



2023-24 Year End Annual Report of the Secretary

CLG Cheathrú Aodha Dhuibh
carryduffgac.com
Carryduff GAC

CEATHRÚ AODHA DHUIBH
CARRYDUFF
Páirc na nÓg CLG Cheathrú Aodha Dhuibh was funded by the Landfill Community Fund and administered by Eirteast via a generous donation from Eastwood Envirowaste Ltd.

Foreword

Welcome to Carryduff GAC Annual Report of the Secretary for the December 2023 - November 2024 period.

It has been another busy and exciting year for our club, both on and off the pitch. We started on a high towards the end of the calendar year when the club was awarded Gaelic Life magazine's Ulster Club of the Year award for 2023, and we have worked hard since then to honour that accolade.

As always, the early part of the year involved putting in place arrangements for the start of the playing season. Much of this work falls to our Registrars who ensure all member registrations are completed in a timely way - taking care in particular that players are correctly registered to participate - and to our Coaching and Children's Officers and Heads of Code who are involved in appointing coaches and in delivering a full suite of skills and safeguarding training so that they are all qualified to the requisite standards.

With the help of our Head of Facilities we also used those early months to prepare our pitches and wider facilities - readying ourselves for another year of sporting activity. Our players commenced their training season early in the year, under the supervision of our Heads of Code and management teams, and, despite the inescapable weather-related challenges, all were up and back on pitches by April; training, developing, and improving.

Inevitably, we have continued to face challenges around training and playing space and are grateful for the efforts of our Assistant Secretary who has had the unenviable task of balancing team needs with the condition and availability of pitches. However, we were delighted to open our juvenile pitch, Páirc na nÓg, in September and are confident that, together with the new 4G facility recently opened at Lough Moss, we will experience fewer such pressures next year.

In addition, we were thrilled to receive a commitment of more than a quarter of a million pounds worth of capital grant aid from Lisburn and Castlereagh Council during the summer which, with match funding in place, will be used to further improve and develop our facilities over the next two years – the artwork and 3D modelling for which can still be viewed at the Hub.

Without our players and our management teams, we would not exist. And as ever our playing season has been hectic and packed. With such a huge number of competitive and social teams across all codes, specific achievements vary, and you can read more about our general progress inside this report. But, regardless of outcome, we are hugely proud of the dedication, resilience and loyalty displayed by our 1,381 playing members. From the smallest feet to grace our soil to the toughest and hardest who push themselves to the limit, we take immense pride and joy. As a club we are extremely fortunate to now have 238 highly competent coaches who continue to light the fire in every single player - drawing them back week in, week out - not only to develop their skills, but also to instil in them a sense of teamwork and to demonstrate, through their wins, their losses and their draws, the values of grace and resilience.

We have also continued to represent you, our wider membership, this year - listening to what you have to say and communicating our plans and ambitions. To this end, we have once again engaged extensively; we communicated with you through various social media platforms and through our quarterly newsletters; invited participation in our club survey; held information, health and social events for adults, children and families; developed a [Club Prospectus](#) and a [Strategic Plan](#) and; further strengthened our existing relationships with local schools.

Throughout the year we also continued to make every effort to offer an inclusive range of activities to the wider community and were greatly encouraged to see the return of hundreds of walkers to our walkway for our second consecutive 'Ireland Lights Up' event through January to March – and indeed in our later 'Darkness into Light' suicide awareness walk. For the first time, through the 'GAA All Stars' initiative, we are also now bringing our national games to people with additional needs, who take to the 3G every Saturday afternoon with a dedicated group of especially trained coaches. Following a highly successful pilot, we are delighted that this programme will now become embedded within the club.

And for the first time in many years, we entered junior teams in the instrumental, drama, singing and quiz teams of the County Scór na nÓg competition, which, at the time of writing, has already led to success as we have now reached a County final. Good luck to all of them.

