



Comhdháil Bhliantúil 2025 Comhairle na Mumhan

Tuairisc Bliantúil 2025 (Secretary's Annual Report 2025)

I am delighted to present my Annual Report to the Munster GAA Convention, which is my eighth such report. I will discuss our Championships and the performance of Munster Teams in the All-Ireland series, while also discussing club fixtures, demographics, amateur status and other matters.

National Leagues

The year began without the pre-season competitions, as these were given a break on a trial basis in the interests of player welfare by the removal of games from the pre-season window. It is hard to gauge how effective this was as numerous challenge games were played by counties in preparation for the season ahead.

The season began in earnest with the Allianz Hurling and Football Leagues, and 2025 proved to be a successful year for Munster counties in both codes. In football, Kerry won their 24th title, and their first since 2019, defeating Mayo in the final. This win was to be a taster for what was to come from the men from the Kingdom as the year progressed. Limerick recorded a well-deserved and welcome win in Division 4, beating Wexford in the final, winning their 4th Division 4 title and their first since 2020. This win signaled a revival in Limerick football fortunes, and more was to come from Jimmy Lee's team.

In hurling, in front of a sold out Supervalu Páirc Uí Chaoimh, Cork won the Division 1 title for the first time since 1998 and their 15th title in all, beating Tipperary in the decider. There was a real sense that Cork hurling was working its way back to the top as the Cork public turned out in their droves to see the League title famine come to an end. There was also Munster success in the Division 1B final, as Waterford overcame a late comeback from Offaly to secure the title.

Munster Senior Championships

The Munster Senior Hurling Championship began in a blaze of excitement, as Cork and Clare faced off at a sold-out Zimmer Biomet Cusack Park in Ennis in a repeat of the 2024 All Ireland Hurling Final. Cork raced into a big lead, but were pegged back by a great Clare comeback, with Cork needing a late score to draw the game. Later on that afternoon, Tipperary and Limerick played out a draw in front of 32,000 spectators. While it went unnoticed to most, the result was a signal that Tipperary, fresh from a positive League campaign, were building a new, young and hungry team, and they would go on to record wins over Waterford and over Clare in a pulsating game at a packed Zimmer Biomet Cusack Park in Ennis. Limerick, chasing a remarkable 7th title in a row, followed on from their first-round draw, with an impressive win over Waterford, and went on to stun Cork with a 16-point win in front of 42,000 spectators at



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a sun-drenched TUS Gaelic Grounds. Cork, having beaten Tipperary in Round 2, secured a Munster Final place against Limerick, with a win over Waterford at Páirc Uí Chaoimh. For Clare, there was disappointment at not qualifying from the group, having won the All-Ireland the previous year. However, Clare will bounce back, and the County has a very positive record in Minor and U20 Hurling in Munster in recent years, so there is plenty of talent coming through in the Banner County.

The Munster Final was played on a Saturday evening, following an arrangement with the Leinster Council to alternate the 2 provincial finals between Saturday and Sunday. A sold-out TUS Gaelic Grounds saw one of the most dramatic finals in many years, as a tightly fought game saw the lead exchange hands on several occasions, with a last-minute Limerick score taking the game to extra time. Extra time proved to be equally dramatic, with Cork needing a last gasp 65 to take the game to a historic penalty taking conclusion, with Cork coming out on top to take their first Munster Senior Hurling title since 2017.



Cork's Rob Downey lifts the Mick Mackey Cup

Our Senior Football Championship played its way to an inevitable conclusion, with Kerry winning their 12th title in 13 years and their 86th in all. While the Championship has struggled in recent years in terms of profile, Cork and Kerry played a pulsating semi-final game before 14,000 enthralled spectators at Supervalu Páirc Uí Chaoimh. The game went to extra time, and had Cork taken more of their chances, they could well have pulled off a famous win, which



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would have given football in the County a boost that it so desperately needs. However, Kerry dug deep and recorded a 2-point win. Clare qualified for the final following a semi-final victory over Tipperary, but 4 first half goals gave Kerry a strong half time lead, and they eventually ran out 11-point winners.



Kerry's Gavin White lifts the Munster Football Cup



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Penalty Competitions and Replays

No sooner had the Munster Senior Hurling Final concluded when calls were made for replays to be restored in provincial finals. However, as covered in my report last year, it is a case of 'being careful what we wish for'. A replay would have taken place on the following Saturday evening, meaning the runner-up would have been playing the Quarter Final the week after the replay and therefore subjected to playing 3 weeks in a row. I was amazed that very few asked if a replay was a fair situation on the players, which in my view, it is not. If we build in a replay weekend, with the All-Ireland Quarter Final two weeks after the replay weekend, then the Munster winner waits for 5 weeks for the All-Ireland Semi Final under the current format, which is also very unfair on the winning team. We need to stop harping back to the days of replays. The landscape has changed dramatically, as the number of championship games being played at Club and Intercounty level has increased dramatically. Replays in the middle of a season are simply too disruptive. They always were, but knockout championships, or the shorter back door formats, made them possible. That is no longer the case.

There was also a focus on the penalty competition as a way of finishing games. It is about finding the fairest way possible to end a game that must finish on the day. A 'Golden Score' system is not fair. For example, a team with a strong wind in their favour will have an advantage. There is also the complication of a free winning a game, which places enormous pressure on the referee. As I discussed in last year's report, the use of penalties is fair in that conditions are the same for both teams. We could decide the winner based on which team has scored the most goals if still level after extra time, which in this case would have handed the title to Limerick. This would reduce the number of times that penalties are needed, which it has to be said, is rare anyway.

Minor and U20 Munster Championships

Tipperary showed very good form in winning the Munster U20 Hurling Championship, with 3 victories on the trot in the group stage following a surprise loss to Limerick in the first round. They powered on to secure the Munster title with a 5-point win over Clare in the final, bringing their haul of Munster U20/21 titles to 23 and placing them at the top of the roll of honour.

In the Minor Hurling grade, Cork had a blemish free run of games, with 4 wins in the group stages and a final win over Waterford, in an exciting and action filled final where the Déise made a stirring comeback but fell short by just 2 points as the Rebel County claimed their 35th Munster title at the grade.

