

Óráid an Chathaoirligh

Fáilte and Review

Fearaim fíorchaoin fáilte romhaibh go léir go dtí an Chomhdáil CLG na Mumhan i dTrá Lí.

Ba bhliain ghnóthach agus ráthúil í dhá mhíle is fiche ceathar don Chumann Lúthchleas Gael i gCúige Mumhan. Ba bhreá liom buíochas ó chroí a ghabháil leis na contaethe uilig as ucht a gcuid tacaíochta agus cabhrach le linn na bliana. Chomh maith le sin ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le mo chomhfigh, do na baill an comhairle agus do na coistí an comhairle as ucht a gcomhoibriú agus a dtiomantais.

Maidir leis na cluichí idir chontaethe, d'fhill trí chorn uile Éireann ar ais go dtí an cúige anuraidh. Bhuaigh An Clár an craobhchomórtas sinsear na hÉireann san iománaíocht agus an Allianz sraith iomána náisiúnta freisin. Bhuaigh Tiobraid Árann an craobhchomórtas mionúir na hÉireann san iománaíocht. Comhghairdeas dóibh siúd agus maith sibh dár gcontaethe agus dár clubanna uilig a bhí ráthúil in ár gcomórtais cúigí.

I am delighted to be able to welcome you all to the Munster Convention tonight in the Meadowlands Hotel in Tralee.

We can look back on 2024 with a lot of satisfaction in Munster.

I want to congratulate all the winners in our county and club provincial competitions and commend them on representing the province so well in national competitions. Special congratulations go to Clare for winning the All Ireland Senior Hurling Championship and the Allianz National Hurling League title. The Limerick senior hurlers set a new record by winning their 6th Munster Senior hurling championship in a row. It is an amazing achievement particularly at a time when the senior hurling championship is so competitive. Tipperary won national honours in the minor hurling championship. Congratulations also to Cork on winning the All Ireland senior and intermediate camogie titles and to Tipperary on winning the junior and minor titles. Kerry bridged a long gap to win the LGFA All Ireland SF championship. Comhghairdeas le Ciarraí as an éacht sin.

Congratulations to Watergrasshill of Cork on winning the AIB All-Ireland Intermediate Hurling club final last weekend. I want to wish Sarsfield of Cork

good luck for tomorrow's AIB All Ireland SH club final against Na Fianna i bPáirc an Chrócaigh.

Munster Handball played a major part in hosting the World Wallball championships in UL in August and I want to congratulate them on its success.

Our senior hurling championship remains the jewel among our championships and what a championship we had yet again in 2024. A highly entertaining round robin series eventually produced a third in a row final between Clare and Limerick with Cork taking the third spot for the All Ireland series having come back from the brink of elimination after losing their first 2 games. The game was nearly overshadowed by off pitch events as an electricity failure put the staging of the game in doubt for a short but tense period. I want to thank both the Limerick and Clare team managements and county boards for their co-operation with the decision to delay the start of the game. I also want to thank the ESB, An Garda Síochána and all of the GAA team who helped manage through this challenging situation.

Our attendances for the Munster Senior Hurling championship increased again in 2024 which shows the interest in and passion for this championship and we look forward to what will hopefully a very exciting championship again in 2025.

The new football championship structure introduced in 2023 reduced interest in the provincial football championship in Munster. This means there are continued challenges being made to the merits of the championship. Ultimately this challenge won't be overcome until we see more competitive high standard games in the latter stages of the championship. It will be interesting to see the impact of the new football rules on the championship.

[New Cups](#)

Comhairle na Mumhan was delighted this year to present 2 new cups for its under 20 football championship and minor hurling championship. The under 20 football cup is now named the Noel Walsh Cup in honour of the late Noel Walsh of Clare who was a former Cathaoirleach of this council. The Munster minor hurling cup is now named the John Doyle Cup in honour of the late John Doyle of Holycross Ballycahill who was one of hurling's greatest ever players and holder of 8 All-Ireland senior hurling titles, the record for a Tipperary man. I am grateful to Noel Walsh's family, Clare County Board, John Doyle's family, Tipperary County Board and all the counties in Munster for supporting the

introduction of these 2 new cups. It was my privilege in my term as Cathaoirleach to present these cups for the first time along with the new Mick Mackey Cup for the Senior Hurling Championship.

Club Development Grants

It is always important to emphasise the significance of our club development grants scheme which this year amounted to €1.5m comprising approximately €1m from central funds and €0.5m from Munster Council. I mentioned in my address to last year's Convention that we were committed to maintaining this important financial support for clubs but that we were going to review both the qualifying criteria and application process for grants in 2024 to ensure that grants were directed where they are most needed to support participation in our games, that the criteria were as straightforward as possible and that applying for them was more automated and simplified. We completed the review, simplified the qualifying criteria and introduced a more electronic application process. Overall we believe these changes will work to support participation better and ensure increased grants for major club developments.