None of these successes could have happened but for the dedication of our Events, Health & Well-Being, Culture and Language and Volunteer Officers. It is heartening to see that interest in the club extends beyond the games we play - further testament to the sense of community we are keen to foster.

As you will appreciate, there are significant administrative and practical burdens associated with managing a club of our size and as an entirely voluntary organisation we are proud of how much we have been able to achieve through the efforts of a very dedicated and committed team of people this year. Above all, and very much behind the scenes, our Executive Committee plays an important, and often challenging role in managing our resources, maintaining our standards, representing conflicting priorities fairly and growing and promoting our club both physically and reputationally. The often-unseen work of our Chair, Treasurer, PRO and secretarial team, provides the solid foundations upon which much of our other success rests.

We are hugely appreciative to our coaches and mentors, to our funders and sponsors, to our players, our parents and our club referees, to those who help maintain our grounds and run the Hub shop, to car park attendants and gate keepers, and to those who answer the call for one-off events, all of whom help to keep these cogs turning smoothly.

However, we also know how much more we could achieve if *every* member did '*just one thing*' to support and complement the existing pool of volunteers. We will continue to reach out for support in a range of ways in the year ahead and are keen to encourage more of you to become involved in contributing to the excellent work that's already happening here.

So, whether you are new to the parish or a long-standing member of the community, old or young, a GAA stalwart or a total newcomer, we don't mind. Please reach out, and we will gladly welcome you too, to the fold. And if you aren't in a position to help, just show your support in whatever way you can - there will always be a place for you at Carryduff GAC.

Many thanks for the role you have played in our success to date.

We are excited to see what next year brings.

Go raibh maith agaibh,



Sandra Ni Aodha / Sandra Hughes
Runaí / Secretary

Membership

Carryduff GAC has experienced huge growth in membership since its inception in 1972. With 1,863 members at the most recent count in September 2024, it remains the largest sporting organisation in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area and the largest GAA Club in Ulster – representing a rise of more than 12% on the 2023 total and an unprecedented 126% increase since 2016 (the earliest period for which our records relate). This continual upward trajectory shows no sign of abating.

	Date	Membership of Carryduff GAC	2024 Membership Change on previous year	Membership Change from 2016 total
8 years ago	Sep-16	825	-	-
7 years ago	Sep-17	988	+20%	+20%
6 years ago	Sep-18	1,099	+11%	+33%
5 years ago	Sep-19	1,261	+15%	+53%
4 years ago	Sep-20	990	-21%*	+20%
3 years ago	Dec-21	1,294	+31%	+57%
2 years ago	Jun-22	1,382	+7%	+68%
1 year ago	Sep-23	1,657	+20%	+101%
Current Year	Sep-24	1,863	+12%	+126%

*Impact of Covid / Cessation of Activities for period of time

Carryduff GAC comprises a young and diverse membership. As well as a juvenile (under 18) playing membership of almost 1,000 - representing almost nearly three quarters of all our players - the club also enjoys the largest number and proportion (at 44%) of female members of any sporting organisation within the council area.

Membership	Male	% of this category	Female	% of this category	All	% of total membership	% of playing membership
All members	1,043	56%	820	44%	1,863	100%	-
Playing Members	750	54%	631	46%	1,381	74%	100%
Adult players	194	55%	160	45%	354	19%	26%
Juvenile Players (U18)	547	55%	445	45%	992	53%	72%
Age not known	9	26%	26	74%	35	2%	3%
Coaches	159	67%	79	33%	238	13%	-
Executive Committee	13	65%	7	35%	20	1%	-

Current trends suggest that we are likely to exceed 2,000 members within the next 12-18 months. Increasing membership reflects well on the club and reassures the Executive Committee that it is delivering what people want to see. However, such growth also brings challenges for which we need to be prepared.

Our [Strategic Plan](#) for the next five years provides a way forward to address these challenges and to meet the demands that increased membership will make in terms of training, playing and social facilities, equipment, and coaching and volunteering hours.

