



**Ulster GAA, The Irish Football Association,  
The IRFU (Ulster Branch)**

**Joint Inquiry Response – Together: Building a United  
Community**

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## 1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to put into context the current positions of Ulster GAA, the Irish FA and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) in relation to the T: BUC Strategy as well as make comment and provide recommendations to feed into the final formation of the programme.

The three codes have developed a positive relationship through the delivery of collaborative programmes, sharing experiences and methods of best practice. There is a strong willingness for the three governing bodies to build on the significant progress made as a result of the partnership.

A key outcome from the growing relationship between the three codes a number of flagship projects have been delivered, such as the 'Sport in the Community' Programme, funded under the Department for Social Development which aims to deliver volunteer, club and community development projects through a sports lens. As well as this a number of joint projects have been established, such as the Game of Three Halves programme, annual joint Good Relations Conference, the Belfast Interface Games, the Stadia Redevelopment and the 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion through Sport' Programme.

During this time the partnership has gained considerable experience in the field of Good Relations and welcomes the opportunity to submit recommendations to the Together: Building a United Community (T: BUC) Strategy. Sport is an important part of the Northern Ireland society, with a firm place in the culture of the region. We are enthused by the support from local government in investing in sport to tackle important societal issues, in recent years.

With the launch of the T: BUC Strategy and sport cited as a model of good practise through the Game of Three Halves, the three codes view this as an opportunity to enhance the social impact of sport and strengthen the foundations already built through current programmes. The T: BUC Strategy serves as a platform for sport to be applied to the delivery of the headline actions under the four strands of the strategy. Ulster GAA, the Irish FA and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) contribute to over 90% of all sports participation in Northern Ireland. The reach of the three major governing bodies highlights the potential for collaborative projects to have real impact against the Good Relations Indicators and Headline Actions under the T: BUC priorities. It is the view of the three sports that the good relations indicators are robust but involvement in sport isn't adequately reflected.

Sport is at the heart of culture in Northern Ireland, and an important feature of the community. To a certain extent sport is ahead of the game on a number of social issues, particularly in the area of good relations. Sport enhances a sense of belonging and safety as well as providing a safe space for people to express their own culture and their shared culture.

The three codes have an excellent track recorded working with various Government Departments through funded projects that deliver against the Programme for Government and broader government priorities. This experience positions the three sports to work effectively with OFMDFM in the implementation of the T: BUC Strategy.

The strategic aims of the three codes are consistent with the T: BUC Strategy, with a clear focus on driving the value of sport in society. Each of the sports is currently delivering a number of programmes that utilise sport as a tool to deliver against wider social outcomes. Ensuring inclusivity and providing opportunities for lifelong involvement in sport is a key component to these programmes.

While it is important to recognise the successful collaborations between the sports, it is of equal importance to highlight the work each body has delivered which its specific sport.

Ulster GAA have considerable experience in delivering club and community development programmes, putting the club at the centre of the community as a hub to enjoy Gaelic Sport and Pastimes. Initiatives such as Club Maith sets best practise for GAA Clubs across Ulster, with a specific emphasis on volunteerism, community enhancement and culture & heritage. This programme promotes that sports clubs are about more than playing the game but about being woven within the fabric of the community.

The Irish FA are well known for their 'Football for All' Programme, which aims to create a fun, safe and inclusive culture throughout football in Northern Ireland. The 'Football for All' Programme works across all strands of the game and plays a vital role in engaging with those that are socially marginalised and in peace building. The programme demonstrates the power of sport in bringing people together and impacting wider social issues.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) have substantial experience in utilising Rugby as way of engaging with underrepresented groups, such as females and people with disabilities. Flagship projects like the International Tag Rugby Festival served as a celebration of Disability Rugby by inviting over 400 players from across the UK and Ireland to play in competition at the Kingspan Stadium. The projects leading up to the event focused on providing new opportunities for people with disabilities to participant in tag rugby as part of a key strategic aim of creating a more inclusive Rugby Community in Ulster.

The three codes have the ability to have considerable impact on the key priorities of the T: BUC Strategy through existing programmes and infrastructure. As well as this there is considerable scope to develop innovative projects, such as a new Cross Stadia Sport and Education Programme, which have the potential to ensure a real and meaningful impact on the wider Northern Ireland Community.

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1. IRFU (Ulster Branch)/Ulster Rugby**

The I.R.F.U (Ulster Branch)/Ulster Rugby is responsible for the leadership, development and growth of the game of Rugby Union within the nine counties of Ulster. This includes the full spectrum of Rugby Union from grass roots participation through to the Ulster Rugby Professional team, which participates in two cross border tournaments, the European Cup and Guinness PRO12.

As part of the ongoing development and growth of the game, the IRFU (Ulster Branch) aims to provide opportunities to grow the game at grassroots level in areas where previously there has been little or no exposure to the game. These initiatives range from grassroots development programmes in schools, female leadership programmes, disability & inclusion programmes to match night experiences, the community gym initiative and player appearances – all of which contribute equally to the growth of the game.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) recognize the significant role that sport has to play in wider society. It is with this in mind that programmes are designed in a way not only to encourage playing the game but enjoying the wider social aspects that involvement in sport can have on the individual and wider community.

### **2.2. Gaelic Athletic Association (Ulster GAA)**

The GAA is the world's largest volunteer sporting, cultural and community organisation with over 1.2 million members of 3,000 clubs located in 54 countries across the world. The GAA promotes the indigenous sports of the island of Ireland namely Hurling, Gaelic Football, Camogie, Handball and Rounders in addition to the promotion of Irish Culture, Language and Pastimes. The GAA is an amateur sporting body governed by volunteers. The Ard Chomhairle (Central Council) of the GAA comprises of delegates from GAA units across the world and oversees the governance and policy.

