

**IT'S
TIME**

TO



**FAI STRATEGY
2026-2029**

CHANGE

THE GAME



**Buncrana Hearts
vs. Salthill Devon**
Castle Park,
Buncrana, Donegal.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We all want success on the pitch, but it does not happen by chance. We must make the right changes to **Facilities, Football Development, and the League of Ireland** to put the foundations of a football ecosystem in place to deliver success at every level.

VISION:

Inspire the nation and connect communities.

MISSION:

Build a self-sustaining ecosystem for the future of Irish Football.

PURPOSE:

To enrich the lives of all through positive football experiences.

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



2. INNOVATE THROUGH OUR GAMECHANGERS

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

Building clear, consistent and sustainable governance structures for Irish football.

SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial



3. DELIVER SUCCESS ON THE PITCH AT EVERY LEVEL

If we get these key areas right, the game will work together to be successful at every level.

Success builds momentum and allows us to reinvest back into the game to improve our football ecosystem further.

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“
THE FOOTBALL WORLD HAS CHANGED.

MORE OF THE SAME WILL NOT SEE THE GAME DEVELOP AND GROW.

Trevor Lyttle
Chairperson
Limerick Women's
and Schoolgirl's
Soccer League



“
“
FOR YOUNG FOOTBALLERS, THE FUTURE FEELS POSITIVE. WE MUST PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SO THAT WE KEEP MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

Madison McGuane
Player, Treaty
United F.C.



“
“
THE LOVE OF THE LEAGUE OF IRELAND IS GROWING RAPIDLY.

WE MUST INVEST WISELY IN FACILITIES TO HELP BUILD A SUSTAINABLE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY AND ENSURE SUPPORTERS HAVE THE BEST EXPERIENCE POSSIBLE.

Shane Crossan
General Manager,
Sligo Rovers F.C.



“
“
WE NEED TO GIVE OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE NATIONAL TEAMS THE BEST POSSIBLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS.

Katie McCabe
WNT Captain



IT IS CLEAR TO EVERYONE THAT IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE GAME...

“
“
FOOTBALL OFFERS EVERYONE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE, COMPETE AND BELONG. WE MUST ENSURE THAT EVERYONE ACROSS ALL DISCIPLINES AND ALL ABILITIES GETS THAT CHANCE.

Kevan O'Rourke
Ireland Amputee
Vice Captain



“
“
WE NEED REAL CHANGE IN HOW WE SUPPORT AND PROTECT REFEREES.

WITHOUT RESPECT, THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR ANY OF US ON THE PITCH.

Hannah O'Brien
Referee



“
“
THERE IS NO MAGIC WAND, FOR CHANGE TO HAPPEN AND FOR US TO REACH OUR DESTINATION, WE ALL NEED TO MAKE THE JOURNEY TOGETHER.

Denise Kent
Underage Coach
and Children's
Welfare Officer



“
“
WE HAVE SEEN THE INCREDIBLE IMPACT FOOTBALL CAN HAVE ON THIS COUNTRY.

WE NEED TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHANGES NOW SO WE CAN CONSISTENTLY REACH MAJOR TOURNAMENTS.

SHARING SPECIAL MOMENTS WITH THE NATION IS WHAT INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION TO FOLLOW IN OUR FOOTSTEPS.

Nathan Collins
MNT Captain



REFLECTION ON 2022-2025: "#WEAREONE"

In 2022, we set out an ambitious strategy at a pivotal moment of reset for the Association. With no prior meaningful strategy to build on, our focus was clear: to rebuild trust, raise standards, and lay the foundations for a stronger future.

This work reached every corner of Irish football. We would like to thank our football community for their tireless efforts in helping us to make significant progress at each level of the game.

The past cycle marked an important period of progress for Irish football. It required hard decisions and collective effort, but it has given us the foundation to move forward with confidence. Continued change will be vital if we are to realise the game's true potential.

The 2022-2025 Strategy set the vision. Now, it's time to turn that vision into lasting impact, through our 2026-2029 Strategy:

It's Time to Change the Game.

TOGETHER, WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE ACHIEVED 74% OF THE OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN WHAT WAS A TRULY AMBITIOUS STRATEGY.

We have learned from the challenges along the way and recognise that there is still so much more to do.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

FACILITIES INVESTMENT VISION LAUNCHED

LARGEST PARTICIPATION SPORT:
245k
(+10%)

+42%
INCREASE IN LEAGUES USING FAI CONNECT

75%
SHARE OF TV AUDIENCE MNT VS. HUNGARY

FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN

3,330
(+10%) DISABILITY FOOTBALL PLAYERS

+79%
INCREASE IN WOMEN & GIRLS PARTICIPATION

+111%
PARTNERSHIP GROWTH

€112M
2024 GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

+40%
INCREASE IN ATTENDANCE AT LOI GAMES

PLAY IT RIGHT CAMPAIGN

+60%
BROADCAST GROWTH

DEBT REDUCED FROM €62M TO €36.5M
↓ -€25.5M

1ST WNT MAJOR TOURNAMENT

+9 LOI UEFA COUNTRY COEFFICIENT

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL DUBLIN 2024

CHALLENGES FACED:

FAILURE TO QUALIFY FOR EURO 2024 AND 2025

PR NEGATIVE PR IMPACTING PUBLIC PERCEPTION

ALIGNED FOOTBALL CALENDAR DIVISIVE

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

LACK OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION DATA

ONLY 1 LOI STADIUM FIT TO HOST UEFA CLUB COMPETITION LEAGUE PHASE

WORK TO BUILD ON:

NATIONAL LEAGUE LAUNCH IN 2026

ACTION LOI ACADEMY INVESTMENT

€863M FACILITIES CHALLENGE IDENTIFIED

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

WOMEN & GIRLS ACTION PLAN

EURO 2028

GLOBAL IRELAND FOOTBALL FOUNDATION LAUNCH IMMINENT

Daniel O'Neill
Fairview Rangers



ALIGNED STRATEGIC PLANS

Over the course of the 2022–2025 FAI Strategy, we developed a series of ambitious plans for key areas of the Association.

To ensure alignment, this document highlights the core outcomes, objectives, and KPIs from those plans that we aim to deliver during the 2026–2029 cycle.

For full context, we encourage you to review the detailed plans themselves.



FACILITY INVESTMENT VISION AND STRATEGY

Outlines the €863 million investment needed to create modern, inclusive infrastructure so Ireland's number-one participation sport can thrive and grow.



THE FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN

A whole-game plan for every level of football; identified as a gamechanger for this strategic cycle.

Sub-plans include the **Education and Development Strategy** and the **Women and Girls' Action Plan**.



SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Our first dedicated sustainability plan, detailing our commitment across Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Health and Wellbeing.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

Throughout the past strategic cycle, we made it a priority to involve the football community in shaping our direction. Building on the consultation from our previous strategy and the Football Pathways Plan, we ensured that voices from every part of the game were heard.

CONSULTATION AT A GLANCE

Workshops with the football community.

10

Number of survey responses.

3,577

Meetings with staff, committees, affiliates, and key stakeholders.



Expert input and data from UEFA GROW.



GROW

From this consultation, clear themes emerged, reaffirming the need for continued change and progress across key areas of Irish football.



IT WAS INTERESTING THAT COMMON THEMES AROSE DESPITE THOSE AT A MEETING BEING FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IT WAS GREAT TO HAVE VOICES OF THOSE AT CLUB LEVEL HEARD.

Audrey Colreavy
Coach and Parent, Merville United



Republic of Ireland Under 17
Boys' National Team
Aspire Zone, Doha, Qatar



OUR 2026-2029 VISION AND MISSION

VISION: Inspire the nation and connect communities.

MISSION: Build a self-sustaining ecosystem for the future of Irish Football.

Our **vision** defines **why** we do what we do.
Our **mission** defines **how** we'll get there.

Together, they set the direction for everything we do.

PURPOSE:
To enrich the lives of all through positive football experiences.

OUR VALUES:



PROGRESS

Creating a better future.



PASSION

With heart and soul.



TOGETHERNESS

Together we achieve more.

BUILDING THE IRISH FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

Football needs to work together. If we do, it will bring success at every level creating momentum, reinvestment and the promise to reach our potential.

We refer to this as the **Irish Football Ecosystem**, meaning each part of our Football Community strengthens the other, benefitting everyone, in every part of the game.