¹¹ This represents approximately 4 qualified and ratified coaches per 23 playing members (specific allocations vary by playing age). This number is further supplemented by a significant number of 'mentors' from among our parents/guardians and older players who assist coaches but may not yet have full qualifications in place.

Coaching

Pivotal to the club's overall success, the dedication of our 238 coaches cannot be overstated. From the youngest nursery age groups, through to senior players, we are ever grateful for the relentless commitment and work rate of our coaches. Many have taken up the mantle with no background in GAA, to support and encourage their own children, others have known no life without Gaelic games, and some lie somewhere between those two. What they all share is a love of the sport, a recognition of its value in the lives of children and adults and, above all perhaps, a desire to improve the lives of others. In turn we will continue to support them in whatever way we can and were pleased in particular to celebrate the end of season with a Coaches' Appreciation night.



In addition to the formal coaching qualifications attained (outlined in the yellow box), at least 10 unique coaching workshops were held across the year, as well as a specific event targeting the female athlete which focused on nutrition and injury prevention.

In our efforts to standardise and rationalise our approach to coaching across the club, we implemented our first all-club Coaching Charter – The Carryduff Way – in the last playing season.

Coaching Accreditations in 2024

94 NEW COACHES CERTIFIED IN THE INTRODUCTION TO COACHING AND GAELIC GAMES

27 ADDITIONAL COACHES CERTIFIED TO LEVEL 1 ACROSS THE CODES

22 COACHES COMPLETING SPECIALIST AUTISM TRAINING ENABLING THEM TO SUPPORT OUR ALL-STARS GROUP

1 ADDITIONAL COACH CERTIFIED TO LEVEL 2

Following an extensive period of research, development and engagement the previous year – which had the support of all codes - the 2023-24 period provided an opportunity to trial the arrangement for the first time. Despite some challenges and teething problems, support for the initiative has been encouraging, a measure of this club's absolute commitment to ensuring all players and coaches have the tools available to reach their full potential. Everyone who accepts a coaching position with Carryduff GAC is required to fully commit to its implementation and endorse the values it espouses. As a living, evolving document, we will continue to take feedback, listen, learn, adapt and refine our coaching policies.

We were also fortunate earlier this year to be chosen as one of 12 clubs nationally to pilot the GAA's latest coach education offering, a peer facilitated Club Coaching Community of Practice (CoP). A relatively informal initiative, in which 30 of our coaches participated, it enables clubs to take ownership of their own coach education, encouraging them to share knowledge, experiences, good practice and resources with the ultimate aim of developing players across the Gaelic Games Player Pathway. The participating coaches enjoyed an opportunity to learn from each other in a supportive environment and can now pass their learning down through their own coaching groups.

Through excellent coaching that instils a love and appreciation for our national games, it is our ambition that all of our players will want to give their best, as part of a team, part of a code, and part of a community. This is where our on-pitch success will begin.

Underage Camps

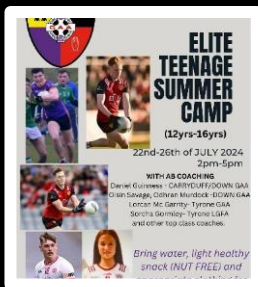
There is no sign of interest in our underage camps waning as we continue to witness huge demand from our young people for these fun-filled, cross-code initiatives. We welcomed a total of 440 children across our camps in the past year and are grateful of the opportunity it provides for children to mix and learn outside of their usual coaching groups.

In further testament to their dedication, we had 22 coaches and 7 mentors offering focused skills development at our Hurling and Camogie camp - attended by 90 children. And a further 35 coaches, assisted by 27 players, volunteering at our Kellogg's Cúl Camp which catered for 220 children in August – once again making it one of the largest in Ulster.

In an effort to meet the ever-increasing demand, we also offered additional externally run camps this year at which 100 younger children and 30 teenagers attended.

