

A Cháirde,

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to update your committee and to outline the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's support for the planned integration of the Gaelic Games bodies, namely the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and the Camogie Association.

I am here as President of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and delighted to be joined by representatives from the GAA and the Camogie Association.

This is an historic year for the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, as we prepare for our 50th anniversary on the 18th of July. Back in 1974, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association was officially formed at Hayes Hotel in Thurles, and it's fair to say that we've come an awful long way in almost half a century.

We are the fastest growing female sport in the country, with growth figures of 12 per cent year on year, and we now have a membership of almost 200,000 people. We cater for women of all ages, from young girls to the elder cohort, who participate in competitive football but also recreational, through our hugely successful Gaelic4Mothers and Others programme.

While our inter-county Leagues and Championships are our flagship competitions, and sponsored by Lidl Ireland and TG4 respectively, the playing base there would account for roughly 1 per cent of our overall membership. In more recent times, we've been proud to welcome record attendances to Croke Park for our TG4 All-Ireland Finals and media coverage of our sport has increased exponentially.

The Steering Group on Integration was formed in the autumn of 2022 and, from the outset, we have been fully engaged in this process. Prior to this, and at our Annual Congress in 2022, delegates attending voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion committing to this project.

We feel that the time is right to integrate the Gaelic Games Associations and while autonomy has been hugely beneficial to the LGFA and allowed us the space and the scope to grow rapidly, we will be better, stronger and in a position to achieve so much more together as one Association for Gaelic Games.

We have ensured that our members have been kept fully briefed and updated on each major development throughout the process, from the listening phase right through to the most recent major announcement,

when Chairperson of the Steering group on Integration Mary McAleese, revealed the timeline for integration at a press conference held at Croke Park in February, at which representatives from the GAA, the LGFA and the Camogie Association were present in a strong show of unity.

A detailed update to our members was issued at our most recent Annual Congress, held last month in county Clare, and we will continue to keep them informed over the coming weeks and months, with a number of webinars where clubs can log on to learn of further progress.

Of course, we recognise that the integration process will present challenges. The prime challenges remain on fixtures, finances and facilities, and each of these key elements are very much intertwined. Significant investment is required to upgrade existing facilities, and to invest in more facilities to cater for members into the future. When you consider our growth figures, this is vital for the continued development of Gaelic Games across all Associations.

To date, we have listened carefully to the concerns raised by various stakeholders from our clubs, counties, provincial bodies, staff and key sponsors. We have taken them on board but we have also been hugely encouraged by the overwhelming sense of excitement and expectation about what lies in store for the Ladies Gaelic Football Association when integration happens, and the many positive impacts that will have whilst ensuring a focus remains on growing the female aspect of our games and that this continues to be at the forefront of plans.

The path forward is now clear and by 2027, there will be one Association for Gaelic Games, which we will be extremely proud to be a part of. This is the ultimate goal and it's a path that we will not be deviated from. We are focused, committed and working hard to achieve this one, overall aim.

We were delighted to be invited here today to present our thoughts and also to reflect. I'm sure you're aware of the feel-good factor that surrounds the integration process, and the associated public sentiment. This is not a simple process but if the Associations are given the time, backing, respect and belief, the new Association for Gaelic Games will be a game changer for the sporting landscape not only in Ireland, but across the world. I would now encourage our political leaders to work towards securing and providing the necessary resources to help make this wonderful vision the outstanding reality that it will be.

Many thanks for your time today. Ar aghaidh le chéile.