In football, Kerry was victorious in both the Minor and U-20 grades, beating Cork in both finals, winning the U20 Final by 8 points and the Minor Final by 9 points. It was Kerry's 3rd Minor title in a row, and their 4th U20 title in a row. 2026 will see a new format in place for the Minor Football Championship, with the double round robin system that is used in the U20 Football Championship in place.



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2025 Munster Club Champions	
Senior Hurling	Corcaigh
Senior Football	Ciarraí
U20 Hurling	Tiobraid Árann
U20 Football	Ciarraí
Minor Hurling	Corcaigh
Minor Football	Ciarraí

Table 1: Munster Intercounty Championship winners in 2025

Munster Teams in the All-Ireland Senior Championships

2025 proved to be a very successful year for Munster counties in the All-Ireland Championships, with 4 of the 6 main titles across both codes coming to the province. For the fourth time since the turn of the century, both Senior titles made their way to the province of Munster. On the Hurling front, there was a clean sweep of titles by Munster counties, with the Senior, U20 and Minor titles coming to the province.

In football, 3 Munster teams qualified for the Sam Maguire Senior Championship, with Kerry qualifying as Munster winners, Clare as Munster runners up and Cork due to their fifth place finish in Division 2 of the Allianz League. Both Cork and Clare struggled to make headway in the Championship, with Cork qualifying for the All-Ireland Preliminary Quarter Final following their sole win in the group stages over Roscommon. Clare failed to progress from their group, while Kerry qualified for the Preliminary Quarter Finals following victories over Cork and Roscommon. A defeat to Meath in the group stages left many questioning the ability of the Kerry men to lift Sam Maguire. However, the men from the Kingdom would go on to claim a stunning All Ireland final victory and a 39th title following wins over Cavan, Armagh, Tyrone and Donegal. It was more than just a championship victory though. It was a victory for Gaelic Football and was won by using the new rules to maximum effect and by playing a superb brand of attacking football, with a tight and steely defense limiting opposition scores. It was a joy to witness. The display of David Clifford in the final will be firmly etched in the annals of the Association, as he delivered a master class in the art of score kicking. In a county that has 39 All Ireland titles, it is hard to pick one to top them all, but this must surely be near the top of the pile in terms of skill and flair, and will no doubt inspire new generations of young Kerry players. Jack O'Connor is firmly part of the group of greatest managers of all time, with 5 Senior titles to his name, won over 3 stints as Kerry manager.



Kerry Manager Jack O'Connor lifts the Sam Maguire Cup

Limerick footballers gave the game in the county a much-needed boost by reaching the Tailteann Cup Final. It was felt by many that the task for the Division 4 winners would be too difficult to take on, but the men from the Treaty County came so close to snatching a crack at extra time and could possibly have won the game in normal time, but it wasn't to be, as Kildare ran out 2-point winners. While there was huge disappointment in Limerick, Jimmy Lee's men can be very proud of the great progress they made and the outstanding performance in the final. Hopefully, Limerick will continue their progress with a solid campaign in Division 3 of the 2026 Football League

In the Senior Hurling Championship, Limerick was defeated by Dublin in the Quarter Final in a shock result, played at Croke Park. Tipperary, who finished third in the Munster Round Robin, defeated Laois in the Preliminary Quarter Final and Galway in the Quarter Final to set up a clash with neighbours Kilkenny in the All-Ireland Semi Final. Cork played Dublin in an 82,000 sellout Semi Final, and the huge Cork crowd witnessed Cork score 7 goals to secure their third final appearance in 5 years. In the second Semi Final, over 60,000 witnessed Tipperary claim a sensational win over Kilkenny, scoring 4 goals in the process, and coming from behind with minutes to go and down to 14 men to reach their first final since 2019. This set up an All Munster All Ireland Hurling Final, the sixth ever such final and the 4th in 6 years.



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Ticket demand for this one reached fever pitch as the 2 Munster rivals faced off in an All - Ireland Final for the first time ever, with Cork aiming to end a 20 year wait for Liam MacCarthy to return to Leaside, while Tipperary were aiming to win their first title since 2019. The final saw Cork go into the half-time break 6 points to the good, but a sensational second half from Tipperary saw them outscore Cork by 3-14 to 2 points and claim an astonishing victory. John McGrath delivered a performance for the ages, as Cork could not contain wave after wave of Tipperary attacks that saw the Premier County claim their 29th title. It was a spectacular change in fortunes for Liam Cahill's charges, who finished bottom of the Munster Round Robin in 2024. Coupled with the U-20 win and the recent Harty Cup successes, hurling in the Premier County is in great health. For Cork, the agonizing wait goes on, but with the talent on the panel and the talent coming through, hope remains high that the wait for All - Ireland senior success will end sooner rather than later.



Tipperary Captain Ronan Maher lifts the Liam MacCarthy Cup

Munster Teams in the All-Ireland Minor and U-20 Championships

In the All-Ireland Minor Hurling Championship, Waterford hurling received a much-needed boost as they beat Clare in an all-Munster All- Ireland Final played in front of 16,000 spectators in Thurles. There were joyous scenes on the pitch after the final whistle as the Déise men, who qualified for the final with wins over Limerick and Kilkenny, ended a wait of 9 years for an All-Ireland title for the county, with an impressive 11-point win over Clare.