Underage Camp Participation

440 CHILDREN ATTENDED
CAMPS AT CARRYDUFF GAC
IN 2024, HELPING TO
FURTHER DEVELOP THEIR
SKILLS AND ATHLETICISM



Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a key focus of all organisations that deal with children and vulnerable adults, and the GAA is no exception. Safeguarding protects the most vulnerable of our members, but also protects our volunteers by ensuring they understand the standards and procedures expected of them.

We are fortunate that County Boards offer safeguarding training through the year, and it is a requirement of Carryduff GAC that all volunteers (coaches and others) complete Level 1 Safeguarding training as a minimum. They must also have current Access NI (police checks) clearance in place before they can be allowed to work with children or vulnerable adults in the club.

During the year, the Children's Officer – to whom any welfare concerns are raised in the first instance – dealt with a small number of relatively minor safeguarding concerns. The club's Designated Liaison Person has additional responsibility for issues that are escalated, and which may require social service or police intervention. All relevant officers have been fully trained for their positions such that members should have no hesitation coming forward in respect of any concern about any abuse or risk of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or other). It is encouraging to see that members do approach the officers with any concerns and understand their respective roles.

Carryduff GAC's [Safeguarding Statement](#) is available on our website and is positioned at various locations around our premises.

At a more operational level we have been extremely effective this year in ensuring that all teams engaging in trips or external activities (e.g. days out at Croke Park or other venues) have completed risk assessments and have worked with the Children's Officer to mitigate the risk of harm. We now have well-established templates for all of this and will continue to support coaches and other volunteers in this regard. In a reflection of our commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment for all members, this year:

- 2 Officers of the Club received in-depth DLP (Designated Liaison Person) Training
- 113 coaches and other volunteers attended Safeguarding Courses
- we held 4 face-to-face workshops and 1 virtual Safeguarding course for Carryduff coaches
- we had 166 coaches and other volunteers apply for or renew their Access NI Clearance certificates
- we were declared compliant with the Camogie Association's Annual Risk Assessment

Protecting You and Your Children

350 VOLUNTEERS AT CARRYDUFF GAC HAVE ACCESS NI CLEARANCE IN PLACE

349 VOLUNTEERS AT CARRYDUFF GAC HAVE COMPLETED GAA ACCREDITED SAFEGUARDING TRAINING TO AT LEAST LEVEL 1



Sporting Codes

Year-on-year, as we have grown, so too have the demands on our facilities. The need for all codes to work together continues and we have been greatly encouraged, in particular, with those younger age groups which, until the opening of our new juvenile pitch, had little opportunity to train or play at our own grounds. As a mark of our appreciation the age groups that had been most severely displaced by pressures on our pitches, were the first teams invited to finish off their season at our new Páirc na nÓg.

Heads of Codes and coaches have continued to demonstrate great flexibility, particularly around pitch provision, and often made compromises to demonstrate our 'One Club' philosophy in action.

We are grateful to our team sponsors across all codes and age groups who continue to cover the costs of kits for our players and all the sponsors whose businesses line our facilities and who have committed to supporting the club for the next number of years.

Management teams from all age groups, and across all codes, have reported back extensively to their relevant Heads of Code outlining key achievements and challenges experienced over the past twelve months. We can only hope to provide a very general overview within the confines of this report but where you have a particular interest in one of these areas you can learn more by contacting the Head of Code directly who will be happy to detail some of this information to you.



Nursery Academies

Our weekend nursery academies for pre-school and primary 1 age groups continue to be hugely successful - and affirming for the future of the club.

Our Nursery sessions have become flagship projects for the Club, with music, colour and fun in abundant display. Running from early April to early October our Saturday morning all-code academies have had upward of 160 children and 60 coaches in weekly attendance, while our Sunday morning Hurling and Camogie academies were regularly attended by 70 children and more than 30 coaches.

Not only is this the point at which many families first become acquainted with Carryduff GAC, in what we hope will become a lifelong relationship, it is often also the first opportunity that these young children have to begin their journey in physical development in a structured, organised way, and the first chance they have – outside of school/pre-school - to take instruction, learn teamwork and develop the essential skills of agility, balance and co-ordination; the building blocks of their whole-life athletic development.