Finance

We continue to be in a strong financial position as has been outlined in the financial statements. We have grown our reserves and we have used the funds generated from our various sources of income, mainly of course our championship attendances, to support our counties and key provincial projects in coaching and games and infrastructure in particular.

Coaching and Games Development

I welcome the progress that has been made as a result of having more Coaching and Games Development staff in all our counties. The staff hired in late 2023 are making a significant impact around the counties in our clubs and schools and are supporting county activities ranging from Cúl Camps to development squads. I want to thank the Provincial Games Managers, Joey Carton and Pat O'Shea, and the county Coaching Officers and Games Managers for their excellent work in ensuring the increase in coaching staff is having a positive impact around the province.

Split Season

The split season has become embedded in our structure and is generally well accepted throughout the Association at present. The focus of the debate in terms of scheduling has switched to 2 areas – whether we have too many games at inter-county level and whether the All-Ireland Senior inter-county championships should end in July or August. There will be motions to Congress to consider some reorganisation of the football championship which will focus on reducing the number of games in the post provincial stages of the competition. I believe this would be of benefit and make the championship more competitive. On the scheduling side, I know that there is a strong view among some counties in Munster that the current end dates for the championships should not change because of the time required to run club championships particularly in large dual code counties. My view is that we need to have a serious look at the opportunities to extend the inter-county championships by 2 to 3 weeks. I believe a model can be developed to support this change without massive impact on club game scheduling and I think it is worth exploring to see what realistic options might emerge.

Player Welfare at Inter-County Level

The decision to defer the pre-season competitions for 2025 was not well received in many counties particularly in light of the forthcoming changes to the football playing rules. I supported the deferral in the interests of inter-county players' welfare as I believe players need some downtime after busy inter-county and club seasons. In supporting this change, I was also voting for no inter-county collective training until December 7th. I am disappointed that this decision was not supported and implemented in all counties but I do not blame our county boards for this failure. Collectively administrators at county, provincial and national level need to work together in a consistent way to implement decisions such as this. Support is also required from team managers and the GPA as inter-county player representatives to ensure that these decisions are implemented. Ultimately, we must prioritise long-term player welfare over the perceived short-term benefits of breaching training regulations. I would prefer that a collective evidence-based approach would be used to address this issue but if that does not work, impactful sanctions should be applied. On the player welfare front it is most disappointing to see county underage squads training in some counties before January 1st. It is unwarranted

and unnecessary and reflects poorly on us all that we allow it to happen. These players should be focused on their schools and colleges in this period. We know for a long number of years that excessive activity for underage players with multiple teams increases the risk of players not developing to achieve their full potential as adult players. To the counties who do enforce the training start dates at adult and underage level, I say well done.

[Inter-County Teams and Amateur Status](#)

I welcome the initiative of Uachtarán CLG, Jarlath Burns, to set up an Amateur Status Review Committee when he assumed office last February. I look forward to the first reports from this Committee because I know it has been looking at the challenges we face in maintaining our amateur status and what potential steps that we need to take to protect it in the long-run.

I called last year for us to review where we were heading in relation to inter-county team spending and activities. I think the ASRC work will address this requirement. However, it is worth calling out that the “runaway train” a phrase attributed originally to my colleague Weeshie Lynch in describing inter-county team expenditure, is running away faster than ever. Inter-county team expenditure in 2024 hit a new record level of €43m, €3.2m and 8% more than in 2023. Here in Munster the €11m barrier was broken for the first time.

This level of spending is not sustainable and it must stop. It is compromising many counties ability to foster the development of our games and the provision of necessary facilities to support participation in our games at club and inter-county level. I also believe that the GPA is a key actor in addressing these challenges as I believe doing so will be in the best long-term interests of inter-county players.

[USGAA](#)

I am delighted to welcome Paul Keane, Chairperson and Ger Dillon, Central Council Delegate of USGAA to our Convention. As you know USGAA are Munster’s twinning partner. Paul and Ger, I want to complement you both and your fellow officers for the trojan and effective work you do promoting our games in the US outside of New York. Their annual finals with over 100 teams and games across all our male and female codes are a joy to behold and were held in San Francisco in 2024. We also saw USGAA enter the junior football

championship this year with a team of players all born in the US. They were unfortunate not to progress to the final this year only narrowly losing the final. I want to wish them well for the 2025 competition.

Social Value of GAA and Integration

Many of you will be aware that the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association commissioned Sheffield Hallam University's Sport Industry Research Group, who are pioneers in the economics of sport and sport's wider social impact, to measure and report on the economic impact of Gaelic Games and the social value and return on investment of Gaelic Games on Irish society.