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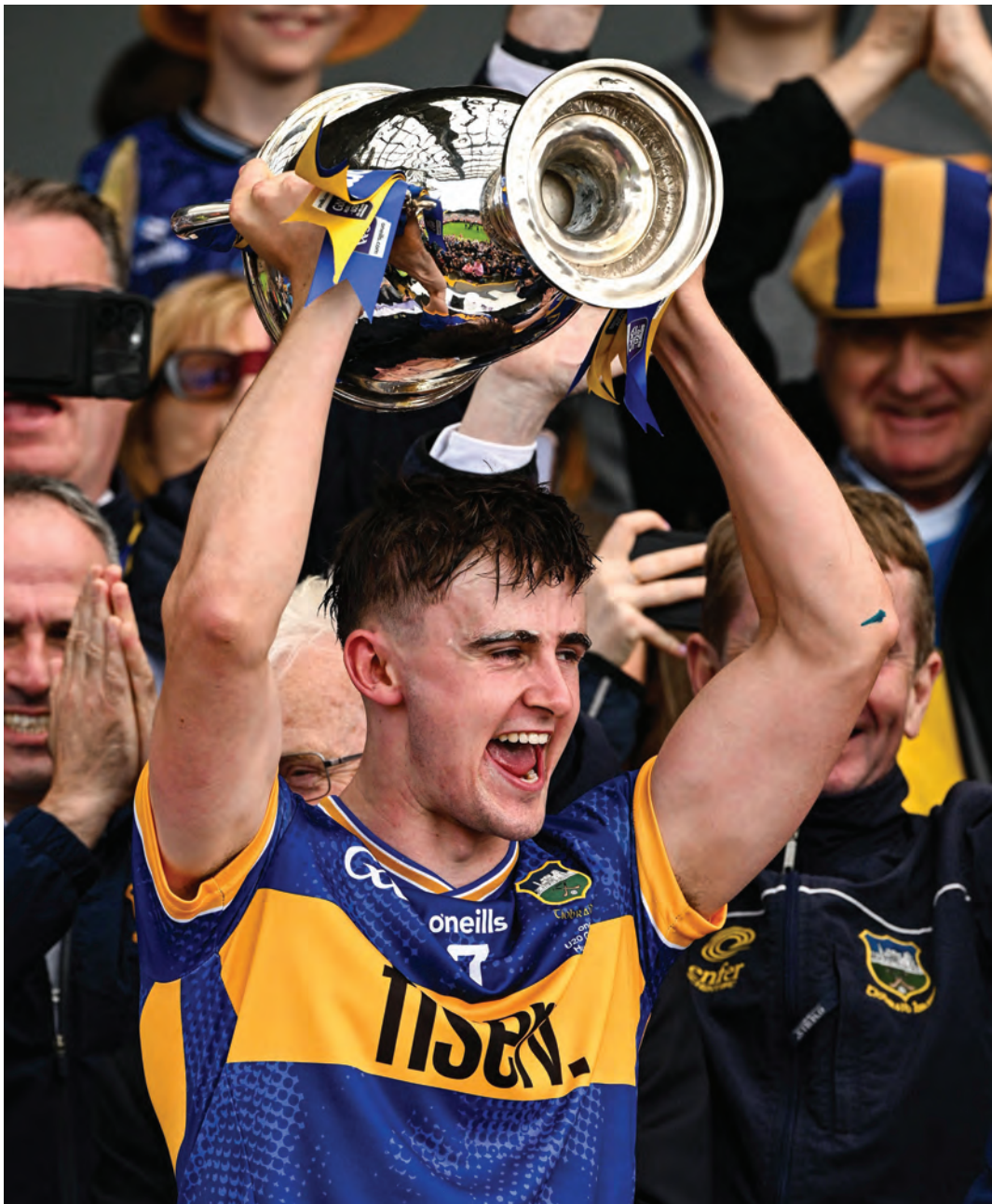
Waterford Minor Hurling Captain James Comerford lifts the Irish Press Cup

In the U-20 Hurling grade, Tipperary faced Kilkenny on their home soil of Nowlan Park in the All-Ireland Final. A powerful second half performance saw the Premier County men canter to a 9- point win and claim their 12th All Ireland at the U20/21 grade. The win was a clear indication of the great work going on in the county following on from the recent Harty Cup success by 3 different schools in the county. 3 of the starting team would go on to star for Tipperary in the Senior success over Cork.



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Tipperary Under 20 Hurling Captain Sam O'Farrell lifts the James Nowlan Cup

In the Minor Football grade, Kerry were very unlucky to lose out to Tyrone in the All-Ireland Final and could have snatched extra time in the dying seconds of the game. Kerry reached the final with a thrilling win over Mayo in the Semi Final. In the U-20 competition, Kerry lost out to Tyrone at the Semi Final stage.



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Club Championships

Munster clubs in the 2024 All-Ireland Club Championships (played in January 2025) had mixed fortunes. In Hurling, all 3 clubs representing the province qualified for the All-Ireland Final. However, Na Sáirséalaigh (Corcaigh) suffered a heavy defeat to Na Fianna (Áth Cliath), while Fánaithe na Ruiséalaigh (Corcaigh), were unlucky to lose out to St. Lachtain's (Cill Ceannaigh) in the Junior Final. However, Cnocán na Biolraí (Corcaigh) won a most dramatic Intermediate Final to bring the All-Ireland Championship back to Cork for the first time since 2018. In football, all 3 Provincial winners suffered semi-final defeats.

The 2025 Munster Club Championships brought the normal level of excitement and local pride to the table. Despite the wet weather, no game was cancelled due to poor conditions, which is testament to the huge work now being put in by clubs and County Boards in their pitch maintenance regimes.

In Senior Hurling, Baile Mhic Gunnair (Port Láirge) claimed their 4th title in 5 years with a very impressive win over Eire Óg of Inis. It is the 6th title that Baile Mhic Gunnair has won, and this places them top of the roll of honour. In Senior Football, Daingean Uí Chúis (Ciarraí) won a most dramatic final, beating Fionnbarra Naofa (Corcaigh) with a two-point free deep in Injury time. This was undoubtedly one of the best games of Gaelic Football ever seen at FBD Semple Stadium, and the game was further proof, if it was needed, that the new rules have transformed the game. The standard of high fielding from both teams, and the standard of scoring, was a joy to behold. It was a heartbreaking defeat for Fionnbarra Naofa, but their attacking style of football was wonderful to watch throughout the Munster campaign, and I have no doubt that their day will come again.