This 4-year strategy sets out the changes needed to make this happen.

“
BY WORKING TOGETHER WITH DEDICATION AND RESPECT, WE CAN ELEVATE IRISH FOOTBALL TO NEW HEIGHTS.
”

Aisling Barron
Football Development Officer,
Donegal Underage League



IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE GAME

IRISH FOOTBALL IS NOT REACHING ITS POTENTIAL

Our volunteers give everything. Our teams compete every week. Our supporters always show up. But passion and effort alone aren't enough. Despite some amazing moments, the data is clear: Ireland is underperforming across key measures. While others have progressed, we are yet to realise our full potential.

EVERYONE DESERVES THE SAME OPPORTUNITY

Football is Ireland's most played sport, but not everyone has the same access or experience. Whether it is playing for a local club or for Ireland, every player deserves the right facilities, structures, and support to succeed.

OUR SYSTEM IS HOLDING US BACK

Grassroots football remains our foundation, driven by the passion and commitment of people across every community. For too long, we've relied on overseas systems to complete the professional development of our young players.

WE CAN CHANGE THIS, TOGETHER

Our football community is our greatest strength. Irish football must work as one ecosystem, from grassroots to elite, where every part supports the other for the good of the game.

Change will not happen by itself. It needs everyone pulling together.

Traditional approach

- Siloed approach to facilities development.
- Direct generalist delivery of programmes from FAI Coaches.
- Overreliance on the UK to develop our professional players.

It's time to change the game

- Deliver innovative, communal, inclusive facilities at every level.
- Develop the capacity of our clubs and leagues to deliver football with specialist support and mentorship from the FAI.
- Build a LOI Academy system that develops our future talent here in Ireland.

IRELAND IS THE THIRD MOST UNDERPERFORMING NATION IN UEFA

UEFA benchmarking shows that Ireland is performing significantly below expected levels across the game. When population, participation and resources are taken into account, our outcomes fall well short of our potential.

This underperformance is evident across national teams, clubs and player development, and highlights a clear gap between the amount of football we play and the results we deliver.

This is not a single issue. It reflects structural challenges across the system:

- We qualify for major tournaments less often than comparable European nations.
- Access to clear and consistent player pathways varies across the country.
- League of Ireland clubs operate with far lower staffing, facilities and commercial capacity than European peers.
- Many clubs lack the basic infrastructure required for modern participation and development.

This is not an effort problem. It is a system problem.

TOP PRIORITIES:

1. Get boys and girls playing more football



2. Develop facilities at every level



3. Grow talent through our LOI Academies



4. Reform our governance & structures



OVERARCHING GOAL:

Inspire the nation by qualifying for major tournaments



HOW WE'RE CHANGING THE GAME

We all want success on the pitch, but it does not happen by chance. We must make the right changes to **Facilities, Football Development, and the League of Ireland** to put the foundations of a football ecosystem in place to deliver success at every level.

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SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial



3. DELIVER SUCCESS ON THE PITCH AT EVERY LEVEL

If we get these key areas right, the game will work together to be successful at every level.

Success builds momentum and allows us to reinvest back into the game to improve our football ecosystem further.

OUR PILLARS



Athenry vs. Killester
Donnycarney F.C.
Gainstown, Westmeath

OUR PILLARS

FACILITIES

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



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Brand and Commercial

Waterford vs. Shelbourne
Regional Sports Centre,
Waterford



FACILITIES

Football should be simple. But too often in Ireland, it is not.

A lack of quality, inclusive, community facilities limits participation and blocks access to the game. Too many matches are cancelled, too many fans are left frustrated, and too much time is spent without football.

We must make fit-for-purpose facilities the standard, not the exception.

From Grassroots to the League of Ireland and our national centres, we must unlock funding, deliver new projects, and raise standards to create environments where football can truly thrive.

€122m of €863m 15-year infrastructure investment target raised so far.

€122M

Percentage of clubs without a female toilet.

62%

Only one LOI stadium fit to host UEFA Club Competition League phase matches.

1

Facilities remain the biggest barrier to growth across Irish football.

The Facilities Investment Vision and Strategy revealed an €863m challenge spanning grassroots, the League of Ireland, and international football. Progress has begun with strong government support, but there is more to do.

The Global Ireland Football Foundation will help fund grassroots projects, ensuring football plays its part in closing the gap.

Growth in the League of Ireland is limited by stadiums that do not meet modern standards for supporters or broadcast.

We must advocate for greater investment, collaborate on local projects, and equip clubs and communities to plan and build for the future.

“

EVERYONE AGREES BETTER FACILITIES ARE NEEDED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

William Grant
Secretary, West Utd. F.C.

”



Cork City vs. Bohemians
Oscar Traynor Centre,
Coolock, Dublin

FACILITIES

Facilities that drive participation and performance at every level.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



HOW WE WILL GET THERE



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



Inclusive, accessible, and community-driven football facilities.

- Expand supports to Grassroots clubs to develop inclusive and accessible facilities.
- Deliver targeted schemes via Club Mark.
- Establish multi-sport partnerships with other NGBs.

- +15% funding in each round of Community Sports Facilities Fund.
- Secure 30% of allocated Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Funding.
- +80 artificial pitches.
- +200 clubs with female toilets.
- +150 clubs with safe, private and inclusive shower and changing facilities.
- +200 of clubs with accessible toilets.

LOI Clubs developing modern, professional football infrastructure.

- Support clubs to create stadium and training ground Development Plans.
- Support clubs to secure funding for development plans.
- Implement FAI Infrastructure Guidelines through Club Licensing.
- Ensure all stadiums are equipped to cater for all supporters, home and away.

- All clubs with dedicated fit-for-purpose training base.
- All clubs to upgrade playing surface.
- Min. 5 UEFA Category 3 and 15 UEFA Category 2 Stadiums.

World-class facilities that enable high performance.

- Deliver a phased roadmap for the National Training Centre.
- Ensure lifecycle investment is in place for the Aviva Stadium.

- Secure €6m of funding for phase 1 of National Training Centre.



WE NEED TO ENABLE LONG-TERM INVESTMENT THAT TRANSFORMS FOOTBALL FACILITIES ACROSS IRELAND AND DELIVERS LASTING IMPACT TO COMMUNITIES.

Colin Ryan
GIFF Chairman



Rannagh Park
Arranmore, Donegal

GLOBAL IRELAND FOOTBALL FOUNDATION

We estimate that €426m is needed over 15 years for grassroots football, with the game committing €85m. Traditional funding alone will not bridge this gap.

GIFF can be a gamechanger: an independent funding vehicle designed to attract new investment and unlock opportunities for Irish football.

While government support remains vital, GIFF provides a proactive way to secure capital and deliver on football's 20% contribution to the national facilities challenge.



HOW WE'LL GET THERE

- Drive fundraising through strategic campaigns and philanthropic partnerships.
- Launch initiatives to raise awareness and attract grassroots facility applications.
- Implement a transparent, investment-led allocation process.
- Ensure full compliance and accountability for all donor commitments.

To stimulate donations, the Foundation must drive awareness and interest of the following audiences:

1. HIGH-NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS

Individuals with high-ultra high net-worth open to donating to Irish Football.

2. CORPORATE ENTITIES IN IRELAND

Large global corporations with a base or headquarter in Ireland.

3. IRISH DIASPORA IN AMERICA

Irish population in America in high-to-ultra-high-income brackets (501(c)(3) tax category).



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- Min. €15m raised by 2029.

FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



2. INNOVATE THROUGH OUR GAMECHANGERS

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



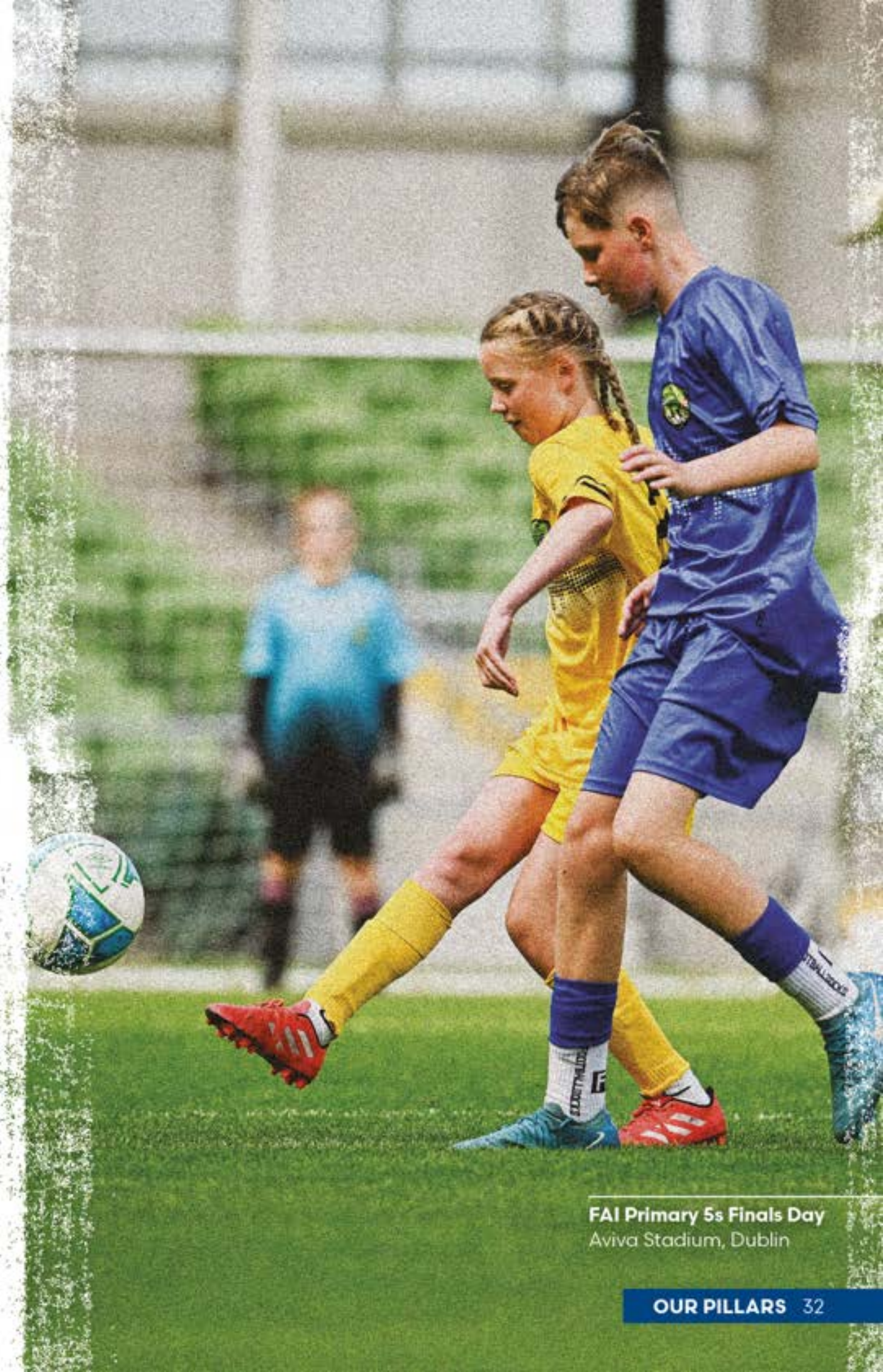
Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial



FAI Primary 5s Finals Day
Aviva Stadium, Dublin

FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

For many years, Irish football punched above its weight. But as the game around us evolved, we must now work together to keep pace and push forward.

Across the country, our football community does incredible work developing players. To build on this, we need a more unified approach: one that ensures every player, wherever they are, has consistent access to quality football, positive experiences, and real opportunity.

The Football Pathways Plan sets out our vision for the whole game. The structures are now in place; the next step is to build the capacity of our clubs and leagues to drive progress.

Whether a player advances to a League of Ireland Academy, wears the green shirt, or continues to enjoy the grassroots game, we all share the responsibility to drive development.

Change will not be easy, and results will not come overnight. But by acting together, raising standards, supporting our people, and believing in what's possible, we can unlock the full potential of Irish football.

Overall participation rate
14th / 55 UEFA nations.

14TH

Percentage of clubs with Club
Mark One-Star accreditation.

8%

Contact time for youth
International teams significantly
below most UEFA nations.



**EVERY STEP WE ARE
TAKING IS FOR THE
GREATER GOOD, WE NEED
TO DEVELOP OUR CLUBS
AND PRODUCE MORE
TALENTED PLAYERS.**

**WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER
AND WE WILL GROW
TOGETHER.**

Andrew O' Leary

Director of football and head
coach, Inter Kenmare F.C.



Inter Kenmare F.C.
Kenmare, Kerry



FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT

Improving standards and experiences for all.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE 	HOW WE WILL GET THERE 	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS 
<p>A larger participation base with more opportunities to play more football, more often, with more variety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new game formats & games programme to increase age-and-stage appropriate playing opportunities. • Develop a Disability Football action plan. • Deliver a EURO 2028 legacy for players, coaches, and volunteers. • Deliver the Women & Girls' Action plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70% of leagues delivering 25+ flexible format games per team per season. • +25% increase in number of Disability Football players. • 100 Clubs providing opportunities to play Disability Football. • +30% registered Women & Girls' players.
<p>High-quality club and league environments that support sustainable participation and progression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the Club Mark rollout and formally launch the League Mark. • Develop and embed the Head of Football role across the club system. • Introduce a volunteer reward & recognition programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All leagues accredited with League Mark Entry Level. • Club Mark accreditations: 100% Entry Level, 20% One Star, 10% Two Star, 1% in Three Star Pilot. • 250 FAI accredited Heads of Football. • +20% registered volunteers.
<p>Clear pathways from Grassroots to International, understood by all stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a clear player pathway with defined transition points. • Improve coach development and retention. • Establish a structured referee development pathway. • Use National League and the Women's Development League to test and shape future pyramid development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +10 leagues providing complete underage pathway from U8 to U16 for boys and girls. • +50% new referee registrations. • Coaching Retention +5%. • Increase proportion of female-to-male qualified coaches to 10%. • National League operating with 15-20 clubs between 2026-2029.
<p>Football and education integrated to support participation and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed football across all levels of the education system through the Education and Development Strategy. • Embed education within League of Ireland Academies through club-based Transition Year programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 teachers to complete Extra Personal Vacation Days (EPV) training with the FAI. • 8 TY Football programmes annually linked to LOI Academies by 2029.
<p>A clear football and coaching philosophy implemented across all international teams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement The Green Line Technical Plan as a shared playing and coaching identity across all international teams. • Provide consistent, high-quality development environments for high-potential players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Green Line Technical Plan embedded across all international teams and aligned coach development programmes. • 10-day average increase of contact time provided to underage International teams.
<p>A modern high-performance system that prepares Irish teams to compete at the highest level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver high-performance environments for all international teams. • Apply high-performance benchmarks across LOI Academies. • Add data & analytics capability to support evidence-based decision making across national teams. • Embed a Performance Support and Talent ID function across the international pathway. • Align the international women's pathway with UEFA best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 20 UEFA ranking for MNT. Top 15 UEFA ranking for WNT. • Baseline performance data established for all LOI Academy players. • Qualification for a third of UEFA underage tournaments entered. • +3 average ranking for our International Disability teams.



THE PLAN IS ABOUT CREATING A STRONGER FOUNDATION FOR IRISH FOOTBALL. IF WE ALL PLAY OUR PART, WE CAN BUILD A SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS EVERY PLAYER AND CLUB ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Peter Travers
Cork Business League Secretary



Cornageeha vs. Shannon
2025 Cairn Community Games

FOOTBALL PATHWAYS PLAN

In 2024, the FAI released 'The Football Pathways Plan' (FPP). **For the first time, football in Ireland has a comprehensive plan for every level of the game.**

The plan sets out a 12-year vision for Football in Ireland, outlining the fundamental changes we must make so we can maximise our potential.

While all details can be found in the Football Pathways Plan itself, this document elevates the **core outcomes, objectives and KPIs we need to achieve over the course of our 2026-2029 strategic cycle.**



HOW WE WILL GET THERE

Changing the Game through 3 key areas reflected across the 'Football Development' Pillar.



PARTICIPATION

While continuing to increase new participants and registration numbers, we want to redefine 'Participation' to increase the frequency and variety of opportunities for football and ensure positive experiences for all involved.



PATHWAYS

Ensure structures are in place to enable opportunities and positive experiences in all areas and levels of the game, encouraging participants to continue their involvement and enjoyment in the game.