The GAA is by rule and policy a strictly non-party political, anti-sectarian and anti-racist organisation. The organisation is committed to the values of respect, tolerance and the vision of a shared future as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement. The GAA underlines its commitment to these values by engaging in an important community outreach programme, which involves dialogue and engagement with individuals, and groups who traditionally have had no interaction with the Association.

Ulster GAA is the Provincial Council and governing body for the GAA in Ulster, which oversees and supports the activities of over 250,000 members, 584 Clubs and 9 County Committees. Ulster GAA is an open and welcoming organisation that encourages involvement from everyone regardless of gender, community and religious background, physical and mental ability, race, nationality, age profile, sexual preference or social background in the Association.

### 2.3. Irish Football Association (IFA)

The Irish Football Association (IFA) was formed in 1880 and is the governing body of football in Northern Ireland, working to develop all strands of the game – international, domestic and grassroots football.

The vision of the Irish Football Association is ‘to develop, foster and promote football for all in Northern Ireland’, and intends to become a world-class organisation with a winning mentality at all levels. The Association has developed a series of values, which will act as guides as to the way we conduct business.

These values (forming together the word ‘PITCH’) are as follows:

**Professional** – We must be professional in all we do, meticulous in our planning and execution, leaving no stone unturned and nothing to chance.

**Inclusive** – Football is truly for all and must be inclusive. Everyone loves the game regardless of gender, religion, politics, race or sexual orientation. We must continue to work to ensure all groups feel comfortable and welcome within the game in whatever role they fulfil.

**Team** – The Association must work as a team, each with his or her own task as part of a greater whole – knowing our roles and supporting and encouraging the other members of the team as we seek to achieve our winning goals.

**Caring and Confident** – The Association must show a duty of care for all involved in the game. It is not good enough to leave it to others – to all players, officials, supporters, referees, and administrators – everyone. We must show and be shown care and concern. Whilst the Association must be confident to believe in that we are doing in all aspects is right and for the right reasons.

**Honesty** – Being honest, saying it as it is, not being underhand or devious – honesty and integrity must be watch words for the Association.

Using these core values in our daily footballing and business life at the Association will enhance it, and show a maturity and sincerity, which will benefit the game and all who are involved in it.

The IFA has almost 1000 adult teams, 900 boys' teams, 300 school teams and 50 women's teams. Our work includes the development of both men's and women's football at the most senior level, operations, club licensing and facilities development, player registration, grassroots football (boys' and girl's), disability football, schools football, elite football development, coach education, safeguarding and player welfare and community relations.

### 3. IFA Strategic Context

#### 3.1. Long Term Objectives and Strategic Plan (2013 - 2018)

The Association has identified six key long-term strategic objectives, which include:

- Qualify for a major tournament
- Deliver the new national stadium and improve other facilities
- Foster a balanced, flourishing senior domestic game
- Create a healthy domestic game at all other levels, i.e. intermediate, junior, women's, boys, schools
- Build a culture of lifelong participation in football
- Reach beyond the game – use the power of football for health, education and social development

The foundations of our strategic action plan are based on our six long term objectives across three areas - International, Domestic and Grassroots. Some of the key actions and priorities outlined within this strategy include:

##### 3.1.1. Qualify for a major tournament

- Improve player welfare
- Elite Programme & Talent ID
- Presence in Schools
- Small sided games policy
- Coaching framework

##### 3.1.2. Deliver the new national stadium and improve other facilities

- Complete **National Stadium** lease agreement
- Stadium management company
- Community consultation process
- Sub-regional projects: investment in a National Training Centre, Major Capital Intervention project, upgrade of grounds

designated under the Safety at Sports Grounds, **community and social cohesion** projects

3.1.3. *Foster a balanced, flourishing senior domestic game*

- Create a **league governance body**
- Develop club academies for better player development
- **Good governance** in clubs (e.g. HMRC, salary capping)
- Develop club education on best practice planning and management
- **Club Excellence Mark** for clubs involved at all levels of the game which will include community relations and coach education
- **Respect** campaign
- **Good Relations and Fans Charter**

3.1.4. Create a healthy domestic game at all other levels, i.e. intermediate, junior, women's, boys, schools

- Support clubs to become '**community beacons**' or **hubs** through club education and development programme
- **Club Excellence Mark** award as a benchmark of club quality
- Build closer links with Divisional Associations to review national competitive/recreational football structure
- **Women's football plan**
- **Boys' and schools football plans**

3.1.5. Reach beyond the game – use the power of football for health, education and social development

- RESPECT Campaign
- Social impact tracker
- 'Football for All' (FFA) Educational Resource
- International Fans Handbook
- 'Football for All' introductory award
- Continue to build on success of Homeless World Cup Poland, through Street League Project and future international tournaments
- FFA Youth Forum established
- International Fans Seminar
- Social and economic impact of FFA on communities across NI using data from social impact tracker
- Good Relations and Fans Charter
- Interface football programme
- World United multicultural programme recognition

3.1.6. Build a culture of lifelong participation in football

- **Disabilities football plan**



- **Volunteer Development** Programme
- Annual joint community volunteer awards
- Youth football forum
- Irish FA **volunteering policy**
- Veterans football plan
- **'Sport in the Community Programme'** collaboration with Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch)
- **Interface and homeless** football projects
- **Summer camps & festivals**
- Create culture of **futsal**

#### 4. Ulster GAA Strategic Context

##### 4.1. Ulster GAA Strategy, 'Family and Community: The Fabric of the GAA'

"Teaghlaigh agus Pobail: An Fabraic de CLG" is the third strategic plan to be rolled out by Ulster GAA. All the targets set in the previous two plans were achieved, most of them well ahead of schedule and the delivery of this plan is following the same pattern.