Camogie

Camogie continues to grow in popularity and success at our club, with participation increasing last year from Nursery age through to U14, and socially among our 'Mothers and Others' group.

We were just one of 9 clubs in Ireland to be awarded the Camogie Club Development Award this year. The work done over the 4 pillars of the award should help ensure that Camogie is firmly embedded and fully embraced within Carryduff GAC for many years.

To meet the increasing demand for the sport we have also this year raised the number of Level 1 qualified coaches to seven. This will be of huge benefit to the quality of future coaching.

At the oldest age group at which we are currently participating in competitive camogie, 2024 has proved a very successful season. Our U14s became the first Camogie team to win a competition for Carryduff – taking the County Féile title in their Division, and only losing the Regional shield final in extra time by a single point. The extent of support from the club through the Féile campaign is testament to how well regarded and important this emerging code is in Carryduff GAC.

In marked contrast to last year's competition, the U14 girls this year also won five out of seven games in the League campaign and continued their success into Championship where they went on to win their first County Championship in an unbeaten run. The team benefited greatly from the experience of six of our players who also participate on the Down Development squad, as well as from those who had played in our first year of U14s last year. We were also fortunate to have the support of a number of younger Camógs who answered the call to join the U14s and 'play up' throughout the year. Our younger Camógs have also enjoyed a good year. Our U12 girls were extremely competitive in their Down league matches and training numbers are also up on last year for them and our U10s which bodes well for the future.

Where training and playing time has been plentiful, Coaches have witnessed significant improvements in skill levels, game play, positional awareness, tactical proficiency, athleticism, team cohesion and camaraderie across all of these age groups.

Our U8½s train together with hurlers of the same age, giving them an opportunity to play in fortnightly blitzes, which many did. Among the U6½s, our youngest camogie age group, camogie and LGFA football training were combined this year. Their season included a number of fun and friendly games organised against Down and Antrim clubs. Retention rates at these ages have been very encouraging.

Unfortunately, given the clear correlation between progress and playing time, there remains a lack of organised games for all underage groups in Camogie - Antrim and Derry enjoy twice as many games for equivalent age groups. This remains a challenge which we have raised with the County Board.



Handball

The year started with the 2024 Juvenile Championships. Carryduff GAC entered players from U12 to U16, winning both the U12 and U16 titles. Following this we had 4 players selected to represent Down in the Ulster Championships. The 2024 Down Championships will take place over 2 weekends at the start of December

Since recommencing the new Season in August, we have had a substantial group of new young players learning the game in the parish hall on a Sunday night. More experienced players are now using the Queen's PEC facility which allows for practice at the 4-wall game.



FACTS AND FIGURES FROM OUR 2024 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Coaches' Rating for
Support they receive from Club

4.4

With 55% scoring 5 stars



Average Rating for Club as a whole
over the last year

4.3

With 53% scoring 5 stars



Hurling

With ever-increasing numbers participating in hurling across the club in the last year, particularly at the underage level, we have also been pleased to see an increase in the number of qualified coaches, many of whom have now completed their Level 1 coaching course.

Our Senior squad competed in the Down Senior Hurling Championship (SHC) for the first time in 2024, successfully completing an objective set when we first brought adult Hurling to the club more 10 years ago. Our place in the SHC has been retained for 2025, along with our Antrim League Division 2 status.



In addition, a larger senior panel has enabled the development of more autonomous Senior Reserve team playing in Down Division 2.

At minor level, we were delighted to win Division 2 and retain the Minor Hurling Shield. Seven of our minor squad members also made their senior debuts this year, boosting the senior panel and increasing the likelihood of their continued involvement in Hurling.



Our U16s had a great run to the county final, where they were beaten by a strong Castlewellan team. We were also very pleased to have had six boys involved on the county U17 panel, and four at U15 county level with a further player representing Carryduff on the county U20 team which won the All-Ireland B Richie McElligott Cup.