PERFORMANCE

Provide best-in-class performance environments and resources to support our players and coaches to maximise their learning and development potential and to inspire the next generation of Irish footballers.

'GREEN LINE' PHILOSOPHY

Consistency and alignment across all pathways

Clear identity and approach to playing and coaching

Supporting every player during and beyond playing

LEAGUE OF IRELAND

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



2. INNOVATE THROUGH OUR GAMECHANGERS

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial

Bohemians supporters
Dalymount Park, Dublin

LOVE FOOTBALL



“

THE LEAGUE NEEDS PROPER INVESTMENT SO IT CAN BE EVEN GREATER THAN IT IS NOW.

Damien Duff
Former LOI Manager

”

Galway United supporters
Dalymount Park, Dublin

BRINGING UP A STORM

LEAGUE OF IRELAND

The League has captured the nation's attention. Now, we must build on that momentum.

With the right investment, we can build a self-sustaining football industry that drives long-term success. The League will be the engine of our men's and women's national teams and a cornerstone of Irish football's future.

As the League matures, we must identify the model that allows it to thrive, turning progress into lasting achievement and building the competition our fans deserve.

Average of just 3.5 full-time staff at League of Ireland clubs.

3.5

Economic Impact (BDO Report 2024).

€164.7M

MU17 FIFA World Cup 2025 squad players developed through the LOI academy system.

16/21

Total LOI club attendances in 2025.

1.1M

The League is growing fast: record attendances, stronger broadcast coverage, and success in Europe. Yet limited staffing, outdated facilities, and constrained finances are limiting the pace and potential of that growth.

Our young players are gaining vital experience, and the government's commitment to academy investment marks an important step forward. Our clubs remain at the heart of their communities, representing something bigger than football.

WE CANNOT LET THIS OPPORTUNITY PASS.

LEAGUE OF IRELAND

Sustainably growing a football industry.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



HOW WE WILL GET THERE



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



A thriving, sustainable Football Industry.

- Improve club sustainability via Club Licensing.
- Upskill club staff and volunteers via training and education.
- Develop and professionalise SES Network.
- Provide pathways and development opportunities for Elite Panel Match Officials.
- Review League governance and competition formats and commission an independent assessment of options.

- LOI economic impact of >€300m.
- Average of 15 full-time employees per club.
- All clubs with full-time SES Managers and SES strategies.
- +10% UEFA club match appointments for LOI match officials.
- Future roadmap agreed by clubs, National League Committee and FAI Board.

A product that can maximise media coverage and commercialisation.

- Grow commercial revenues within the League of Ireland.
- Upgrade club facilities to enhance broadcast and performance analysis capabilities.
- Review, refine and grow the League of Ireland brand.
- Develop a Marketing and Communications plan for the Women's League of Ireland.

- Double Men and Women's LOI Broadcast numbers.
- Double League sponsorship revenue.
- Average monthly social engagement rate of 2.5%.

An inclusive, unique experience for fans, with our clubs at the heart of the community.

- Develop and professionalise Supporter Liaison Officer and Disability Access Officer Networks.
- Engage quarterly with SLOs, DAOs and the LOI Supporters' Committee.
- Develop initiatives to encourage the next generation of fans.
- Develop initiatives to grow the Women's League of Ireland.

- Active Supporter Liaison Officer and Disability Access Officer in place for 75% of home matches.
- Improved supporter matchday experience via Net Promoter Score.
- +50% attendance for Women's Premier Division.

LEAGUE OF IRELAND ACADEMIES

Decades of underinvestment have left LOI Academy facilities and staffing far below modern professional standards. Brexit has added further pressure by closing the traditional UK pathway for developing Ireland's best young players.

Our top talents now face poor facilities, limited professional support, and the lowest development time in Europe, leaving them at a clear disadvantage.

To change this, we must build a modern, fit-for-purpose LOI Academy system that empowers clubs to develop elite talent, compete in Europe, drive international success, and grow Ireland's football industry.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE



- Build on government's multi-year LOI Academy investment.
- Create a clear funding framework with strong monitoring and impact measures.
- Further develop the Women's LOI Academy pathway by adding a younger age group.
- Collaborate with clubs to develop the workforce and maximise LOI Academy potential.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



- All academies achieve and maintain LOI Academy Mark.
- Min. of 8 Top-Tier LOI Academies established.
- 100 full-time staff across the LOI Academy system.
- Double the transfer fees for LOI Academy-developed players (2026-2029).
- +200% increase in player contact hours.



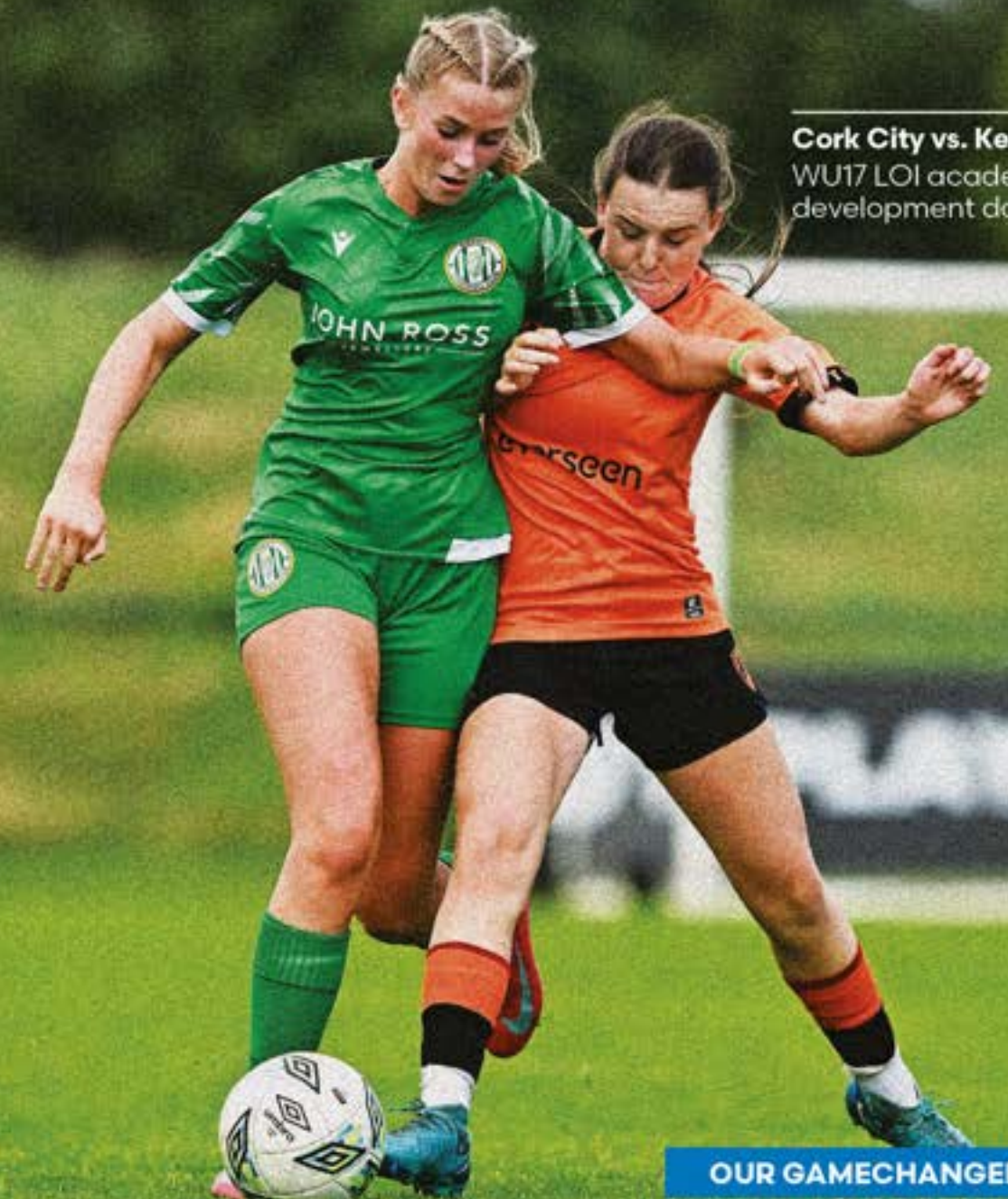
I DO NOT SEE WHY IRISH ACADEMIES CAN NOT BE THE BEST IN THE WORLD IF WE INVEST IN THEM.