Five core values shape and influence how Ulster GAA does its work. Those values are: Community, Volunteerism, Identity, Inclusion and Excellence.

The detail of Ulster GAA's work is in turn taken forward under five themes:

- Keeping Ulster GAA Fit for Purpose: Governance
- Increasing and Improving the Games
- Increasing and Improving the GAA Plant: Facilities and Infrastructure
- Enhancing the "Gaelic" in GAA: Culture and Heritage
- The GAA's End Purpose: Community Development, Inclusion and Cohesion

##### 4.2. Public Affairs Resource and Programme, 'Building Better Communities'

The GAA underlines its commitment to the values of respect, tolerance and the vision of a shared future by engaging in an important community outreach programme. This programme involves dialogue and engagement with individuals and groups who traditionally have had no interaction with the Association. GAA Clubs are key community anchors and are key providers of sporting, cultural and community activities across Ulster. This approach aims to further diversify the make up of the GAA and to enhance understanding of the Association among those who may not have previously engaged with it.

##### 4.3. Ulster GAA Community, Strategy and Public Department

Ulster GAA has a dedicated Department who are charged with bringing to life one of the 5 strategic themes, “The GAA’s End Purpose: Community Development, Inclusion and Cohesion”. The work of this Department aims to better equip Clubs to enhance the communities they exist in, addressing agendas such as health and wellbeing, cultural awareness, volunteer development, strategic development, inclusion and outreach.

#### 4.4. Cultural Awareness Strategy (DCAL)

Ulster GAA is working with DCAL Languages and Waterways Ireland Branch to address historical tensions to develop greater understanding, tolerance and respect for our indigenous cultural traditions.

### 5. IRFU (Ulster Branch) Strategic Context

As one of four provincial branches of the Irish Rugby Football Union, the IRFU (Ulster Branch) is aligned to the IRFU 2013-17 Strategic Plan - "From Grassroots to International Success; One Island, One Passion, One Goal".

The IRFU Strategic Plan is built on the values of Irish Rugby.

- Respect - Discipline and respect are cornerstones of our game. Participants show respect both on and off the pitch for teammates, opponents, match officials, and all those involved in the rugby family.
- Integrity - Integrity is the foundation of the game. It is generated through honesty, transparency, ethical (Drug Free) and fair play.
- Inclusivity - Irish Rugby celebrates camaraderie and teamwork, which transcends gender and cultural, racial, geographic, political and religious differences.
- Fun - Rugby generates enjoyment, passion, pride, excitement, emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to the Irish Rugby Family.
- Excellence - Irish Rugby aspires to be a Leader in sport and in the community, which achieves success at all levels through being transparent, innovative and forward thinking. Irish rugby prides itself in doing things well and in a professional manner.

One of the goals of Rugby on the island of Ireland is to continue to grow our clubs and schools through a player experience that maximizes retention and creates playing opportunities for all those who wish to play rugby, from all communities and to promote an involvement in the game for life.

In addition the IRFU (Ulster Branch)/Ulster Rugby in its Business Plan 2014-17 has clearly identified its vision to be a World Class Rugby Region. The achievement of this vision is dependent on a number of key factors including growing the game beyond its traditional playing base, increasing the number of and developing capacity of volunteers and an creating welcoming & sustainable clubs that serve the needs of the community.

## **6. Best Practice: Sport and Good Relations**

### 6.1. IRFU Initiatives

#### 6.1.1. Welcoming Clubs Programme

The IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme is designed to support the team “off the field” in growing the club and strengthening links to the wider community. The vision behind the programme is to create a community environment where the focus is on fun, safe activity, challenging activity and social outcomes.

#### 6.1.2. Club Excellence Award

The IRFU Club Excellence Award celebrates and promotes best practice in on & off pitch management of a Rugby Club. The Award supports clubs in developing the best standards across the following key areas: Rugby Development, Club Management, Child Protection, Volunteer Management, Community Engagement and Health & Safety.

#### 6.1.3. Club Community Rugby Officer (CCRO) Programme

The CCRO Programme is a partnership between the IRFU and affiliated clubs. The purpose of the programme is to provide clubs with the capacity to employ a development officer who is responsible for reaching out to the surrounding community of the club through participation programmes, opening access to facilities, creating new opportunities for underrepresented groups and supporting club structures.

#### 6.1.4. Play Rugby Programme

The Play Rugby Programme is aimed at creating a Rugby Legacy within schools and communities across Northern Ireland and Ulster. The purpose of the programme is to equip new schools and communities to sustain rugby through the provision of equipment, educational resources and training. This provides schools/communities with another means of engaging with other schools and communities through the medium of Rugby.

### 6.2. Values Based Rugby

Rugby is a value-based game with a number of core values that develop players/coaches/volunteers/administrators/fans within a social and moral context. The international values of the game are: Integrity, Passion, Solidarity, Discipline and Respect.

These values are central to the fabric of the game and run right across all levels and aspects of Rugby in Ulster, from the elite level to grassroots participation. These values provide the base for the culture of Rugby and focus on the development of the social outcomes that are inherent to participation in sport.

### 6.3. IRFU (Ulster Branch) 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion (PETPSE) Through Sport' Programme

The PETPSE through Sport Programme ties into the redevelopment of the Kingspan Stadium aims to provide new opportunities through Rugby for people from areas of multiple deprivation and under represented groups e.g. females and people with disabilities.

Central to the delivery of this programme is creating an open and inclusive environment for people from all backgrounds to enjoy Rugby. The programme focuses on five key areas: Increasing participation among people from areas of multiple deprivation, providing new opportunities to increase female representation, providing opportunities for people with disabilities to get involved, promoting fitness and healthy lifestyle and leaving a lasting Rugby Legacy across the province.