In a first for hurling in the Club we had sufficient numbers this year to allow us to enter two U14 teams which ensured more game time for developing players.

Our Go Games age groups attended and hosted many blitzes during the year with emphasis on skills development and maximising participation.

Our U8½s trained with the Camógs and the U6½ group ran dual hurling and football sessions throughout the year.

With many dual coaches in the Club, we are hopeful that we will encourage dual players at all levels in the future, further enhancing our One Club ethos.



LGFA

The progress across all age groups in Ladies Football this year has been extremely encouraging with consistently high numbers attending training across the board. Among the many positives, particularly at adult level, we were pleased to witness players returning to the senior squad, new players integrating into the group, and greater involvement of the senior ladies with underage teams in the club. In addition, our Minors and Seniors trained together all year, further promoting improved integration. In a successful Senior season, we fielded two teams at adult level with our first team winning their League for the first time in seven years and competing in the Championship Final for the first time in four years. Our second team were third in their League and retained Intermediate status in the Championship.



Our Minors were runners up in their League but retained their status as County Champions, and as of early November, are continuing their quest to retain the Provincial title which they won last December.

In the spirit of the Carryduff Way, our U16 and U14 Leagues were used as development opportunities. Player development has been very positive, and both U16 teams won their respective Championships. In addition, a hybrid team at U15 level became County Féile Champions, and went on to compete at All Ireland level. Our U14 teams were each unfortunate to come up against the eventual winners in early rounds of their Championship series but acquitted themselves well throughout.



Numbers continue to grow at underage level and girls at all levels have enjoyed plenty of playing time. At U12 level there was a focus on preparing the girls for competitive football next year when thirty-one of the current age group will transition to U14. With ninety-six girls registered to play at U8½ level last year, and retention rates improving all the time, the future looks bright.

All in all, 2024 was a year of significant progress for Ladies football in the Club. Coaches at the younger age levels were careful to a focus on enjoyment and preparation for the future with all age groups working together to ensure that girls are ready for the step up to the age group above. This will help us to achieve our eventual ambition of competing in the Ulster Championship at Senior level. We do continue to face some challenges with the timing of various campaigns and clashes with exams, holidays etc, however, we also continue to adapt to maximise our potential and overcome such obstacles.

Male Football

Building upon the already strong foundations of the male football code, progress has continued throughout this season, and we remained highly competitive on the pitch. Our senior footballers lost to Kilcoo in the League final by the most slender of margins. A defeat to Burren in the Championship semi-final was a disappointing end to the season. However, there is significant potential within this group and a Championship title still remains an attainable goal for the year ahead.

We continue to experience challenges with player participation at both Premier Reserve and Reserve levels. As an important avenue for younger adults to move to senior football we will need to think about how best to address the shortfalls with both cohorts if we are to provide a pipeline of senior players capable of playing first division football.

Playing numbers remain high at almost every other age group, with the exception of Minors. At Minor level, with a panel of just 23, we were only in a position to enter a single team for League and Championship - where we competed in Division 3. There are also some skills shortfalls in this cohort and work will be needed to improve confidence and interest levels if we are to retain players to senior level.

In contrast we had sufficient numbers at U14 level to allow us to compete in three Divisions. A concerted effort will be required to address player retention between these age groups.

Our two U16 teams finished strongly in their respective leagues, with the first team losing out to Burren in their County final.



Burren proved to be our nemesis once again in the U14 County final - beating the boys by a single point in the last kick of the game; a heartbreaking finish to what had been an enthralling game.

Our younger age groups were fortunate to get plenty of playing time this season. The most significant issue at this level lies with managing the numbers involved to ensure sufficient individual attention.

There are also some issues with managing children with additional needs who would appear to require a greater deal of one-to-one support which current support structures do not allow for.

Continuing development in core skills, game analysis, possession, transition, defensive play and attacking football were key areas of focus this year, while also ensuring as much game time as possible, especially among our younger age groups. The high attendance rates at younger levels remains a significant strength and something we wish to continue to build upon if we are to retain players up to senior level.