WE HAVE THE PLAYERS, WE HAVE GOOD COACHES, WE JUST NEED THAT INVESTMENT TO GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

Mason Melia
LOI Academy Graduate



Cork City vs. Kerry F.C.
WU17 LOI academy development day



Republic of Ireland
supporters
Aviva Stadium, Dublin



SUCCESS ON THE PITCH

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Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial

Four ambitious measures show the health of our football ecosystem, enabling us to inspire the nation, connect communities, and reinvest in the game to further strengthen football in Ireland.

Age-and-stage appropriate formats for boys and girls in every county.



LOI Clubs competing in League Phases of senior and youth UEFA Club Competitions every year.



+10% girls' retention rate at age 13-14.

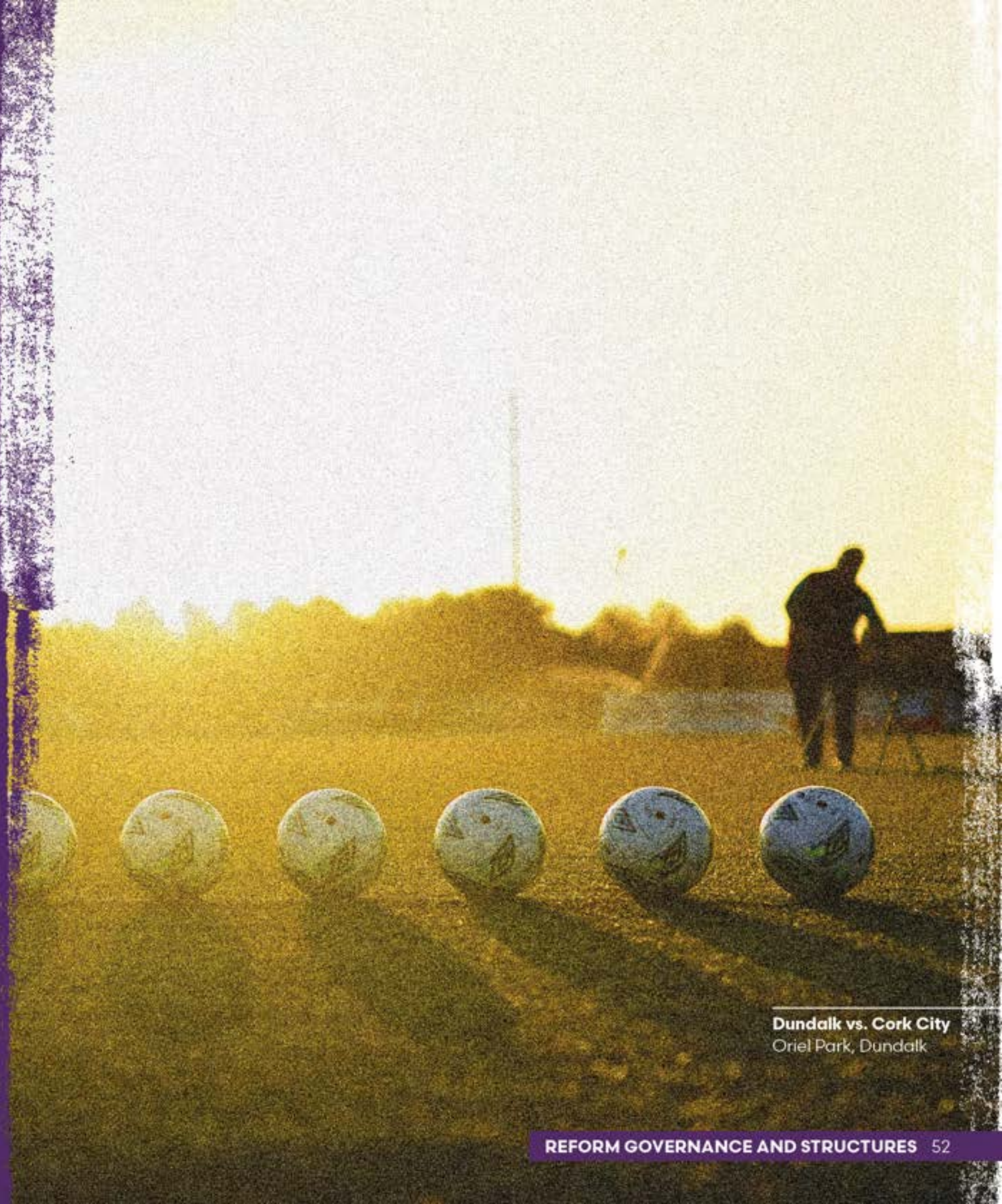


Senior MNT and WNT to qualify for at least one major tournament each.



Republic of Ireland Women's National Team
Den Dreef Stadium, Belgium

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES



Dundalk vs. Cork City
Oriell Park, Dundalk

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



2. INNOVATE THROUGH OUR GAMECHANGERS

3. Deliver SUCCESS ON THE PITCH at every level



REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



Organisation



Digital



Brand and Commercial

Irish football is at a critical point of transition. Since 2019, the FAI has delivered extensive governance reform through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government and Sport Ireland. Although these reforms have introduced Governance best practice to the FAI, the broader football ecosystem remains complex and fragmented, with large representative structures, multiple committees and inconsistent governance models across our affiliates, leagues (69+) and grassroots clubs (1,000+). Club Mark & League Mark are the practical delivery mechanisms that will form a central pillar of future reform.

The FAI Board and Executive will lead a sustained programme of change and continuous improvement throughout this strategic cycle, informed by external engagement and best-practice governance standards. This programme will be supported by key stakeholders, with the detailed scope to be agreed in early 2026.

Through one of our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) conditions with the Government: MoU14* – Cascading Good Governance, the FAI is committed to ensuring governance standards are applied consistently throughout the football pyramid. This work will focus on:

Extending and formalising governance standards for clubs, leagues and affiliates.



Ensuring consistent safeguarding, compliance and increased financial transparency.



Enhancing training, resources and support structures.



Reviewing the stability and sustainability of grassroots and league structures.



OUTCOME

Irish Football is governed in a transparent, accountable, inclusive and future-focused way across all aspects of the game.

*MoU14 is part of the latest Memorandum of Understanding (2024-2027) between the FAI and the Government. MoU14 is one of 16 recommendations – a substantial decrease from the 163 included in the original MoU.