### 6.4. 'Sport in the Community' Programme

The project is a joint partnership and programme between the IRFU (Ulster Branch), Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association (Ulster GAA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) to help support club/community development and volunteering as well as use sport as a tool for community development.

The project was incepted organically from a relationship that had been developed over a number of years. There was a clear willingness to embark on a joint project, which would seek to deliver on areas such as:

- Club & Community Development
- Diversity programmes and Good Relations
- Training and Development Programmes
- Volunteer Development (supporting DSD Volunteering Strategy for NI)
- Policy Development
- Capacity Building

Whilst the three codes were already delivering in these areas, this joint flagship project would allow the three governing bodies to further develop their programmes and have a more significant impact on club and community development, capacity building and volunteer development. It also provided an opportunity for shared learning and examples of best practice.

Some of the projects main achievements over the past two years include:

- Developing Associations' framework for club and volunteer development
- Policy development and implementation
- Increasing reach and impact across Northern Ireland
- Programme development and implementation

The project has allowed for the governing bodies to deliver a host of joint work, but also to deliver a number of programmes specific to their own sporting requirements. The three codes have delivered the following programmes:

- Volunteer Goldmark (Young volunteers)
- Game of Three Halves (cross code diversity programme)
- Training workshops (sponsorship, funding, governance)
- Good relations events
- Volunteer recognition events

Independently, the three Associations have developed and delivered their own programmes in the following areas:

- Club development
- Volunteer development
- Community development
- Diversity and good relations

## 6.5. Kingspan Stadium Redevelopment

A significant investment by DCAL into the Stadia Redevelopment Programme enabled the IRFU (Ulster Branch) to construct a state of the art stadium at Ravenhill Grounds with a capacity of approximately 18,000.

An important element of the redevelopment is increasing community access to the stadium and working towards the vision set out in the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy that Belfast will be a "City of Culture & Sport" by 2025.

Through community engagement and education programmes the stadium acts as a shared space where people can access rugby and help improve deprivation.

The stadium acts as a place to inspire people to participate in sport (rugby), which is at the core of DCAL's Strategy for Sport and Sport NI's Corporate Plan. The stadium is fully accessible and aims to promote equality and tackle social exclusion through sport.

#### 6.6. IRFU (Ulster Branch): Nevin Spence Education Centre

As part of the redeveloped stadium complex at the Kingspan Stadium, Ulster Rugby will welcome visitors to a new education and heritage Centre celebrating the evolution of the game and its positive role in contributing to a healthy, shared society.

Housed in the new Memorial End Stand, The Nevin Spence Centre will enable visitors from the education and tourism sectors to explore the rich heritage of rugby in Ulster and will provide a dynamic stimulus for learning in alignment with the NI Curriculum and Ulster Rugby's existing outreach programmes.

Offering engaging interactive content, powerful audio visual storytelling and archive materials, it is envisaged that the NSC will also stimulate awareness of the positive impact of rugby on the health and welfare of individuals and communities and may result in increased participation from those in areas traditionally underrepresented in the sport.

A visit to the Centre will be a memorable experience, incorporating a curriculum-linked workshop with a dedicated Education Officer and an informative "behind the scenes" stadium tour. From the home changing rooms and media suite to the players' gym and training facilities, visitors will gain a fascinating insight into the home of Ulster Rugby.

#### 6.7. Ulster Rugby: The Professional Team

A unique part of Ulster Rugby is the professional team associated to the province. In line with the values and culture of Rugby, our professional players are an important part of rugby both on and off the pitch.

As role models our professional players play an important role in growing and promoting rugby. Our players have the potential to positively impact the lives of the people they interact with, on and off the pitch – they serve as a platform to promote and inspire the values of Rugby. This is a core part of grassroots rugby, where player appearances, Q&As and special events compliment the delivery of various programmes.

## 6.8. Mid Ulster Sports Arena

The Mid Ulster Sports Arena (MUSA) acts as a safe and shared space for sports participation. The complex houses the facilities to caters for the majority of field sports with both indoor and outdoor spaces.

The MUSA enables the three codes to deliver programmes on the same site as well as cater for club participation to promote lifelong enjoyment of sport. The facility acts as a space where sport can be celebrated, where people come together for a common goal and embrace diversity as a crucial part of the game.

## 6.9. Game of Three Halves (GO3H)

The GO3H is a collaborative partnership between Ulster GAA, the IFA and the IRFU (Ulster Branch) that aims to provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to have positive interactions through sport.

The three major governing bodies have driven this initiative from its inception with a focus on promoting respect for diversity. The demand for the GO3H has grown significantly during the past two years with considerable potential to enhance the delivery of the programme.

## 6.10. Belfast Interface Games (BIG)

The BIG uses the model of the GO3H to deliver a summer intervention programme in partnership with Ulster GAA, the IFA, the IRFU (Ulster Branch) and PeacePlayers International NI (PPINI).

The purpose of the programme is to offer young people the opportunity to participate in Gaelic Football, Rugby Union and Soccer in a Summer Camp setting. To compliment participation in each of the sports, a number of sport themed good relations workshops are delivered during the camps.

## 6.11. IRFU (Ulster Branch): Female Leadership Programme

The programme aims to grow female leadership within rugby in Ulster at all levels; playing, coaching, volunteering and administrating.

A panel of females will engage in a yearlong training programme which includes accredited rugby coaching, fitness instructor qualifications, practical experience and leadership training.

## 6.12. IRFU (Ulster Branch): Get Fit Women's Boot Camp

This programme is designed to utilise health and fitness as a way of engaging females into Rugby. Females are underrepresented within the leadership, playing and coaching of the game. This programme operates

out of Rugby Clubs across the province as a way of introducing new females to the sport by focusing on the health and fitness benefits to rugby.

#### 6.13. International Tag Rugby Festival for People with Disabilities

The International Tag Rugby Festival is hosted across the UK and Ireland as a method of promoting and celebrating Disability Rugby for people with Learning Disabilities.