The list of Munster Club Championship winners for 2025 is as outlined in the table below:

2025 Munster Club Champions	
Junior Hurling	Cill Briotáin (Corcaigh)
Junior Football	Baile Mhic Eileagóid (Ciarraí)
Intermediate Hurling	An Teampall Uachtarach An Drom Bán (Tiobraid Árann)
Intermediate Football	An Ghaeltacht (Ciarraí)
Senior Hurling	Baile Mhic Gunnair (Port Láirge)
Senior Football	Daingean Uí Chúis (Ciarraí)

Table 2: Munster Club Championship winners 2025



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Munster Hurling on the Crest of a Wave

The great ancient game is going through a rich period of growth and profile in Munster. Liam Mac Carthy has made its way to Munster for the 8th year in a row, while in the same period of time, 6 U-20 All-Ireland titles have come to the province, as well as 5 Minor All-Ireland titles. The 8 years since 2018 have also seen 4 All Munster All-Ireland Hurling Finals. The Munster Championship has a huge profile now with 2025 seeing an insatiable ticket demand for many games. Munster Hurling attendances reached 92% of combined stadium capacity in 2025 while the 7 games RTE showed live had a combined viewing figure of 2.7 million. Cork Senior hurlers played in 7 sold out games this year across the Munster and All-Ireland Championships. Club Championship games are also continuing to be attended by healthy crowds with vibrant county championships providing great entertainment while generating a large local media profile.

The Round Robin format has been great for hurling. The Munster Senior Hurling Championship is going through a particularly buoyant phase, and as I referenced in last year's report, this phase won't last forever, and the powerhouses of Leinster Hurling will make a return to the top table, and this could happen in any year. We must live in the moment.

There is one tweak I would like to see with venues for the All-Ireland Hurling Quarter Finals. I believe the provincial final losing team should have home advantage in the Quarter Finals. It is important that the Provincial Final losing teams have some advantage over the team that finished 3rd in their Province, and home advantage in a knockout game would provide that.

There is a suggestion that the hurling championship structure should be altered to allow 4 teams to qualify from the round robin. In my view, this will do far more harm than good to the profile of hurling. While the championship would gain 2 quarter finals with this format, the round robins would become meaningless, with 10 games being played to eliminate 1 team. Therefore, we would lose far more big occasions than the 2 additional quarter finals that we would gain. The Provincial Senior Hurling Championship would become more like a warm-up league than a Championship.

We must stop thinking that our Senior Championships are there to develop teams. They are there to pit the best teams against each other and to decide who the best team in the country is. There are several other grades and competitions that have a development purpose. For example, the Minor and U20 competitions are about developing teams, and players and formats are put in place that reflect that. For example, 4 teams qualify from the Munster Minor Hurling Championship, and this is fine as the competition is all about developing players. However, this should not be the case at senior level. The competition is fair to all teams with 2 home and 2 away games. It is the jeopardy of the current format that gives the competition the excitement and anticipation that it has, coupled with the success of Munster counties in the All-Ireland Championship. We saw in the Senior Football Championship what happened when 3 teams progressed from a group of 4. Too many games became meaningless and supporters lost interest. Does a team deserve to remain in a Senior Championship if they win 1 of 4 games? I don't think so and this is the scenario we face each year if 4 teams progress from a group of 5.



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Munster Senior Football Draw Format

There was controversy during the year when the Munster Council voted to introduce a Senior Football Championship seeding mechanism, whereby the top 2 performing teams in the Allianz Leagues gain automatic entry to the following year's Provincial Championship Semi Final draw, and both will be on opposite sides of the draw. The proposal, which was passed with a one-year delay clause included, is in place for a three-year period from 2027 and followed extensive consultation with the 6 County Boards and the GPA. It is designed to try to give the Senior Football Championship a lift that it badly needs, by providing a pathway for the 2 strongest teams to progress to the final. We have not had an open draw in Munster for many years now. We have the strongest county in our province, and one of the weakest, so it makes sense that we have had a draw structure that reduces the chances of both those teams meeting in the Championship.

Our 2025 final had the poorest attendance of all 4 provincial finals. Our average attendance for the last 4 finals is 13,000. TV viewing figures are also struggling. In 2025, Munster will have 2 teams in Division 4 of the Allianz League, 2 in Division 3, and just 1 in Division 1 and Division 2. Therefore, under the system that is being replaced, and draw depending, a Division 4 team could qualify for the final and therefore enter the Sam Maguire Championship, where they would struggle to compete. At this point in time, football is not as strong as it should be in Munster, but that will change and there are some early indications that football is on the rise again, such as Limerick's great run in the Tailteann Cup.

Munster's Minor and U20 Football Championships are structured to give Clare, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford the best development pathway, as they play each other first in a round robin before the top 2 progress to play Cork and Kerry in a second round robin. Home advantage in the second round robin is always given to the two teams from the first round robin in their games with Cork and Kerry. In the last 4 years, at Minor and U20 level in Munster, Tipperary has played the most games with 28 fixtures played, followed by Clare with 27 fixtures played.

The Council will announce a Football Development Committee in 2026 and will also be funding football development projects in counties. The new draw structure is part of this strategy to try to lift the standard and profile of football. It is in place for a 3-year period after which it will be reviewed.

Primary, Post Primary and Third Level

It was another very busy year for the Munster GAA Post- Primary Committee, and for the Full Time Servicing Officer, Eoin Ó Riain. Over 650 games were played from the month of September to March, often in the most difficult weather conditions. Very often, a batch of games can be called off at late notice due to weather conditions, but all competitions get played and the standard of games is as good as ever. Increasingly, artificial pitches are used for schools' games, and this further enhances our strategy of funding artificial pitches in the



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County Centre of Excellence network. The Post-Primary sector is a vital one for the GAA. The greatest drop off in player numbers occurs in the teenage years when these players are in Post-Primary School. It is essential that we give all players in Post-Primary Schools the opportunity to participate in our games and give players the opportunity to grow and develop as players. The competitions must remain a cornerstone of the GAA's fixture programmes, and ideally, the number of games offered to certain grades will increase, but that is very dependent on the availability of venues and referees.

A special congratulations to Thurles CBS who captured the Masita GAA Post-Primary Schools Croke Cup (Senior A Hurling). Congratulations to Scoil Mhuire agus Ide Newcastle West who won the Masita GAA Post-Primary Schools Michael Cusack Cup (Senior C Hurling) and to Scoil Phobal Ros Cré who won the Masita GAA Post-Primary Schools Niall McInerney Cup (Senior D Hurling).

