídí
Leas-Chathaoirleach	Gearoid Ó Riain
Cisteoir	Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh
Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí	Roibeard Ó Riain
Bainisteoir Oibríochtaí	Seán Ó Braonáin
Uachtarán	Pádraig Seosamh Ó Riain
An Clár	Seán de Fáwl agus Bearnárd Ó Catháin
Ciarraí	Seán Ó Laoire agus Gearóid Mac Cárthaigh
Corcaigh	Micheal Ó Beirne agus Gearóid Ó Laighin
Luimneach	Donnacha Ó Cearúil agus Séamus Ó Tuama
Port Láirge	Pádraig Mac Gráinne agus Micheál Ó Phaidín
Tiobraid Árann	Sean Ó Dubhghaill agus Seán Ó Nuinseann
Colaistí Triú Leibhéil	Cathal Mac Cárthaigh
Iarbhunscoileanna	Colm Ó hAodha
Bhunscoileanna	Tomás Ó hAiniféin
Liathróid Láimhe	Micheál Ó Conchúir

Table 2: Members of the Munster Council

Committee	Cathaoirleach	Runaí
Management & Finance Committee	Liam Ó Loineacháin	Seán Ó Braonáin
Provincial Competitions Control Committee	Liam Ó Loineacháin	Ciarán Ó Lidí
Provincial Hearings Committee	Donncha Mac Thomáis	Liam Ó Conchúir
County & Club Grounds Safety Workgroup	Ciarán Mac Canna	Seán De Bhreitt
Club & County Administration & Officer Training Workgroup	Eamon Ó Súilleabháin	Micheál Ó Broin
Referees Administration Committee	Caoimhín Breathnach	Seán Ó Seasnáin
Coaching & Games Development Committee	Gearoid Ó Riain	Pádraig Ó Sé
Inter-Firm Workgroup	Micheál Ó Maolchathaigh	Oilibheair Mac Giolla Phadraig
Coiste Cultúrtha	Antóin Breathnach	Micheál Ó Drisleáin
Obair Ghrúpa Scór	Maighréad Fhaoileáin	Gearóid Ó Dúda
PR & Marketing Committee	Roibeard Ó Riain	Eamonn Ó Donnghaile
Club Fixtures Monitoring Committee	Eamon Ó Súilleabháin	Seán Ó Braonáin
Munster Provincial Regional Handball Committee	Micheál Ó Conchúir	Donal Ó hAodha
Planning and Physical Development Committee	Liam Ó Loineacháin	Seán Ó Braonáin
Games for All Health and Wellbeing Committee	Gearóid O hIcí	Gearóid Mac Conmara
Risk And Audit Committee	Seosamh Ó Cruadhlaioich	Diarmuid Ó Cathasaigh

Table 2: Council Sub Committees and Workgroups

Games Development, Education Sector and USGAA

While Covid restrictions and lockdowns did hamper normal Games Development work during 2021, there was still plenty of activity throughout the year. The Kellog's Cúl Camps were the highlight of 2021, with 42,500 children participating across the province at 381 individual camps. These camps take an enormous amount of organisation, and our full-time staff undertake a huge body of work to make these happen. The roll out of the Club Development programme was also another great success for the Coaching and Games Committee, with 239 clubs engaging with the programme in 2021. This programme is designed to assist clubs in all aspects of activity, and it is intended that every club in Munster will participate in it. While the delivery of Coach Education programmes has been severely hampered by Covid-19 restrictions, the Committee still delivered 78 formal courses, while 100 tutors were trained to deliver a new Foundation Coaching Course, beginning in January 2022. A report from the Coaching and Games Committee is included in this booklet.

One area that Munster GAA will be addressing in 2022 is the low number of full time Games Development Administrators (GDA's) in the province. Plans were in place at the end of 2019 to address this, but the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic resulted in these plans being stalled.

We currently have the lowest number of staff of the 4 Provinces and have the highest GDA to club ratio in the country. This ratio is currently 1 GDA for every 18 clubs and we need to reduce this considerably. We need to be in a position where we can assist Club and School Coaches at all levels, but particularly those coaches who are working with children/players from 6 to 17 years. These are the critical years in the development of a player, and our Association needs to ensure that every effort is made to support those coaches. I firmly believe that if we can raise standards across the province, it will have a transformative effect on the development of the games. I am keen to see Munster GAA having a sufficient number of GDA's in place in order to provide the level of support required to our clubs, and to the Primary and Post Primary education sectors.

Unfortunately, activity in the Primary, Post Primary and Third Level education sector was severely hampered in 2021, with the lockdown in the first 5 months resulting in a shutdown of all games. Thankfully, the latter half of 2021 has seen a resumption of games in the Post Primary and Third Level sector. This is a welcome return to normality, and the GAA Community looks forward to the Fitzgibbon and Sigerson Cup Competitions in early 2022. It was a similar story with USGAA, with Covid restrictions making normal activity difficult. Great credit is due to all involved in USGAA, who work under difficult circumstances to administer and play our games. Sometimes, we don't appreciate the challenges the GAA faces in the US. It is not unusual for teams to travel for hours by plane to play in tournaments. But they do, and it is encouraging to see the Association go from strength to strength in the US and around the world.