The Festival was hosted at the Kingspan Stadium during June 2014 and brought together over 400 players from across Northern Ireland, Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland to participate in a tournament that focused on participation and enjoyment.

#### 6.14. IRFU (Ulster Branch): Community Gym Initiative

As part of capital investment the IRFU (Ulster Branch) have established 15 Community Gyms across Northern Ireland. The purpose of this programme is to promote and deliver health & fitness programmes, create access to gym/fitness services/facilities, support capacity building within deprived communities, enhance the employability of local volunteers and act as a stepping stone to lifelong involvement in Rugby.

The vision of the initiative is to create community hubs where people can improve their health & fitness and enjoy the social benefits of physical activity/involvement in sport.

#### 6.15. Creggan Rugby Project

The Creggan Rugby Project is a partnership programme between the IRFU (Ulster Branch), City of Derry (COD) RFC, Derry City Council and the Creggan Community with the aim of developing better relationships, increasing participation in rugby and building the capacity of local coaches & volunteers.

The project involves establishing a satellite Mini Rugby (Ages 6-12) in the Creggan area, which will act as a hub for players, coaches and volunteers from diverse backgrounds to network, grow rugby and develop new relationships.

#### 6.16. 'Sport in the Community'

The project is a joint partnership and programme between the IRFU (Ulster Branch), Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association (Ulster GAA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) to help support club/community development and volunteering over a three-year period (April 2012 - March 2015).



The focus areas of the project cover: volunteering, good relations, club & community development and capacity building.

6.17. Ulster Rugby Crew

The Ulster Rugby Crew is a volunteer programme primarily targeted at 16 – 24 year olds from areas of high social need. The purpose of the programme is to empower young people from all backgrounds through capacity building and practical experience.

Rugby Crew volunteers are offered opportunities to gain skills and qualifications through training as well as putting their newly acquired skills into practice through programmes in schools and community groups. The young volunteers are encouraged to link with their local rugby club to gain further experience and provide a voice for young people across domestic rugby.

6.18. Respect Programme (Londonderry YMCA)

The programme is targeted at low capacity, grass roots sports clubs in a developmental process. The aim is to increase the confidence and capacity of local sports clubs, with a specific focus on improving attitudes among young members of sports clubs on issues of sectarianism and racism. Participants are offered a range of Good Relations training, alongside Child Protection and First Aid training, thereby qualifying them to support the safe delivery of sporting activities within their clubs.

6.19. IFA 'Football for All' Project

The 'Football for All' project, based within the Community Relations department, aims to create a fun, safe and inclusive culture throughout football in Northern Ireland.

'Football for All' works across all strands of the game (international, domestic and grassroots) and plays a vital role in engaging with those socially excluded (marginalised groups, young people, ethnic minorities, homeless, refugees and asylum seekers) and in peace building.

The main aims and objectives of this project include the:

- exchange of information and addressing national issues through the provision of sport
- providing a platform on which football fans, coaches and volunteers can discuss issues of the past
- development of community relations projects and strategies within domestic football clubs
- working with community hubs in and around premier league clubs to heighten community awareness, making football

accessible for all, promoting inclusivity and providing a platform for social cohesion

- developing educational resources and enhancing links with school.
- working with grassroots projects directly delivering intervention and integration programmes addressing sectarianism, racism, social integration, mental health, volunteer development, unemployed and homelessness

'Football for All' delivers a range of grassroots based programmes, which use football as a hook for social development purposes such as:

- Street League
- Limestone United
- Ardoyne Interface
- Women's World United
- World United
- 'Football for All' Youth Forum

These programmes are designed to reach beyond the game, with the practical side of football coming secondary to the impact it can have on individuals and communities. The 'Football for All' project provides a diversionary approach for young people at risk, and opportunities for education and training (mental health, drugs and alcohol, good relations, mentoring, and skills development) and increased pathways to employment.

From 1 January 2015, the 'Football for All' project will be developed and coordinated by the new Football and Social Responsibility Unit, based within the Football Development Department of the Irish FA. This unit will be the training wing of the Association, with a focus on education, outreach and development for individuals, volunteers, clubs and communities.

#### 6.20. IFA: 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion Through Sport' Programme

The Irish Football Association is currently funded through the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure under the 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion through Sport' Programme (2012 – 2015). Given the IFA's experience and reach into all communities across Northern Ireland, it was clear that our work could be supported under this programme, and indeed, that we could make a further substantial impact in terms of equality, diversity, community cohesion, health and well-being, social inclusion, community development, skills development, volunteering, pathways to employment, and social and economic regeneration.

This programme is far reaching in its geographical spread engaging with and delivering into communities across Northern Ireland, in some of the

most socially deprived communities across the country. It is vast in terms of its ability to meet the key aims and objectives of the programme, supporting a **Health** Awareness and Training Programme, Schools **Enterprise** Programme, **Club and Community Development** Programme, **Disability** Football Development Programme, **Small Sided Games** Programme and '**Football for All**' Programme.

#### 6.21. Club Maith

Club Maith is an Ulster GAA derived initiative, which aims to acknowledge the unrivalled commitment and time invested by GAA volunteers to their GAA club. Tradition dictates that the work carried-out in GAA clubs is of a standard, which every GAA member can be proud of. Ulster GAA wish to recognise the sterling contribution of volunteerism in our clubs, while also laying-down foundations which will allow this culture to continue. To do this Ulster GAA have established core criteria on which clubs can benchmark themselves. The criteria have been divided into the following five areas: Governance, Duty of Care, Community Enhancement, Culture & Heritage and Coaching & Games Development. Club Maith offers guidance and support to clubs going through the process. The completion of the process will result in clubs gaining a better understanding of how good their club is, as well as ensuring best practice is standard in all clubs. Successful clubs are awarded either bronze, silver, gold or platinum awards.