In the Third Level sector, it was another busy year in Munster. As is outlined in the 3rd Level Committee report, the academic year 2024/25 proved to be an exceptionally active and successful period for Munster 3rd Level Colleges, with a remarkable total of 617 games played across Hurling, Football, Ladies Football, Camogie, and Handball. In total, 24 National Titles were won by Munster Third Level Colleges. University of Limerick (UL) led the way with 16 National Titles, including prestigious victories in the Fitzgibbon Cup, Fresher 1 Hurling, and the Ashbourne Cup. It is the 14th year in a row that the Fitzgibbon Cup has been won by a Munster based University. The GAA is very fortunate to have such a huge profile in the University sector, and it is something that we must protect. Players playing with their 3rd Level Colleges must be given the opportunity to fully embrace their time with these teams and not be needlessly dragged by an intercounty team manager to training sessions and challenge games. We need to give the Third Level sector time to breathe and let players enjoy their short time in the Third Level environment.

At Primary School level, the ongoing and tireless work of Cumann na mBunscoil delivered another year packed with activity and development. We are very fortunate to have so many dedicated teachers in schools who do such amazing work, and so many clubs that take an active role through the Club School link programmes.

Refereeing

2025 saw continued progress with Referee Development with the full-time employment of Seán O Riain in the position of Munster GAA Referee Development Manager. Seán brings a wealth of experience to the role. The Munster GAA Referee Academy continues to be a huge success, and by March of 2026, 40 referees will have been through it. It was noticeable that a number of County Secretary Convention reports referenced the growing issue with a lack of referees at Club level. This issue has been creeping up on the Association for a number of years now, and unless we recruit new referees, male and female, in the years ahead, we will



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struggle to run the vast programme of games at club and school level across the 4 codes. The Split Season and the move to round-robin championships in all counties has undoubtedly placed additional pressure on our referees, and an increase in the number of active referees is now one of the most critical challenges we face. According to many club referees, the new Football rules have had a positive impact on refereeing, as abuse from team officials has reduced considerably. Introduction of these same rules in Hurling will have a similar result. This should help us in our recruitment drives in the years ahead.

Games Development, USGAA and Games For All

2025 was another busy year on the Games Development front. Our increased staff numbers are having a positive impact on the delivery of Games Development programmes across the province. A full report of the activities of Games Development is contained in the convention book.

One of the success areas for Games Development was the Club Audit Programme, with a total of 310 audits completed. These audits were then used to help produce a club coaching plan for the participating clubs. At Post Primary level, 6,400 students in 128 schools participated in internal leagues organised by Games Development Staff. A Post Primary Schools Planning Programme resulted in 124 schools producing a development plan with the aim of increasing participation. Games Development Staff have been active working with schools to develop these plans. It was a very busy year in the vital area of Coach Education, with 107 Introduction to Coaching Courses delivered along with 12 Award 1 Courses. The County Development Squads are also an area of huge activity for staff, with 79 squads in the U14-U16 grades in operation along with 10 Celtic Challenge Squads. The Cúl Camps continued to be a success with close on 47,000 children participating, and staff play a key role in organising these camps.

The USGAA National Finals were held in Philadelphia in August of 2025 and were another huge success with over 100 games played across the 2 days of the competition, involving teams from all over the USA and beyond. There is significant collaboration between USGAA and Munster GAA and while Gaelic Games is a very niche sport in the US, the numbers playing our games are growing every year.

The Munster Wheelchair Hurling and Camogie team had another superb year, winning the All-Ireland Championship for the fifth year in a row. Wheelchair Hurling and Camogie has grown from strength to strength over the years, and huge credit must go to Gearóid Mac Conmara and Bernie Ní Rinn and their Committee for their tireless work in this area. 2025 also saw Munster GAA run an Inclusion Camp at Semple Stadium in Thurles while the Council provided financial support to counties who also ran similar camps.



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Gaelic Football and the FRC

If ever a Committee in the GAA deserves credit, Jim Gavin's FRC deserves it in spades. Gaelic Football has been transformed, and the 2025 Championship was a superb watch, with high scoring and open, fast play. In this year's final, including 2 pointers as 1 score, there were 41 scores. While one year isn't a trend, the signs are very good that we will witness a new and exciting era for what many are calling 'the new game'.

One change I would welcome is 4 points for a goal, as I feel goals always add a great level of excitement to a game. A goal allows a team chasing a lead to reel that lead in. A goal also allows a dominant team to press home their advantage. However, this is a small tweak. The main body of the rules passed by Special Congress has had a remarkable effect on the game.

Hurling can certainly learn from the discipline side of these rules. The sidelines in Hurling Championship games have become unsightly, and this needs to be tackled. While better implementation of the matchday regulations by 4th officials is also needed, we need to introduce an 'on the field' sanction for poor behaviour. Some years ago, we had a Maor Foirne, an official who could run on to the field of play with messages for players. Eventually, the bad behaviour of the Maor Foirne resulted in them being removed. We see managers and/or selectors constantly running up to the 4th Official to question a decision by the referee. This needs to be stopped. It may be an idea to limit the interactions with the 4th official to 3 per game per team. Anything beyond that leads to an on-field sanction. While the interactions may be polite at times, very often they are not.

Another issue I feel needs to be tackled in both codes is teams arriving late from the half-time break after the 15 minutes has passed. While there can be issues at half time dealing with injured players and so on, letting an opposition team wait on the field for 3 and 4 additional minutes is not fair. In my view there needs to be an on-field sanction such as giving the referee the power to give the team on the field on time the ball to begin play with from the half way line.

Split Season

I will now make my annual defense of the split season. Thankfully, the cries to go back to the old system of fixture chaos and uncertainty are getting less frequent. Tipperary won the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship on July 20th. Just one-week, later John McGrath had his penalty saved by Rhys Shelly in the Tipperary Club Championship, with John lining out for Loughmore Castleiney and Rhys for Moycarkey Borris. Certainly, it must be said, that the July 20th date for the All-Ireland final is early, and one week after it is very soon for players to go back playing with their clubs. However, in my view, our Intercounty players playing Championship for their club is the part of the GAA that we must do the most to protect.



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The people we hear least complaints from are the club players themselves. If they were unhappy, they would have long grouped together, as they did when the CPA was formed, and demanded change. Instead, I have heard many intercounty players and many club players laud the new structures, and that is all that should matter.

As I have said before, we are unique in that our elite players play at grassroots level, and if the day comes that this is no longer the case, then a major part of our heritage will have died. This is the part we must keep central to any discussion on the intercounty and club season.