Young Drogheda
United Supporter

OUR ENABLERS

OUR ENABLERS

1. STRENGTHEN OUR PILLARS



2. INNOVATE THROUGH OUR GAMECHANGERS

REFORM GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES

SUPPORTED BY OUR ENABLERS



Culture



Organisation



Digital

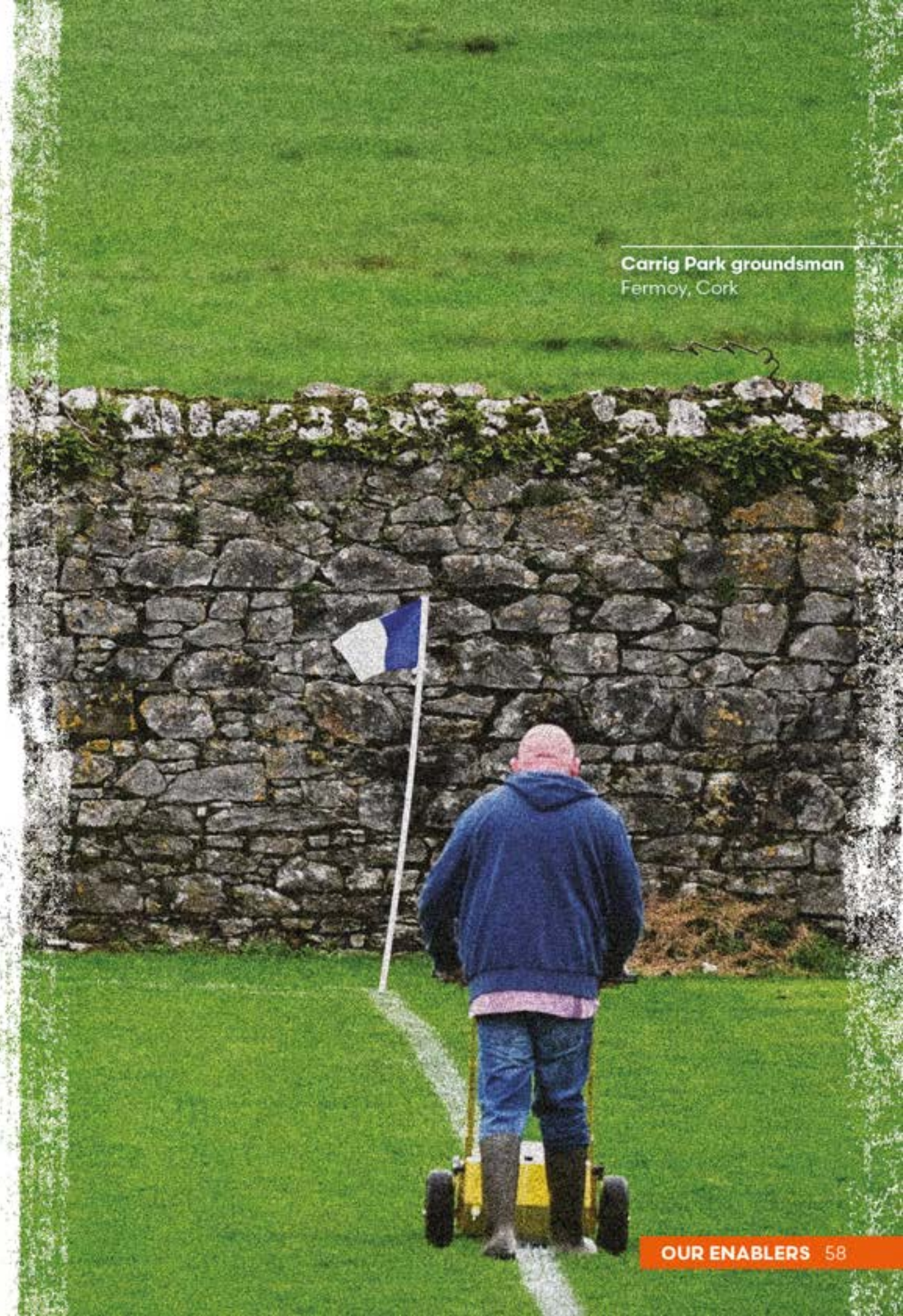


Brand and Commercial



3. Deliver **SUCCESS ON THE PITCH** at every level

Carrig Park groundsman
Fermoy, Cork



CULTURE

Inspiring, including, and protecting everyone in the game.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



A high-performance culture where our people live our values everyday.

An inclusive football community that embodies our values and creates a positive impact.

A safe environment for all. No tolerance for abuse or misconduct.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE



- Prioritise staff learning and development.
- Enhance employee experience and wellbeing.
- Implement a Performance and Recognition strategy.

- Embed a culture of respect and accountability, and action when behaviours fall short.
- Set baseline and targets for equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels.
- Engrain Disability Football in everything that we do.
- Implement the FAI SES Strategy 2024-2027.
- Improve access to mental health and wellbeing services.
- Use football as a vehicle to promote Irish culture and language.

- Maintain safeguarding compliance, including statutory requirements, with disciplinary action for noncompliance.
- Educate stakeholders on their safeguarding responsibilities and the tools available to help them.
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms at all levels of the game.
- Implement adult safeguarding gap analysis recommendations.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



- Min. 4 Learning hours per employee per month.
- 30% improvement in staff sentiment scores.
- Achieve Great Place to Work award.

- Retention rate of referees: 1 year (80%) and 3 years (50%).
- All clubs and leagues with bespoke ED&I policy.
- Achieve and maintain 40% female representation on FAI Board, General Assembly and committees.
- Achieve and maintain 30% female representation in FAI Senior Leadership and staff.
- Achieve and maintain ADI Bronze Xccessible Award.
- Reduce FAI Carbon Emissions by 50%.
- 80% of clubs and leagues with mental health and wellbeing framework in place.

- Maintain full compliance with safeguarding requirements at all levels of the game.
- All leagues with Customer Charter in place.
- Pass all UEFA, FIFA and Sport Ireland audits.
- All gap analysis recommendations implemented.

Brothers and LOI supporters
Aviva Stadium, Dublin



**Marie Morrison
and Tony Quinn**
Sligo Rovers volunteers



ORGANISATION

Building smarter structures and strong, sustainable governance.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



Robust governance from the boardroom to the sidelines.

An improved and sustainable financial landscape.

Knowledge and insights drive every decision.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE



- Continue governance transformation.
- Implement and embed a structure to enable the Association to best deliver on our strategic goals.
- Educate the football community on governance and strategic planning.
- Introduce an FAI Governance Code for affiliates.

- Prudently manage spend in line with income.
- Ensure we can meet legacy debt obligations.

- Collaborate with Governing Bodies, Research Bodies and 3rd level institutions.
- Perform a gap analysis on our data.
- Create an internal data and insights framework.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



- All Sport Ireland MoU conditions completed.
- Achieve and maintain ISO9001.
- 70% of clubs and leagues feel better equipped and supported to deliver football.
- 90% Club and League Mark revalidation rate.
- All affiliates compliant with FAI Governance Code.

- Revolving credit facility at min. €6m at year end.
- Overall debt levels reduced to max. €25m.
- Increase net assets to min. €20m.

- Min. of 2 commissioned or co-produced research projects undertaken annually.
- Real-time football landscape dashboard developed.

Republic of Ireland supporters
Aviva Stadium, Dublin

DIGITAL

Inspiring insight, innovation, and impact through digital-first football.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



A football community empowered by digital tools and innovation.

A culture of digital-first learning to enhance the capability of our staff and the game.

Digitally connected people and systems to improve decision making and efficiency.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE



- Enhance FAI Connect to strengthen governance, compliance, licensing and registration.
- Launch FAI Digital Hub to provide digital resources to all stakeholders.
- Grow a suite of digital products to engage our fanbase.

- Build digital transformation capability across the FAI.
- Launch an e-learning platform across the game.
- Provide on-demand guidance for coaches via an FAI Digital Playbook.

- Integrate and automate systems, processes, and reporting.
- Advance, integrate and promote performance analysis capabilities across all levels of the game.
- Support stakeholders better and faster with AI-powered customer service.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



- 90% of clubs and leagues using FAI Connect Competition Management.
- Min. 80% of clubs actively using FAI Digital Hub.
- FAI Digital Hub with 10,000+ premium subscribers.
- Double number of Fantasy LOI players.

- All staff receiving annual digital-readiness training.
- 25k participants engaging with e-learning platform annually.
- 55k active users of FAI Digital Playbook annually.

- ISO27001 certification achieved.
- All FAI performance analysis software integrated under one platform.
- 70% of customer support queries resolved within 48 hours.

BRAND AND COMMERCIAL

Connecting with our football community and generating revenue to reinvest in the game.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE



An engaged and supportive stakeholder community.

Optimised revenue streams enabling us to reinvest in the game.

A memorable matchday experience.

HOW WE WILL GET THERE



- Ensure our stakeholders understand and align with our goals.
- Understand our reputation drivers and positively influence them.
- Review how our FAI brand impacts the Association.
- Use EURO 2028 to unite Irish football and inspire national pride.

- Grow partnerships aligned with strategic objectives.
- Maximise sources of revenue inclusive of grants and funding.
- Maximise the growth and interest in domestic football.
- Leverage EURO 2028 to attract long-term partnerships.

- Engage quarterly with the Irish Football Supporters Partnership and fan forums.
- Improve our matchday experience for fans.
- Increase attendances for WNT games through targeted initiatives.
- Improve our Club Ireland membership offering.
- Implement fan loyalty programme.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS



- Average monthly positive Net Promoter Score.
- Average monthly social engagement of 2.5%.
- Set baseline and targets for sentiment on reputation drivers.

- +30% sponsorship revenue.
- Double the number of sponsor-led campaigns.
- €500k reduction in cost base via partnerships.
- +20% non-fixed grants and funding received.
- +20% MNT and +30% WNT broadcast numbers.

- Set baseline and targets for fan sentiment and matchday experience.
- +10% MNT and +25% WNT attendances.
- Sold out Men's and Women's FAI Cup Finals.
- Double the number of Club Ireland members.
- Min. 25k Season Ticket sales.
- Min. 10 football matches played at Aviva Stadium per year.