#### 6.22. Ulster GAA Cúchulainn Programme

The Cúchulainn Programme is Ulster GAA's flagship annual cross-community and cross-border competition. It offers young people from non-GAA backgrounds the opportunity to learn the skills of Gaelic Games in both hurling and Gaelic Football, and then to compete with teams from across Ulster. The programme is delivered in both the controlled and maintained sector with games participation linked to relationship forging and friendships established. The Cup competition is now in its seventh year with 11 teams representing 31 schools and over 220 players. The Cúchulainn Programme also comprises of a further outreach element including educational trips to Dublin and games participation in London.

#### 6.23. Ulster GAA Community Outreach and Engagement Programme

The GAA underlines its commitment to the values of respect, tolerance and the vision of a shared future by engaging in an important community outreach programme. This programme involves dialogue and engagement with individuals and groups who traditionally have had no interaction with the Association. GAA Clubs are key community anchors and are key providers of sporting, cultural and community activities across Ulster. This approach aims to further diversify the make up of the GAA and to enhance understanding of the Association among those who may not have previously engaged with it. We also open dialogue and

engagement with Community leaders from a range of backgrounds, including reaching out to political leaders and groups to promote tolerance and respect.

#### 6.24. Ulster GAA Community, Health & Wellbeing Programme

Ulster GAA have an extensive health and wellbeing programme aimed at enhancing the welfare of its members in clubs, counties and schools. The range of programmes delivered include: Heads Up (Mental Health), Stand out from the Crowd (Drugs & Alcohol), Live to Play (Road Safety), Healthy Hamper (Primary Schools), Social Initiative (Older Members), Cardiac Screening (Heart Health), First Aid and AED (First Responders). This programme has now been formalized in the structures of the association with each club now appointing a volunteer health and wellbeing officer and adopting a policy to provide a framework for future delivery.

#### 6.25. Ulster GAA Twinning Programme with overseas units

The GAA is vibrant in many areas overseas. Ulster is twinned with Canada and Britain in the development of our games. This relationship has evolved over time with support overseas being provided in a range of ways. Referee tutors have been provided to run courses and to referee important games. Coaching tutors have been trained to deliver coach education courses. Coaches have supported summer camps and Ulster has provided equipment to support these developments. At a strategic level time has been spent on developing plans and strategies to help focus the membership to drive the GAA forward.

#### 6.26. Ulster GAA Cultural and Language Programme

Ulster GAA organises a wide range of projects to promote the Irish language. These include holding a weeklong summer course for learners in Gaeltacht Dhún na nGall, funding 'Gaeilge sa Chlub' university diploma scholarships, assisting with the administration of Irish classes in local areas, and producing special Irish-language resources such as a booklet listing the names of all clubs in Ulster. Gaelic culture is promoted through the annual Scór competitions and other occasional events. The Ulster GAA heritage programme encompasses the organisation of special commemorative events and initiatives to archive historical material relating to Gaelic games. Clubs are given advice on how to enhance their cultural output and archiving policies.

#### 6.27. Ulster GAA: GAA 4 All Programme

The development of opportunities for children and young people with learning and physical disabilities has been a very successful programme. Coaches work closely with schools and community clubs to engage with

the groups and teach them the skills of the games. They progress to regional events both indoor and outdoor and play games as part of the National League and Ulster Championships programmes. This work is still evolving and with the help of Disability NI four hubs are emerging that will facilitate wheelchair hurling and football. Able-bodied people can also be involved in this activity and it is hoped that a formal competition will emerge in 2014 across the hubs.

#### 6.28. Ulster GAA: 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion Through Sport' Programme

Ulster GAA has been working with DCAL to deliver it's own top priority, and most important objective, 'To Promote Equality, and Tackle Poverty and Social Exclusion'. It is the Department's goal to contribute to social cohesion and united communities, and through the elimination of the economic, cultural and societal inequalities. Ulster GAA was selected as a body to deliver this agenda and have done so across the following areas:

- Urban Club and School Coaching Equipment and Support Programme:
- Disability Gaelic Games Programme:
- Club and Community Volunteer Development
- Health, Wellbeing and ASAP Programme
- GAA Volunteer Employment Skills Programme

### **7. Issues to be Addressed**

Throughout the deliver of the T: BUC Strategy there are a number of important issues that need to be address for the implementation to be successful. If the Strategy is to realise the full vision of removing interface barriers, there are a number of key issues that need to be addressed before their removal:

- 7.1. Building Positive Intra & Inter Community Relationships
- 7.2. Deprivation
- 7.3. Levels of Unemployment
- 7.4. Levels of Anti-Social Behaviour
- 7.5. Decreasing the Occurrences of Hate Crime
- 7.6. Developing peoples Understanding Diversity
- 7.7. Providing Education & Training Opportunities
- 7.8. Enhancing Quality of Life
- 7.9. Addressing Health Inequalities
- 7.10. Increasing Access to Services
- 7.11. Increasing Access to Facilities

## **8. Role of the Community**

Engaging the local community in decision-making is a key element to public policy making. The delivery of government driven programmes should reflect the needs of the local community through on-going consultation.

The T: BUC Strategy aims to remove interface barriers by 2023 and recognises the extent of the challenge associated with this. The majority of interface barriers are in areas of high social deprivation, with people feeling marginalised and disengaged from society. It is important to recognise that before barriers are considered for removal, it is crucial that people feel part of the community and engaged in society. The issue of interface barriers is a sensitive one, particularly for those living with them on their doorstep. The views and opinions of the people that will be most effected by their removal should take priority in the decision making process alongside those of the wider community.