Figures compiled by Éamann Ó Donnghaile show that a total of 2,685 adult club championship fixtures were played across the six counties of Munster during the months of July, August, September and October.

69% of those fixtures (1,841) took place in August and September, which shows the importance of these months to our clubs, the lifeblood of the Association. 495 fixtures took place in July which was lower than normal given the involvement of Cork, Kerry and Tipperary in the All-Ireland Senior Finals and Limerick Footballers in the Tailteann Cup Final.

A total of 349 fixtures were played in October, and it is questionable whether this month could sustain too many more fixtures, due to the need for floodlights for evening games, and the deteriorating condition of pitches due to poor weather.

This is a huge level of activity. Club Championship games were also very well attended. Most counties in Munster showed an increase in Club gate receipts, with the combined total gate receipts across the province going north of €5,000,000.

	Clare	Cork	Kerry	Limerick	Tipperary	Waterford	Total
July to Oct	338	791	201	499	466	390	2,685
Hurling	214	395	22	305	382	242	1,560
Football	124	396	179	194	84	148	1,125

Table 3: Club Adult Fixtures in Munster from July to October end 2025

My fear is that if we push the intercounty season into the club season, the more frustrated the club player will become with his lot, and in time, this may lead to a split between the intercounty and club level. Therefore, it is a case of 'proceed with caution' for me on the move of the All-Ireland Football Final into August. Even though it is only two weekends into August, it is stepping into the club window, and this is a window that has served club players so well. If this move forces a move of the hurling finals to August, then we will have lost ground on a system that has served the club players very well. The statistics in Munster tell the story of how important these months are to club players.



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Minor All Ireland Final Curtain Raisers

There are calls to see a return of Minor Finals as curtain raisers to All Ireland Senior Finals. I do not see the advantage of changing our current structure, where these games are played as stand-alone competitions. In July of 2025, Waterford and Clare played out a thrilling Minor Hurling Final in Thurles in front of 16,000 people. Under-16's attended the game for €5. Had this game been played in front of the All-Ireland Senior Final, less than 2,000 tickets would have been made available to each county, and the cost of each ticket would have been €100. Surely it is far better for these games to be played as stand-alone fixtures where any person who wishes to attend can do so. This structure has worked well and should be left alone.

GAA's Demographics Challenge

The changing demographic of the country is now the biggest challenge we face, and it is going to completely change the shape and look of the GAA in the years ahead. We must accept that unless we begin taking radical action, then our position as Ireland's largest Sports organization is in peril. The simple fact is that we are strongest in the areas of depopulation, and weakest in many areas of increasing population.

Rural clubs have faced challenges before. Emigration was the curse of rural clubs for many decades. The population of the 26 counties was just 2.9 million in 1950, due to the constant emigration of Irish people to all four corners of the earth. The difference was that with higher birth-rates, coupled with the majority of the population living in rural areas, young players were coming up to replace those who left. That is no longer the case, and clubs are now dealing with emigration for different reasons, as young people move to escape the high cost of living, especially in relation to housing.

The decline of rural Ireland has been happening slowly over many decades. The changing nature of work in Ireland has been a huge factor, as agriculture has become a smaller component of Ireland's economy. The economy's big employers, such as the multinational pharma industry, are, and for obvious reasons, located mainly in and around major urban areas. Added to this, planning strategy has been to neglect rural Ireland and its towns and villages and push people towards the main urban areas. It is difficult to see why it has made sense to planners and politicians in a country as small as Ireland to push so many towards the east coast and neglect the west coast. While I accept that I am far from an expert in planning, surely, a more balanced planning approach coupled with investment in a modern public transport network would have made much more sense and allowed smaller towns and villages to thrive. It also true in my view, that one off housing won't solve the rural depopulation issue, as declining birth rates mean that it would take significant levels of such housing to arrest the population decline, and planning regulations have made it very difficult for such housing to be built.



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In 2025, 9 of the 12 Senior Football and Senior Hurling Club Championships in Munster were won by urban clubs. 16 of the 24 teams participating in County Senior Club Finals were urban clubs. One year is not a trend, but it is an indication. As urban clubs begin to dominate, particularly at juvenile level, counties will find it more difficult to get a sufficient number of clubs to compete in the top grades of juvenile competitions. Therefore, the day may come when counties will need to join together to get a sufficient number of clubs for competitions at these grades.

The National Demographic's Committee, under the Chairmanship of Benny Hurl, has released a very well researched and informative report, which has many key recommendations that the Association cannot afford to pay lip service to. The recommendations on better engagement with Local Authorities, on better facility planning and on a review of club catchment areas must be followed through.

One area that I feel the Association must look at is our transfer rules, and we must make it easier for rural clubs to accept a transfer. For example, if a player moves into a county and lives in an urban area where the local club has no issues with numbers, local byelaws can mean that he can only join this club. If he wanted to play with a rural club a few miles away that is struggling with numbers, our own rules may prevent him from doing so. I have seen transfers rejected for that very reason. This makes no sense, as urban clubs are always going to have the advantage as these are the areas with the most housing.

Coupled with this, the GAA must accept that the Association has been behind the curve in planning too and has largely failed to recognize areas of new populations and move to take the necessary steps to set up new clubs. Hence, we now have many urban areas with catchment areas of 20,000 or more, and an inability to adequately cater for the population, despite these clubs being very active and having large memberships. In some cases, a club has folded in recent times in an area where we now badly need a club or a second club. However, we have been too slow to act and allowed these clubs to drift away.

The GAA must do better at being ahead of local authority planning, and not forever behind it. Now is the time to see where the large numbers of houses are going to be built in the years ahead and to work with the Local Authorities to secure the land needed for new clubs. The number of new clubs will be small, but at least these areas of high population won't be left under catered for. Munster GAA's own Demographic's Committee under the chairmanship of Joe Crowley has undertaken an exhaustive examination of population trends and movements across Munster. This committee has identified a number of areas in the province where future populations cannot be catered for properly with the current club network and where new clubs are needed.



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Munster GAA has also put in place urban projects, with the aim of rejuvenating the GAA in Limerick City, Waterford City and the Northside of Cork City. Early indications are that the projects are working and delivering what they were set up to do. These projects are focusing on rejuvenating existing clubs, and also on the development of facilities where needed. The project is already bearing fruit, with the Limerick City Southside Gaels winning a County U14 title in 2025. The hope is that in years to come, the clubs that form the Southside Gaels will once again be able to field teams on their own.