Their independent analysis of Gaelic games activity found that the Social Value of Gaelic games is estimated to be worth at least €2.87 billion to Irish society.

The Social Return on Investment study shows that for every one euro invested in Gaelic games, the benefit returned to society is at least €2.30 and could be as much as €3.96.

Detailed event impact assessment of the Munster final showed that the 2024 Munster SHC Final was worth €3.2 million to the town of Thurles and €4.5 million to County Tipperary.

We should be very proud of the findings of this report as it clearly shows the major impact and benefits of Gaelic Games on Irish society. It is also important in showing to Government that it needs to do more to support Gaelic Games. Integration is a good example of where Government support is needed. Integration remains one of it not our most challenging projects. It is a slow process but a very important project, one we need to ensure is successful. In particular government support will be necessary to provide the infrastructural and facilities required to enable it to work successfully. The Social Impact Study shows that Government should be proactive in supporting the need for new facilities and the Gaelic Games family of Associations needs to be very strong in its approach to Government as part of the integration process.

Football Review Committee

The approval at Special Congress last November of the Football Review Committee proposals marks the introduction of one of the most significant set or rule changes ever in the Association. I welcome the new rules and

congratulate Jim Gavin and the Football Review Committee on its excellent and speedy but comprehensive work. I also want to mention and thank the Munster representatives on the Committee – Eamonn Fitzmaurice of Kerry and Colm Collins of Clare. Thanks are also due to the counties in Munster for their engagement with the review process and support for the proposals. The implementation of the new rules will prove challenging but with patience and effort I think delivery of a good outcome will be achieved. I think the new rules promise the opportunity of more entertaining football which overall is badly needed. I also think it was important to introduce the rules at inter-county and club level simultaneously as our club players are as entitled as inter-county players to benefit from the new rules. It is also good that there will be opportunity to monitor the implementation and allow Central Council to make changes if needs be.

Development Plan for Council

We launched the Munster GAA Development Plan at last year's Convention. I said then that our plan is focused on being dynamic, relevant and achievable. The plan is focused on high level and high impact actions across 4 key areas: Coaching and Games Development, Facilities for the Future, Managing our Resources, and People on and off the Pitch. The Plans committed to supporting the values set out in the GAA strategic plan of Community Identity, Amateur Status, Inclusiveness, Respect, Player Welfare, and Teamwork and Volunteerism. Our vision remains to have a sustainable community-based and volunteer-led Association. I am pleased to report as has the Rúnaí that good progress has been made overall and I would like to highlight the following areas:

- 1) We created a County Strategic Development Fund which will aim to invest over €7m in county playing facility development projects over the lifetime of this plan. Kerry have been the main initial beneficiaries of this Fund with approval given for a new 4G pitch at the Kerry Centre of Excellence. Projects from other counties are in the pipeline.
- 2) As part of our focus on recruiting, training and supporting referees in our counties and province and building on the success of our Munster Referee Academy, we have appointed Johnny Ryan as a full-time Referee Development for the province, the first appointment of its kind.
- 3) We will look to increase participation in both hurling and football particularly in areas where either code requires more support.

- 4) As referred to earlier Coaching and Games has made excellent progress with the roll-out of additional staff.
- 5) Our urban development plan which focuses on 1 area in each of the 6 counties has commenced with good initial progress being made In Limerick, Cork and Tipperary with plans in place to move forward in the other 3 counties.
- 6) We have completed the initial stages of a feasibility study and cost-benefit analysis to assess the viability of a Munster GAA Dome.
- 7) Tá ár nOifigeach Gaeilge i gceannas ar chur i bhfeidhm ár n-iarrachtaí chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn níos fearr.
- 8) We have made internal organisational changes to enhance governance and reporting including the appointment of a Finance Manager.
- 9) One major area of challenge for us remains support for our County Grounds. We have completed an initial review of our field rent model but there remains a need for additional central funding from the GAA and government grants to support, maintain and develop our major facilities.

I said last year that our plan is worthless unless we implement the actions and track progress. I want to thank Kieran Leddy in particular for ensuring actions are being progressed and reported to the Management and Finance Committee on an ongoing basis.

Tim Murphy

Tonight is a very important occasion for Tim Murphy, his wife Emer and children, his father, the Brosna club and Kerry as Tim takes on the role of Cathaoirleach Comhairle na Mumhan. I want to welcome Tim's family members and club members to our Convention tonight and thank them for attending.

I want to wish Tim well in his new role. He has the experience and ability to carry out the role very successfully which I have no doubt he will do. I want to wish him every success and assure him of my personal support and assistance in any way I can. I want to thank him for his exemplary support and assistance to me in his role as Vice-Chairperson over the last 3 years. I also want to thank him and congratulate him for the very effective manner in which he led our Coaching and Games Committee. In particular, he ensured the recruitment and roll-out of 20 new staff was handled extremely well and that has significantly enhanced our coaching and games capability around the counties. Go neirí go geal leat Tim agus tá súil agam go mbainfidh tú an taitneamh as a bheith mar Cathaoirleach Comhairle na Mumhan.