Involving the local community in the development of Action Plans that work towards the removal of interface barriers in a timeframe that works for them, should be considered as part of T: BUC. This will provide a straight forward and transparent, step-by-step process developed and delivered in partnership with the local community.

## **9. Good Relations Indicators**

The three codes are of the view that the Good Relations Indicators proposed by OFMDFM are robust, practical and measurable. It is with significant enthusiasm that we welcome the inclusion of sport in a number of the indicators, particularly under outcome 1.2 Young people engaging in bringing the community together.

However, sport is not limited under one Key Priority, in fact the impact of sport cuts across all four Key Priorities under the T: BUC Strategy. It is with this in mind that the following recommendations are included within the indicators to reflect this:

### **9.1. Shared space is accessible to all (Outcome 2.2):**

Sports facilities are viewed as community hubs, where people come together to interact with others, enhance their health & fitness and develop personal & emotional skills.

This directly contributes to community cohesion and promotes positive social benefits. The sports club acts as a central point within the community where people can share their own cultural expression in a safe and inclusive environment. This is a key indicator that should be considered when measuring the impact of the T: BUC strategy.

### **9.2. A community where places and spaces are safe for all (Outcome 3.2):**

Sports clubs/facilities are spaces for people to come together for a common passion and celebrate their cultural expression through sport.

A sports club promotes a self of belonging and working together for a common cause, which creates positive community cohesion.

Sports clubs/facilities should be considered as an additional area to be monitored under this outcome.

## **10. Sport as a Key T: BUC Delivery Method**

The IFA, IRFU (Ulster Branch) and Ulster GAA contribute to over 90% of all sports participation in Northern Ireland – making the reach of the three major Sports Governing Bodies a considerable resource when working towards government priorities.

It is acknowledged in a number of Government Strategies that Sport is a key driver in delivering social and economic impact. The T: BUC Strategy details the following:

***“We recognise that sport is a powerful tool in bringing people together. We know that sport can play a central role in breaking down divisions in society and can provide a mechanism to encourage sharing, learning, and friendship; as well as, healthy competition across all parts of our society.”***

While investment into sport and sporting facilities has been sited as a model of good practise for delivery of the T: BUC Strategy, it is important to recognise that sport is not limited in it’s capacity to impact all Priorities of the Strategy.

Sport should be highlighted as a central delivery method within T: BUC across the four key Priorities. The associated principals of these priorities are all qualities demonstrated through sports clubs and sport in general. Sport is about working together for a common goal, creating a safe space where people can express their own identity but enjoy a joint identity at the same time. This is reflected in a recent Northern Ireland Life & Times survey where 84% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that sport has the ability to unite people across communities.

It is recommended that any future investment should take into consideration the extensive remit that the three major Governing Bodies have and the impact sport can have on the delivery of the T: BUC Strategy from a face to face grassroots perspective.

Sport also plays a vital role in contributing towards long term sustainable employment and furthermore, the attributes, qualifications and personal development that can be gained from sport will undoubtedly contribute towards job prospects in a wide range of disciplines.

According to the Sport NI; Economic Importance of Sport in Northern Ireland report, sport and associated industries are estimated to employ 17,900 people in Northern Ireland, accounting for 2.3% of all employment in the region in 2008. This figure represents a 12% increase since 2004 so in today's climate, the actual number and percentage is most likely to have increased.

Sport also has the power to develop many aspects of personal development, including education, and through initiatives such as coach education and sports leadership programmes linked with local Clubs and the infrastructure at a local level, the impact on people regarding their employability prospects would be significant.

A key consideration as part of the T: BUC Strategy should be the potential for capital investment in shared sporting venues in strategic places across Northern Ireland.

With investment from the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure into the Stadia Redevelopment Project, we have seen the impact capital investment can have on sport and the wider community.

A number of capital club projects have already seen considerable impact on the wider community and indicated the addition of updated/additional facilities have opened access and transformed the perception of the sports clubs to the surrounding community.

## **11. Partnership (Ulster Rugby, GAA & IFA)**

The three major sports governing bodies have been working in partnership on a number of programmes such as the 'Sport in the Community' Programme (DSD Funded) and the Game of Three Halves, the Belfast Interface Games (Peace III Funded) and the 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport' Programme (DCAL Funded).

The three codes are committed to working together on programmes that have the potential to have significant impact on wider social issues. As part of the growing relationship across the three sports, collaborative projects have focused on promoting good relations and diversity through capacity building among clubs and volunteers at a grassroots level.

The partnership between the three Associations has provided an interesting learning experience over the last two years in particular, as part of the DSD funded 'Sport in the Community' Programme. It was clear from the outset that the reach and impact of the three codes in areas such as capacity building, community development, and good relations through sport was significant.

Whilst the codes are in a strong position to further develop their capacity building work for instance with clubs and volunteers across Northern



Ireland, the Associations have learnt that they differentiate in some ways for example, their structures and developmental stages.

The three codes have gained much experience of working in partnership with other stakeholders in developing good relations programmes that have defined targets and outcomes relating to shared actions, joint up working and inclusion as well as providing directed programmes in areas of high social need that promote equality, tackle poverty and social exclusion.

Each Association has their strengths and challenges with regards to delivering programmes around capacity building, good relations and community development. The Irish Football Association has a wealth of experience in good relations and diversity programmes, using football as the vehicle for social change, which is evident through their internationally recognised 'Football for All' project.

Ulster GAA has a strong delivery in the area of Club Development and Community Outreach, educating volunteers and providing outreach education to provide an open and welcoming environment for the entire community. Participation projects such as the Cúchulainn Project; establishing links with female codes and providing GAA playing opportunities for all who wish to partake.