Brothers and Republic of Ireland supporters
Aviva Stadium, Dublin



THEMES ACROSS OUR STRATEGY

Sisters and Republic
of Ireland supporters
Republic of Ireland
supporters



THEMES ACROSS OUR STRATEGY

WOMEN AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL

Our last strategic cycle saw significant progress, with participation in Women and Girls' football increasing by 79%. Qualification for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, inspired a new generation and created real momentum across the game.

In this strategy, Women and Girls' football is not confined to a single pillar. It is embedded across our pillars and enablers, with clear and measurable objectives integrated throughout. Progress is therefore a shared responsibility, reflected in the priorities, actions and accountability of teams across the Association.

Alongside this, the Women and Girls' Action Plan will continue to drive targeted progress, building on strong foundations and supporting the next phase of development.



CASE STUDY: MALAHIDE UNITED

Malahide United shows the football ecosystem at its best and proves that when football is welcoming and built around girls' needs, it grows.

HOW THEY DID IT:

- Through programmes such as Aviva In Her Boots, Female Coach Mentoring Support and FAI coaching pathway courses, the club built regular, age-appropriate sessions that helped girls feel welcome.
- Coaches engaged in FAI pathways, with parents noting how the 'Aviva In Her Boots' programme improved coaches' understanding of girls' confidence and communication needs.
- Female-friendly toilets, better changing access and equal pitch allocation removed everyday barriers and boosted retention.
- Coaching, player visits and club-wide events with Shelbourne F.C. have inspired girls, many of whom now attend LOI and WNT games.

WHY IT MATTERS:

The Women and Girls' game grows when football is engaging, the environment is built for girls, leaders are visible, the community is involved, and clubs focus on parity where it matters.

THE IMPACT AT MALAHIDE UNITED

2x the amount of girls
playing today since 2022.

270

+30 coaches involved since 2022.

48

Dedicated facilities for girls to
maximise opportunities to play.



Malahide United

THEMES ACROSS OUR STRATEGY

WOMEN AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL – OUR OBJECTIVES AND KPIS



HOW WE WILL GET THERE



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

	HOW WE WILL GET THERE	HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS
FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand supports to Grassroots clubs to develop inclusive and accessible facilities. Ensure all stadiums are equipped to cater for all supporters, home and away. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +200 clubs with female toilets. +150 clubs with safe, private and inclusive shower and changing facilities.
FOOTBALL DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the Women & Girls Action Plan. Create a clear player pathway with defined transition. Use National League and the Women's Development League to test and shape future pyramid development. Align the International Women's pathway with UEFA best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +30% in Women & Girls players registered. +10 leagues providing complete underage pathway from U8 to U16 for boys and girls. Increase proportion of female-to-male qualified coaches to 10%. Top 15 UEFA ranking for WNT. Complete the International Women's pathway to align with UEFA best practice.
LEAGUE OF IRELAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a specific Marketing & Communications plan for the Women's League of Ireland. Develop initiatives to grow the Women's League of Ireland. Further develop the Women's LOI Academy pathway by adding a younger age group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double Women's LOI Broadcast numbers. 50% increase in attendance for Women's Premier Division.
CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set baseline and targets for equality, diversity & inclusion at all levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve and maintain 40% female representation on FAI Board, General Assembly and committees. Achieve and maintain 30% female representation in FAI Senior Leadership and staff.
BRAND AND COMMERCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase attendances for WNT games through targeted initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +25% WNT attendances. Sold out Women's FAI Cup finals. Min. 10 football matches played at Aviva stadium per year.



THANK YOU, LETTERKENNY ROVERS AND THEIR VOLUNTEERS, FOR GIVING ALL KIDS WITH DISABILITIES THE CHANCE TO FEEL INCLUDED AND NOT JUDGED.

Deborah McDermott
Parent



Letterkenny Rovers F.C.
Leckview Park,
County Donegal

THEMES ACROSS OUR STRATEGY

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Football has the power to bring people together. Our game should reflect the diversity and values of the society it serves, ensuring football is welcoming, inclusive and accessible to all.

We recognise there is more to do. While important progress has been made through our Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has not yet been embedded consistently across the game. Strengthening this remains a clear priority.

Through this strategy, we are committing to strengthening Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the Association, shaping how football is developed, supported and governed. Over this strategic cycle, our focus is on building stronger foundations by:



Continuing delivery of our Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategy



Developing a clear action plan for disability football



Empowering League of Ireland clubs within their communities through SES and DAO networks



Establishing baselines and targets for ED&I metrics across Football



Tackling discrimination in all its forms

These commitments will shape priorities, behaviours and decision-making throughout the Association.



Republic of Ireland supporters
Aviva Stadium, Dublin

THEMES ACROSS OUR STRATEGY

EURO 2028

For the first time, Ireland will co-host Europe's biggest football tournament during this strategic cycle. It represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to signal a turning point for Irish football.

EURO 2028 will reach every level of the game. Its impact goes far beyond the matches, giving us the platform to:



**Accelerate the progress
Irish football needs**



**Showcase the need for
modern, inclusive facilities**



**Bring the excitement of
tournament football to Ireland**



**Attract new investment and
strengthen the FAI for the future**

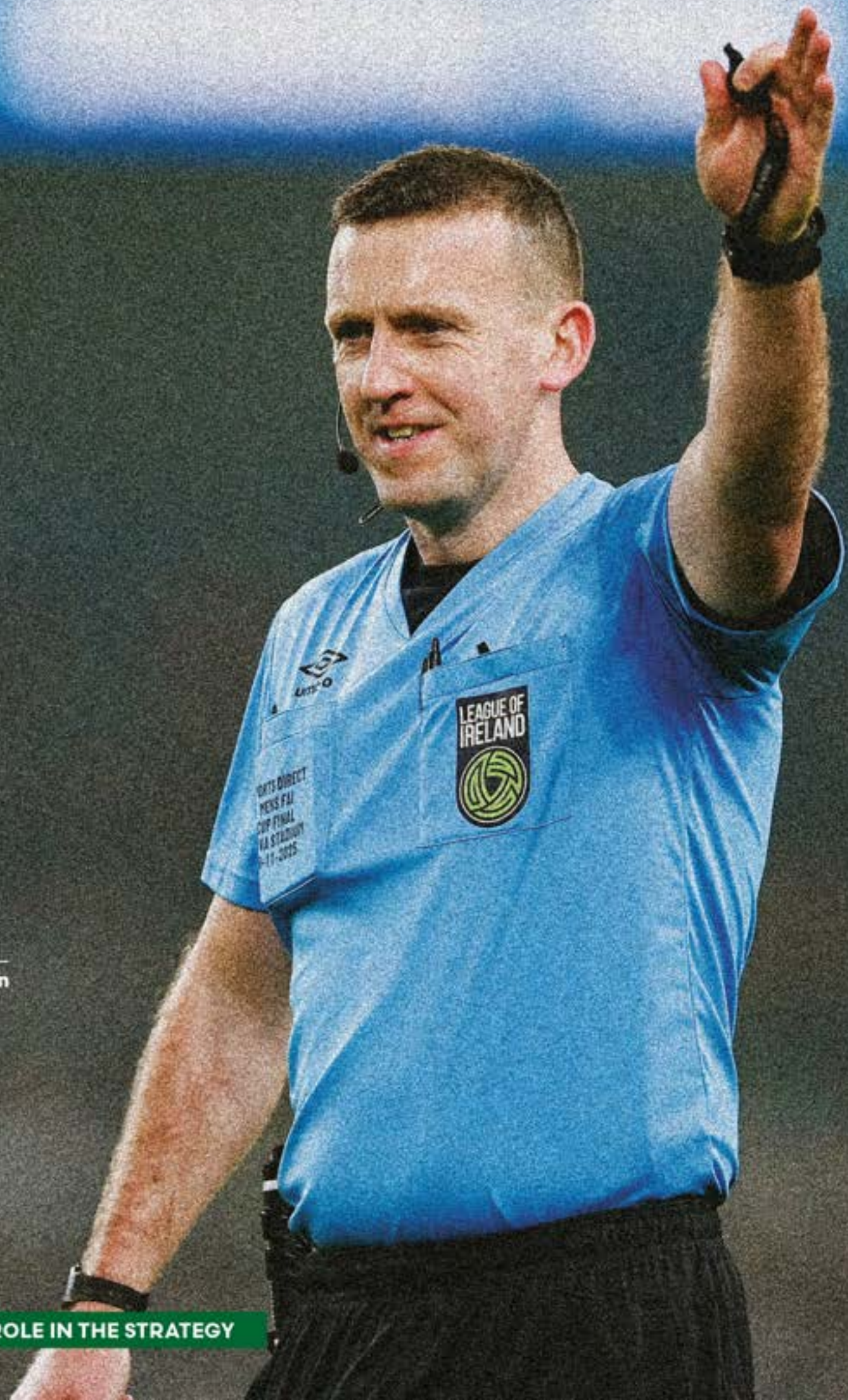
This tournament will help us stabilise the organisation, reduce debt, and proudly present Ireland to the world, celebrating our culture, our supporters, and our place in the global game.