Ticket Price Increases

In 2025, the Management Committee of Munster GAA took a decision to increase adult ticket prices by €5, and to increase the juvenile ticket from €5 to €10 for our final. This followed an increase of €5 per adult ticket in 2024. All told, a family of 2 adults and 2 kids can attend all Munster Senior Hurling Round-Robin games and the Final for a total of €440. I am not saying for a moment that this is cheap, but it compares very favorably with other sports and is reflective of the huge costs now associated with holding major events, along with the investment we are making in County and Club facilities around the province.

We face a dilemma in terms of the work we want to do to promote and grow Gaelic Games in Munster and ensuring that we have the funds to do so. The only way we can generate revenue is through ticket sales and pricing.

Most of our grounds struggle for cash revenue and need investment to improve spectator facilities, player facilities and normal stadium infrastructure. Our field rent, which is the amount of money we give to grounds that host our games, amounted to €1.25 million this year. The participation grants and finalist grants that we pay to club and county teams that play in our competitions amounted to €880,000.

3 of our counties have made good progress in developing a fit for purpose training center, while 1 county urgently needs to expand theirs, and 2 other counties do not have one. Munster GAA has committed €1.2 million to each county in Munster to help develop its playing facilities. This money is already being put to good use, with Kerry GAA investing their grant in a new all-weather floodlight pitch at its Centre of Excellence, Limerick has built a new stand, gym, changing room facilities and upgraded its all-weather pitch and floodlighting, while Clare is also using its grant to install an all-weather floodlight pitch at its Centre of Excellence. Semple Stadium requires a significant multi million-euro investment, Walsh Park is undergoing a major redevelopment to modernise the venue, while Cork has committed their €1.2 million towards funding the acquisition of land for a Centre of Excellence. These are all very worthwhile projects that need significant financial resources from Munster GAA. A strategic aim of the Munster Council is to assist with the development of a network of artificial floodlight pitches in Munster, and in time, to see a Dome developed.



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Many of our clubs are constantly endeavoring to improve their facilities, and all seek financial support to do so. The Munster GAA Club Development Grant scheme for 2025 amounted to €1.5 million, with the assistance of €1 million from Central Council. Munster GAA is also supporting 52 full-time Games Development staff in the province.

Ticket prices need to be seen in the context of what the money is being invested in, and in all cases, the facilities we are investing in will have a very positive impact on the development and sustainability of the GAA in the province.

County Facility Grants	€2,125,000
Games Development	€1,554,000
Club Development Grants	€1,255,000
Field Rent	€1,401,000
Team Participation Grants and Finalists Grant	€880,000
Player Injury Scheme and Player Bursaries	€604,000
Grants to Education Committees, Urban Projects and other bodies	€360,000
Total	€8,179,000

Table 4: Outline of various grant headings from the 2025 accounts. €1,957,000 of this expenditure came from Central Council.

Amateur Status

2025 saw the publication of the Amateur Status Review Committee report on the current and future amateur status of the GAA. The committee must be complemented on the work they undertook to discuss and review this vital topic. The proposed Intercounty Certification Programme is long overdue in my view and is now needed to try to tackle what is being referred to as the 'runaway train' of intercounty team costs.

The organisation is far from amateur in many respects. Administration at county, provincial and national level is now managed professionally. The Association has close to 700 employees in administration and games development. Training and preparation standards at intercounty level are now beyond where they were even a decade or so ago. Pitch preparation is now managed professionally in all County Grounds and Centres of Excellence, and rightly so, as top-class playing surfaces are required all year round now. Our matchday events are managed professionally too, as the day of voluntary stewards doing all internal stewarding is long gone. In Munster, we are now increasingly relying on full-time security to manage our games.



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However, on the other hand, the playing of our games has remained amateur, and any move to pay for play would be detrimental to the Association. An organisation on a small island could not sustain the payment of large panels given the number of intercounty teams that we have, and payment opens the matter of players being able to move county without having to permanently reside there, which is currently the case.

On the one hand, the level of professional preparation has had a positive impact on the quality and speed of our games. This is as true at club level as it is at county level. Just look at the recent club championships and the excellent quality of the games coupled with the fitness levels of the players. However, on the other hand, the costs associated with team preparation and the time demands being placed on amateur players must also be tackled and kept in check. It is the sustainability of the organisation in terms of the time expected of players and the financial cost of team preparation that is our big issue and what we must be most careful of, particularly given the stated desire of the 3 Gaelic Games Associations to integrate.

I hope that the proposed certification programme will help to level the playing field in terms of what counties can spend on teams. This is essential to maintain a level of fairness. How can a county that can afford to spend €1 million on preparation of its teams be expected to compete with a county that can spend twice that? Hopefully, the Certification Programme will have the desired impact and help deliver a sustainable organisation into the future.

I also hope the certification will prevent counties from entering teams in intercounty competitions in cases where their competitive adult team numbers fall below a practical number. No county with 2 or 3 adult club teams should have an intercounty team. As I said in a previous report, this practice has done nothing for the promotion of hurling in particular, and money spent on these teams could have been better spent promoting the games and funding regional club competitions.

Full Council, Sub-Committees and Workgroups

As in all years, the Council could not operate without the hard work and dedication of a number of Committees, Sub-Committees and Workgroups. While often unseen, their work is instrumental in the smooth working of the Council. In all the Council met on 6 occasions, with the Competitions Control Committee also meeting on 9 occasions. The Finance and Management Committee had a particularly busy year, meeting on 12 occasions and with a significant amount of work taking place between meetings, dealing with club property and borrowing applications and all matters of expenditure. It was also welcome to see the increasing activity of Coiste Cultúra in promoting the use of the Irish language across the province, and hopefully this activity will have an ongoing and positive impact on the health of the language in Munster. A report from each Sub Committee is contained in this convention book. For the record, a list of the members of the Council is contained in table 4, while a list of the Chairperson and Secretary of all the various sub-committees is contained in table 5.