The IRFU (Ulster Branch) has considerable experience in areas of Grassroots Rugby Development, providing opportunities for player, coach and volunteer pathways. In recent years the IRFU (Ulster Branch) has developed robust participation programmes focused on growing the game with underrepresented groups, specifically with females, people with disabilities and people from areas of deprivation. As well as this, through the redevelopment of the Kingspan Stadium the Nevin Spence Education Centre is leading the way through an innovative approach to education and learning.

This learning has brought a great deal of value to the multisport partnership of three codes and has strengthened their position for future delivery, in how they meet Programme for Government, government department objectives and the priorities outlined as part of the T:BUC Strategy.

## **12. Cross Stadia Programme (IFA, IRFU Ulster Branch, Ulster GAA)**

As part of the redevelopment of the Kingspan Stadium, Windsor Park and Casement Park there is significant potential to deliver a cross-stadia sport & education programme that provides synergy to the capital investment from DCAL.

Each stadium will host an education centre where people will be able to engage in education through a sporting lens, with a particular focus on STEM subjects. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to discover the potential for sport to integrate with education as well as providing a shared

space to explore the culture of each sport in a safe and respectful environment.

It is recommended that a Cross-Stadia Programme between the Kingspan Stadium, Windsor Park and Casement Park be considered as part of the delivery of the T: BUC Strategy, particularly in relation to the Shared Community and Cultural Expression themes.

#### 12.1. Kingspan Stadium

A significant investment by DCAL into the Stadia Redevelopment Programme enabled the IRFU (Ulster Branch) to construct a state of the art stadium at Ravenhill Grounds with a capacity of approximately 18,000.

An important element of the redevelopment is increasing community access to the stadium and working towards the vision set out in the Northern Ireland Regional Development Strategy that Belfast will be a “City of Culture & Sport” by 2025.

Through community engagement and education programmes the stadium acts as a shared space where people can access rugby and help improve deprivation.

The stadium acts as a place to inspire people to participate in sport (rugby), which is at the core of DCAL’s Strategy for Sport and Sport NI’s Corporate Plan. The stadium is fully accessible and aims to promote equality and tackle social exclusion through sport.

#### 12.2. Casement Park

The Ulster GAA Stadium Project Board have worked closely with their Design Team to produce impressive plans which will transform the current 12-acre Casement Park stadium site in West Belfast into an iconic stadium for all Ulster Gaelic Games, increasing the capacity of the stadium from its current figure of 32,500 to a 38,000 all seater. All GAA codes and activities will be catered for in the modern stadium to include Hurling, Camogie, Gaelic Football, Rounders, and Handball. The new building will also offer up to 2000sq metres dedicated to community facilities.

The stadium, as well as servicing needs of the Central GAA and Ulster GAA will also continue to serve all the needs of Antrim GAA as the County’s home ground and will provide for all codes at all age levels. The aspiration of Ulster GAA is to have all school children with an interest in Gaelic Games play in the new stadium within five years of its completion. It is anticipated that this major Project will bring many benefits and opportunities for the local area and for Belfast and Ulster. When

completed the Stadium will bring significant local economic benefits, through job opportunities and by attracting visitors from across Ireland and these islands to Ulster and Belfast.

### 12.3. National Stadium: Windsor Park

The Association has a once in a generation opportunity to transform its stadia over the next five years. The £29.2m re-development of Windsor Park into a state of the art 18,000 seat National Stadium will be more than a new ground for the national team.

It will be a new home for the Irish FA; a new conference facility for the city of Belfast; and provide new social and recreational facilities to local communities.

We hope that its construction symbolises a continuing confidence in a new Northern Ireland, and in turn inspires growing confidence and support for our team.

A further £36.2m investment is planned to develop sub-regional facilities for the benefit of both the international and domestic game. By improving and upgrading facilities across Northern Ireland, we will provide better environments to develop our players and improve the facilities for fans and supporters who come to watch the game.

In total, the NI Executive through the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has committed £61.4 million of capital funding for football stadia and facilities. The Irish FA is committing a further £4 million (14% of the total stadium project costs), and we aim to attract further investment partners both at the new National Stadium, and for regional facilities. The preparation, planning and execution of this work must be carried out with immense care and thought to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from this investment. With careful thought and willing partnerships we can deliver a revitalised physical infrastructure for football, inextricably linked to local community development in Northern Ireland.

Plans for the new National Stadium are now complete, and work has already begun. We plan to welcome fans and new supporters to the refurbished home of Northern Irish football in summer 2015. We have completed a Community Consultation Process which together with further engagement will shape our plans for community facilities at the stadium. Through partnership we will be able to offer a community space, GP surgery, or additional sports and leisure facilities to meet the needs of the surrounding neighbourhoods and kick-start renewal.

The Irish FA will be headquartered at the new stadium. Having all of our staff in a modern, fit for purpose building will be a huge boost to our teamwork ethic and will improve our ways of working.

A new management company has been created, as a subsidiary of the Irish FA, to run the new National Stadium and ensure its long-term sustainability as a venue, conference centre and museum from 2013. It will take operational control of the stadium's commercial and community facilities upon opening in 2015.

### **13. Conclusion**

To conclude we welcome the opportunity to response to the T: BUC Inquiry and make recommendations to the future delivery of the strategy.

There is a clear willingness for the three codes to deliver joint initiatives that will result in a major impact on the Northern Ireland Society. The T: BUC Strategy presents a key opportunity for the three codes to enhance the good work that is currently being delivered in the area of Good Relations. With the capacity to deliver effective and successful programmes across Northern Ireland, the three Governing Bodies are well placed to act as core delivery partners for sport in the implementation of T: BUC Programmes.

Creating new opportunities and increasing inclusivity is central to the strategic direction of the three sports. This is an area that we hold considerable experience and can demonstrate a number of methods of best practise.

We also welcome the opportunity to present the comments and recommendations outlined in this joint Inquiry Response to the OFMDFM Committee.

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