I would like to complement our 2 Provincial Games Managers, Pdraig Ó Sé & Seosamh MacArtáin, along with all of the Games Development Staff across the Province for the work they do each year in promoting and developing our games.

Finance

2021 was another difficult year financially, and while there was an improvement on the previous year with a surplus returned, the overall loss of income for the 2 years of the Covid-19 crisis stands at close to €15 million. This is a staggering loss of income, and the effects of this have been felt in our units across the province. For example, our clubs should have benefited to the tune of €2.2 million in grant support over these 2 years, while County grounds should have received close to €1.5 million in field rent payments over the same period, which is very valuable income to help our major venues with the high maintenance and insurance costs that they have. As already stated in the section on the Development Plan, we need to chart a way through this loss and ensure that our units are not overly disadvantaged in the years ahead.

In 2020, I reported that the accounting loss of the Provincial Council and the 6 counties was in the region of €940,000. Thankfully, all 6 counties and the Council returned a surplus in 2021, which is a welcome boost. This was mostly due to a return of supporters to games, the continued support from the government and from County sponsors. I also want to recognise the continued support of the Government for all Sports Organisations, including the GAA, with the various Covid-19 supports that have been put in place. Investment in Sport will always yield a huge dividend to the Government, as sport generates economic activity, and is good for peoples mental and physical health.

I would like to thank the Council Treasurer, Diarmuid Ó Lionsaigh, and Operations Manager, Seán Ó Braonain, for their work in preparing the accounts and keeping a close eye on our finances during the year.

Ciarraí Centre of Excellence

I had the pleasure of attending the recent opening of the Ciarraí Centre of Excellence at Currans. It is a most impressive facility, and it will undoubtedly be a major asset to the development of the Association in the county for many years to come. Great credit must go to those of vision and effort who have made this facility a reality. Those attending on the day of the opening heard how before the Centre was in place, that Ciarraí teams needed to borrow facilities from clubs, sometimes outside the County. This situation couldn't continue, and work began on developing a facility that the County can rightly be proud of. The Munster Council supported this facility with a direct grant of €1 million and has also provided further finance to the County Board through the Council's Budget Framework scheme.

Tralee Parnell's

I was delighted to see Tralee Parnell's participate in this year's Munster AIB Junior Club Hurling Championship. Tralee Parnell's is a new hurling club in the town and has been making huge strides in recent years promoting the game in Tralee. I would like to acknowledge the effort of so many dedicated hurling people in the town and the work of Seosamh MacArtáin from Munster GAA who has been of huge assistance to the club. Hurling in Ciarraí is certainly on the up, with Kilmoyley reaching the Munster Intermediate Hurling Championship final, and the intercounty minor and U-20 teams giving a very good account of themselves in the 2020 and 2021 Munster Championships.

Referees

Once again, we are indebted to our referees, without whom the vast games programme across the province could not take place. I want to say a particular thanks to Caoimhín Breathnach and Ó Seasnáin and the Referee Development Committee for the huge amount of work that they have done throughout the year in organising training for the Munster panel, as well as ensuring a full panel of officials is present at every Munster game. Referee development across the province will be a key focus area in the Munster Development Plan, and Munster GAA will be assigning the necessary resources to ensure that a sufficient number of referees is available in order to allow us to play an ever-expanding games programme.

As we know, some of our counties are reporting that the number of referees available to them is just about allowing them to fulfil all fixtures, but there are cases of games having to be changed in order to ensure that an official is available. Our own need to provide an active programme of games, coupled with the very welcome increase in activity in Camogie and Ladies Football, means that we need a larger pool of referees at club level. Now is the time for us to act.

There were some high profile and controversial incidents during the year, whereby a Referee took a decision based on a split-second piece of action during a game, and the decision received a huge level of attention on traditional and social media platforms. As usual, a lot of the commentary was toxic, and made by people who had the benefit of countless slow motion

action replays on TV. This is totally unfair on referees. They are doing a job that very few will put their hands up for. They don't have the comfort of an elevated position in the stands, or of TV replays when making their decision, unlike many of those commenting on their performance. As I have said before, we can be sure we will always have players and pitches, but we can't be sure we will have referees. Without them, the Association cannot function, so it is high time they are given the respect they deserve for doing a most difficult job.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the Munster referees who refereed All-Ireland Finals. Fearghal Ó Hargáin (Tiobráid Árann) refereed the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final, Séan Ó Murchú (Luimneach) was in charge of the All-Ireland U-20 Hurling Final, while Deiric Ó Mathúna (Tiobráid Árann) took charge of the All-Ireland Minor Football Final.