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Cathaoirleach	Tadhg Ó Murchú
Rúnaí/POF	Ciarán Ó Lidi
Leas-Chathaoirleach	Seán Mícheál Ó Riagáin
Cisteoir	Roibeard Ó Riain
Oifigeach Caidrimh Phoiblí	Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh
	Gearóid Ó Riain
Bainisteoir Oibríochtaí	Seán Ó Braonáin
Uachtarán	Seán Mac Pháil
An Clár	Séan Ó Callanáin agus Bearnárd Ó Catháin
Ciarraí	Traolach Ó hUallacháin agus Páidí Ó Duinnín
Corcaigh	Pól Mac Cárthaigh agus Seosamh de Bláca
Luimneach	Pádraig Ó Dábhoireann agus Seán Ó Criagáin
Port Láirge	Pádraigín Bhreathnach agus Mícheál Ó Broin
Tiobraid Árann	Seosamh Ó Cinnéide agus Mícheál de Búrca
Coláistí Triú Leibhéil	Séamas Mac Fhíobhuí
Iarbhunscoileanna	Déaglán Mac Gearailt
Bunscoileanna	Dáithí Ó Coiléain
Liathróid Láimhe	Liam de Róiste

Table 4: Members of the Munster Council

Coiste Committee	Cathaoirleach	Rúnaí
Management & Finance Committee	Tadhg Ó Murchú	Seán Ó Braonáin
Provincial Competitions Control Committee	Tadhg Ó Murchú	Ciarán Ó Lidi
Provincial Hearings Committee	Mícheál de Búrca	Liam Ó Conchúir
County & Club Grounds Safety Workgroup	Ciarán Mac Canna	Seán Ó Braonáin
Club & County Administration & Officer Training Workgroup	Séamus Ó Tuama	Eamonn Ó Faoláin
Referees Administration Committee	Marcas Ó Griofa	Seán Ó Riain
Coaching & Games Development Committee	Séan Mícheál Ó Riagáin	Pádraig Ó Sé
Coiste Cultúrtha	Tómas Ó hAiniféin	Aedín Ní Bhriain
Grúpa Oibre Scór	Maighréad Ní Fhaoileáin	Muirne Nic Bhinéid
PR & Marketing Committee	Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh	Éamonn Ó Donnghaile
Club Fixtures Monitoring Committee	Éamonn Ó Donnghaile	Seán Ó Braonáin



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Munster Provincial Regional Handball Committee	Liam de Róiste	Dónal Ó hAodha
Planning and Physical Development Committee	Tadhg Ó Murchú	Seán Ó Braonáin
Games for All Health and Wellbeing Committee	Bernie Ní Rinn	Gearóid Mac Conmara
Audit and Risk Committee	Mícheál Ó Catharnaigh	

Table 5: Munster Council Sub Committees and Workgroups

Philly Ryan and Anthony Walsh

In October the sad news came through to us that the Tipperary Senior Football Manager, Philly Ryan of Clonmel Commercials, had sadly passed away. He was a true Gael and dedicated many years to the Association at Club and County level, and his passing left a huge void in Tipperary Gaelic Football. We also lost former member Anthony Walsh, former treasurer and PRO of the Munster Council. Anthony, of Colligan GAA Club and Waterford, served his Club, County and Province with great distinction.

Harty Cup Book

In early December, the Munster Council Post Primary Committee launched a history of the famed Dr. Harty Cup 1918-2025. The book, which was written by Liam Ó Donnchú, is an excellent publication that captures the exalted status of this competition and contains testimonials from many of the game's great players, all of whom speak of the great honor and passion associated with playing in the Dr. Harty Cup. Comhghairdeas Mhór to Liam Ó Donnchú, and to all those who assisted him, including Munster GAA Staff members, Éamann Ó Donnghaile, Eoin Ó Riain and Aedín Ní Bhriain.



Dr. Harty Cup History
(1918-2025)

Buíochas. Thank you

Each year, it takes a huge effort from many people to enable the Council to carry out its role. Firstly, thank you to the Officers of the Council namely Tadhg Ó Murchú, Seán Mícheál Ó Riagáin, Roibeard Ó Riain, Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh and Gearóid Ó Riain, who diligently carry out their roles and are always on hand to provide assistance and advice. The amount of time that Officers put in to attending the numerous meetings and events that take place over the year is enormous. They all carry a huge level of experience in the GAA, and this experience is invaluable to Munster GAA. Roibeard Ó Riain and Diarmuid Ó Loingsigh have served as Officers of Comhairle na Mumhan for 6 years and take with them a wealth of experience in the administration of our Council. I wish both well in wherever their administration careers take them.



Comhdháil Bhliantúil 2025 Comhairle na Mumhan

I would also like to thank the six County Secretaries in the Province for their help and support over the last year. We are very fortunate in the province to have the calibre of County Secretary that we have. Deirdre Ní Murchú completed her 3 years as the Operations Manager and Rúnaí of Clare County Committee. She provided outstanding service and leadership to the Clare County Board, and I would like to wish her successor, Áine Máire Ní Móráin, every success as she takes up the role.

Lastly, I would like to thank the staff of the Council (Aedín Ní Bhriain, Éamann Ó Donnghaile, Eoin Ó Riain, Eva Ní Dhuinn, Máire Ní Mhathúna, Pól Mac an Fhailí, Pádraig Ó Sé, Seosamh Mac Artáin, Seán Ó Braonáin & Sean O Riain), who go well beyond the call of duty in carrying out their roles. They are always on hand to run our events and games, no matter what day of the week these are on. We are lucky to have such a dedicated group of employees who have such a huge interest in the Association and the games.

The Year Ahead

We can look forward to 2027 with great optimism. We can always be confident that our Hurling Championship will deliver another blockbuster series, while 2027 will be the second year of the new Gaelic Football rules and we could see even better fare, as teams get used to and adapt to the new rules. 2027 will also see a new All Ireland Senior Football Championship format, with less games and a more competitive edge. Therefore, the year has all the ingredients to deliver a superbly entertaining championship. Munster GAA will focus on the development of Gaelic Football through our Football Development Committee and a number of projects. We will also continue to work on our Urban Projects and progress the development of facilities around the province.



David Clifford of Kerry gets away from Daniel O' Mahony of Cork during the Munster Semi-Final