EURO 2028 will not fix everything on its own, but it can set Irish football on the right path by unlocking momentum, belief, and lasting change.

YOUR ROLE IN THE STRATEGY



**Dominic Hendrick
and his daughter**
Phoenix Park



Paul Norton
Referee

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

AS A COACH, I WILL...

- Follow a clear coaching pathway with learning and mentoring support.
- Access digital tools and on-demand coaching resources.
- Work in a system where player development is aligned across the game.

AS A VOLUNTEER, I WILL...

- Be recognised and supported for the vital role I play in my club and community.
- Access improved tools and guidance through FAI Connect.
- Receive mentorship and development opportunities to stay involved in the game.

AS A REFEREE, I WILL...

- Experience greater respect and positive behaviours across the game.
- Access clear pathways for training and progression.
- Feel proud to help make football safer, fairer, and more enjoyable for everyone.

AS FAI STAFF, I WILL...

- Have a specialised role to enable me to make a clear impact on the game.
- Be supported to learn and develop professionally in my career.
- Work in a positive environment where we live our values everyday.

AS A LOI CLUB, I WILL...

- Have access to modern training bases fit for professional football.
- Help develop a strong academy system that grows talent and drives success.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to shape the future model of the League.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

AS A GRASSROOTS PLAYER, I WILL...

- Have more opportunities to play and enjoy football, wherever I live and whatever my ability.
- Benefit from better, safer, and more inclusive facilities, with fewer cancelled matches.
- Be part of a welcoming game that helps me grow as both a player and a person.

AS A HIGH-POTENTIAL PLAYER, I WILL...

- Follow a clear, connected pathway from grassroots to elite level.
- Develop through a modern LOI Academy system here in Ireland.
- Be supported by full-time LOI Academy staff focused on my development, on and off the pitch.
- Have strong education and career pathways beyond the professional game.

AS AN INTERNATIONAL PLAYER I WILL...

- Train in fit-for-purpose national facilities with world-class support.
- Have the tools to reach my potential and compete at the highest level.
- Inspire the nation and the next generation through success on the international stage.

AS A FAN, I WILL...

- Enjoy better matchday experiences and inclusive fan facilities.
- Have new digital ways to connect with my club and Irish football.
- Feel part of a vibrant, united football community.
- Feel more engaged through digital channels and fan forums.



Coach Brid McGinty
Abbotstown, Dublin

HOW YOU CAN CHANGE THE GAME



PROGRESS

1. Review the FAI Strategy 2026-2029 and see how your own plans can contribute.
2. Engage with the Club/League Mark process and see where you can raise standards.
3. Set one priority you will change this year to make a difference.



PASSION

1. Support your local club through volunteering or attending matches.
2. Speak with your General Assembly representative to ensure your voice is being heard.
3. Take steps to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.



TOGETHERNESS

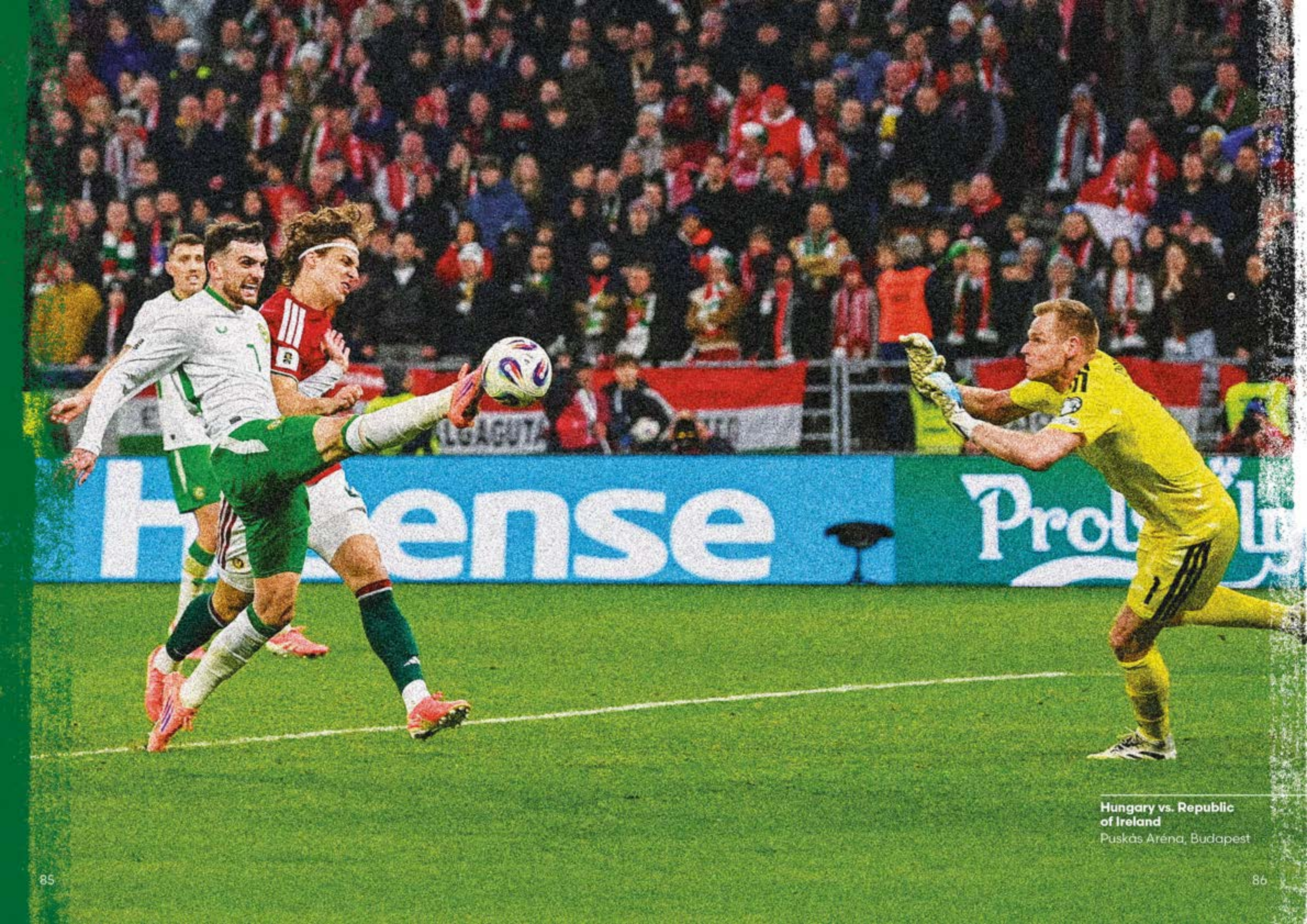
1. Contact the FAI for support and mentorship.
2. Work with local schools, clubs, leagues, LOI clubs and other sports to share knowledge and resources.
3. Consider how your role contributes to the bigger picture and how you can change to benefit others.

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE GAME.

DROGHEDA UNITED F.C.
REGULATIONS ARE POSTED AT ALL
TO THE GROUNDS. ALL PATRONS ARE
TO HAVE ACCEPTED THESE REGULATIONS
BY ENTERING THE GROUNDS
IN COMPLIANCE WITH GROUND REGULATIONS, ALL
PERSONS WILL BE SEARCHED FOR FLARES, FLAGS
OR OFFENSIVE WEAPONS



Gemma Bulger
Drogheda United



Hungary vs. Republic
of Ireland
Puskás Aréna, Budapest

“
**BE PATIENT,
BE OPEN MINDED
AND ENJOY BEING
PART OF SHAPING
THE FUTURE.**

Paul Larkin
Chairperson, Ratoath Harps

”

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