My 3 years

I want to thank everyone who has supported, assisted and advised me in carrying out my role as Cathaoirleach Comhairle na Mumhan from clubs around the province to council members and my fellow officers. I am acutely conscious of how fortunate and privileged I am to have held this position. I want to thank my own County, Tipperary, for affording me the opportunity to stand for the position and to all the other counties in the province for electing me 3 years ago. I want to thank all the officers in the 6 counties for their ongoing support to me and the Munster Council. I also want to thank all the Council members from the counties and the other bodies represented on the council for their co-operation and support at all times.

Our Committees and workgroups do great work for the Association without every seeking the limelight for themselves. Well done and thank you to all those who served on our Committees for the last 3 years.

I want to mention all the stewards who work so well and hard at all our venues. I have gotten to know many of them very well over my time on the Council and I want to thank them for their welcome and courtesy at all times.

I also want to thank the 2 Uachtaráin, Larry McCarthy and Jarlath Burns, the Árd Sturthóir, Tom Ryan, the staff in Croke Park and my colleagues on Coiste Bainistí and Árd Chomhairle who I served with during my term.

We have an excellent team who work for Munster Council. I want to thank John Brennan, Mary O'Mahony, Eoin Ryan, Ed Donnelly, Paul McNally, Aedín Ní Bhriain, Liam McLoughlin, Pat O'Shea and Joe Carton for all the excellent work they do. They ensure our Council and games operate very efficiently and effectively and do so in a friendly and co-operative manner at all times. They are also hugely dedicated to Munster GAA. They have been wonderfully supportive to me over all my time on the council and have always been most welcoming to my family. Thank you all, I am very very grateful to you.

I also want to thank my fellow officers. I have worked for the last 5 years with Bob Ryan and Weeshie Lynch. Both are people with strong views and great experience which is of great benefit to the Council. Each of them has been personally very supportive to me and are strong and forthright in their advice. I want to thank them both sincerely and wish them both well as they head into the third year of their roles.

Kieran Leddy's and my phone won't know what hit them from next week on. We were in very regular contact at all times with multiple calls per day often being the norm. We are fortunate to have somebody of Kieran's experience, calibre, capability, commitment and values as Rúnaí and CEO of Comhairle na Mumhan. He was a pleasure to work with over the last 3 years always keeping me fully briefed and up to date. I have really enjoyed working with you Kieran and I want to thank you so much for all your advice, assistance and support.

We are fortunate in our membership on the Council. Everybody is willing to work together in the best interests of the GAA in Munster and I want to thank all the council members and the members of our sub-committees for their contribution and ongoing support. To those members of the Council who whose terms are ending: Michael Power, President of the Council, Michael Wadding of Waterford, Sean Nugent of Tipperary, John Fawl of Clare and Mike O'Connor of Handball. I want to say míle buíochas and wish them all well.

Sympathy

I want to extend sympathy to all those involved with Comhairle na Mumhan who were bereaved in 2024. In particular I want to mention the loss of our colleague, Nuala Nealon. Kieran has paid fitting tribute to Nuala in his report and I would like to echo his words. Nuala was a great servant to the Council. I want to extend our sympathy again to her father Donie and her sisters and brothers. I was delighted that we were able to name one of our main meeting rooms in Aras Mumhan in her honour.

Ba mhaith liom freisin ómós a thabhairt do Mhicheál Ó Muircheartaigh a bhí mar ghuth na gCluichí Gaelacha ar feadh na mblianta fada. Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh was an icon of Gaelic Games and his unique commentaries were recognised worldwide for the passion, colour and detail he brought to them. I want to extend our sympathy to his wife, Helena and his family.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh anamacha Nuala agus Michéal agus gach duine a fuair bás anuraidh.

Closing

I wish all the counties well for 2025. I want to wish the new Vice-Chairperson, council members and committee members every success in their new roles. I

also want to wish the Camogie, Ladies Football and Handball Associations well for the year ahead.

It has been the honour of my life in the GAA to serve as Cathaoirleach Comhairle na Mumhan.

I could not have carried out the role without the unqualified support I received from my two daughters, Orlaith and Dearbhla, and most particularly from my wife, Maria. I want to thank them for all their great support. I also want to thank the Council for always being so kind and considerate to them. All of us appreciate that greatly.

Ath Bhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir agus go raibh céad míle maith agaibh go léir as an phribhléid agus onóir a bheith mar Chathaoirleach ar Comhairle na Mumhan.