



## JMC – I - 1778

### Opening Statement

A dhaoine uaisle, ar an chéad dul síos, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil libh as ucht an chuireadh inniu. Léiríonn an cuireadh seo an tabhacht a bhaineas leis an tionscadal seo agus tá a fhios againn go léir go bhfuil an tír agus an pobal gaelach ar fud an domhain ag feitheamh linn an sprioc seo a bhaint amach mar tuigimid go léir an duais atá le baint ma éiríonn linn é a dhéanamh mar ba cheart. Agus caithfear é a dhéanamh mar is ceart. Sin an fáth go bhfuil muid ag cur an oiread sin fuinnimh, stáidéir agus comhairliúchán isteach san fhiontar seo, agus don trí eagraíocht, sé seo an tionscadal is tabhachtaí i stair ár gcumann.

Today I come before you as President of the Gaelic Athletic Association, alongside my esteemed counterparts from the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and the Camogie Association, united in our commitment to the project of full integration between our organizations. Integration is not merely a goal; it is a shared vision rooted in our collective dedication to the advancement of Gaelic games. Together, we recognize the transformative power of unity, and we are resolute in our determination to realize its full potential. Our consultations with our membership have returned overwhelming approval for full integration and have allowed us to imagine a future where the barriers between Gaelic football, ladies' football, and camogie are dissolved, where players of all backgrounds and genders stand shoulder to shoulder on the same field, bound by a common love for our national games. Integration promises not only greater inclusivity but also enhanced competitiveness, as we harness the unique strengths of each code to create a more dynamic and compelling sporting experience for all. And yet, I know there are those who will state that all they have seen so far is aspirational rhetoric, without tangible results and that we are moving too slowly, while others will state that a target date of 2027 is fanciful and too ambitious and that we should not be naïve to the challenges that lie ahead. Many of our grassroots club activists are impatient to usher in a new era of inclusivity in its fullest sense and over 900 clubs have achieved full integration with the One Club model. These views will be shared almost unanimously with our county players of all codes and the Gaelic Players Association.

However, the county game, in particular, presents a formidable challenge to integration, with its complex structures, significant financial demands and player welfare requirements. Many GAA County committees are apprehensive around the idea of full equality fearing that it will simply multiply the 40 million cost of preparing county teams by three and we know that an inter county model without a significant enforcement of the amateur status code is simply not viable. There is also the issue of playing and changing facilities which will require significant upgrade and modernisation if we are to cater properly for a fully compliant association which honours even the most basic terms of reference for equality in this regard.

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So, as we reflect on this project, it is important that in our giddy enthusiasm to 'begin with the end in mind', as Covey described, we don't lose sight of the journey to achieve integration, which is why a methodical, incremental approach is not only important, it is absolutely crucial if this is to work.

The two perspectives I have outlined above, are true in their own way, but should not distract us and it is the job of the implementation committee to create a gaelic games organisation which reassures the fears of those reluctant to make the jump, while satisfying the impatience of those who can't understand why it hasn't happened already.

As custodians of Gaelic games, we must confront all of these challenges head-on, mindful of the need to protect the integrity and tradition of our three organisations, while forging a path towards greater unity and cooperation. However, the one driving force which should keep our minds focused and our resolve strong, is the fact that the road to integration, while complex and with many obstacles, is a journey worth undertaking. With strategic planning, prudent financial management, and unwavering commitment, we can overcome these barriers and usher in a new era of unity and inclusivity in Gaelic games. Together, as one sporting family, we are confident in our ability to navigate the complexities of integration in a manner that respects the unique identity of each code while advancing the collective interests of all. I want to pay tribute to the officers of each of the three associations for their diligent work in bringing us closer each day to the moment of full integration, led by Mary McAleese, who is perhaps the only person in Ireland who has the skills, the respect, and the acumen to achieve this vision for us. And we know that on that morning when we awaken to the vista of full integrated status as one organisation, it will not be an end in itself, but the beginning of a new journey towards a brighter, more inclusive future for Gaelic games in Ireland.

Is mise le meas



Iarlaith Ó Broin  
Uachtarán