Competition Sponsors

I would like to thank our Competition Sponsors who provided valuable revenue to the Association and much needed exposure for our games, particularly in this difficult year. AIB, EIR and Supervalu (All-Ireland Senior Football Championship), Bórd Gáis Energy, Centra and Littlewoods (All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship), Allianz (National Leagues), Electric Ireland (All-Ireland Minor Championships), Bórd Gáis Energy (All-Ireland Under 20 Hurling Championship), Eirgrid (All-Ireland Under 20 Football Championship), John West (National Féile Competitions), Kelloggs (Cúl Camps) and AIB (All-Ireland Club Championships) and Co Op Superstores (Munster Senior Hurling Cup) have been great supporters of the Association.

Tom McGarry

We lost many great GAA people over the year. One person I want to mention in particular, is Tom McGarry, who was one of our best-known Munster Stewards. Tom had an extraordinary sporting career, playing Senior Hurling for Luimneach in the 1950's, and won Railway Cup's with Munster. He also played Senior Football for Luimneach, was a Champion Handballer, and played Rugby and Soccer at the highest level in the province. Tom was a very helpful steward and had a wonderful manner with the general public. We will miss Tom at our games.

Liam Ó Loinneacháin

Liam Ó Loinneacháin has now completed his term as Munster Council Chairman. Liam has served the Association in the province with great distinction and led us through a very difficult period during the Covid Crisis. He was also in the great position of presenting his native Luimneach with three Munster Titles in a row. On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank Liam for his dedication to the role over this 3-year tenure. I would also like to welcome Gearoid Ó Riain to the role and wish him all the best for his term. Gearoid has a wealth of experience in GAA administration, having served as an Officer with the Tiobráid Árann County Board, and has served as Munster GAA PRO and Vice Chairman. I look forward to working with Gearoid to continue develop the Association across Munster.

Buiochas. Thank you

Each year, it takes a huge effort from many people to enable the Council to carry out its role. The various Covid-19 restrictions have made it more difficult for some of our committees to function properly, but none the less, it is so encouraging to see how people have reacted so positively to the situation and got on with the task at hand. It is not possible to mention everyone in this report, so apologies to any group or people that I have missed.

Firstly, thank you to the Officers of the Council, who diligently carry out their roles and are always on hand to provide assistance and advice. Thank you too to all those who serve on our various Committees and Workgroups. Their time is greatly appreciated and their work, while often unseen, is invaluable.

I would also like to thank the six County Secretaries in the Province for their help and support over the last year. We are very fortunate in the Province to have the calibre of County Secretary that we have, and they do an enormous amount of work for the Association, often in difficult circumstances.

Lastly, I would like to thank the staff of the Council (Eamonn Ó Donnghaile, Eoin Ó Riain, Máire Ní Mathúna, Nuala Ní Nialláin, Seán Ó Braonáin, Pádraig Ó Sé & Seosamh MacArtáin) who go well beyond the call of duty in carrying out their roles.

Conclusion and looking forward to 2022

I hope that 2022 will see us emerge fully from the grip of the Covid-19 crisis and that we return to a full year of activity, with maximum attendances at games. However, this hope is tinged with a level of uncertainty, with spiralling case numbers associated with the Omicron Variant leading to an increased nervousness that the pandemic, which has dominated our lives for 2 years, has some way to go before we can confidently consign it to history. Hopefully, as the vaccination programme and the booster programme roll out is completed, we will get a full return to normal activity across society.

As stated already, we will return to the Senior Hurling Round Robin format in 2022, and the competition begins with a repeat of last year's All-Ireland Final, with Corcaigh taking on Luimneach in Páirc Uí Chaoimh, and Tiofraíd Árann taking on Portlairge in Walsh Park. I have no doubt, our championship will be full of the usual excitement, twists and turns, and one of 5 captains will become the first person to lift the new Mick Mackey Cup. I also hope that our football teams will have an upturn of fortunes on the national stage. It is 2014 since Sam Maguire spent the winter residing in the province and hopes will be high in Ciarraí that Sam makes an overdue visit.

I hope that our clubs will see a full year of activity in 2022. We certainly learned over the Covid years of 2020 and 2021 the value of our clubs to communities across the country, and the enormous contribution our clubs make to the health and wellbeing of so many people. There was an initial concern that volunteers, and players might not return in the numbers that were there before the crisis, but thankfully, that concern proved unfounded. Clubs were quickly back to full activity, and many gaining from all of their players being available for a full year.

For now, we look forward to our Club Finals in January in hurling and football, and we hope that 2022 will progress in an uninterrupted manner. We will continue to do everything in our power to help develop the Association across the province of Munster and to keep the GAA as the province's number 1 sporting and cultural organisation.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Mise le meas,

Ciarán Ó Lidí,

Rúnaí/Príomh-Oifigeach Feidhmiúcháin,

Comhairle Na Mumhan CLG.