Going forward we will continue to build on what we have learned in our first year implementing the principles of The Carryduff Way to ensure a more shared understanding and application of its 'one team' ethos across all age groups.

Carryduff GAC continued to enjoy strong representation at county and provincial level from U14 through to Senior level. We are also pleased for those who were deservedly nominated for individual player awards at schools, club and county level. However, we are proud of all of our players, for their ongoing commitment and dedication to the sport and will continue to support the development of players whatever their playing level.

Rounders and Social Codes

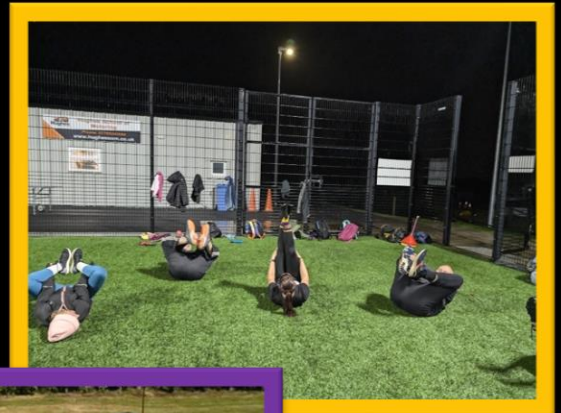
We have continued to offer social sporting opportunities throughout the year in male football and hurling – Dads and Lads; female football – Gaelic for Mothers and Others; Social Camógs – Camogie for Mothers and Others and Social Rounders.

These codes continue to welcome people of all abilities (and none!)

In only our second year of Rounders, Carryduff GAC's first ever Rounders Championship team competed in the All-Ireland Junior Ladies competition. The new Carryduff side showed excellent fielding and didn't make it easy for Carrickmacross in the first ever competitive match. Following a series of other games throughout the summer Carryduff looks forward to showing an even stronger and more experienced side in 2025 as members of this group move from social to competitive mode. We also continue to have a mixed side that plays socially which, with a few additional players may also decide to become competitive next year.

Camogie for Mothers and Others (C4MO) enjoyed another great year, training and competing – including in the Ballinderry Blitz against teams from Derry, Tyrone and Antrim. Very successful co-training skills sessions were organised with both Bredagh & East Belfast – a great opportunity to get to know the neighbours!

Our Dads and lads also enjoyed a successful 2nd year. With an average of 24 players in attendance each week for football and 16 for hurling, numbers have increased significantly since last year. This year we participated in a number of challenge matches and attended 5 blitzes, culminating in the national football blitz in Dublin, which we hope we will do with our hurlers next year.



G4MOs also saw fantastic growth in numbers over the last year. Camaraderie and confidence were evident as the players developed their skills and fitness together. Training sessions had strong and consistent attendance. The Carryduff GAC G4MO group was represented at both the Ulster Blitz and the highly sought after National Blitz in Dublin and many other matches throughout the year, providing opportunities to forge new friendships with neighbouring clubs as well as those further afield. The group also participated in the Club's 50th anniversary celebrations for the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) and in many fundraising and social activities throughout the year. Of particular note, in June the ladies hosted a highly successful and popular outdoor yoga session 'Sunset Yoga' as a fundraising event at our pitches. The Group also put a lot of energy into supporting the spooktacular children's Halloween Disco at the Parish Hall.

In all, there has been significant interest from our membership for the opportunities that social codes offer to adults who want to continue to play their national sports (or indeed start to play for the first time) in a relaxed, non-competitive environment where they can also meet new people and build relationships in the community.

Language and Culture



Promotion of the Irish language and culture remain central to the GAA's purpose and Carryduff GAC is keen to support this aspiration, particularly since it also tends to attract people who do not have a particular sporting interest but do want to become involved in the community or cultural aspects of the club.



During the last twelve months, our Language and Culture Sub Committee undertook a number of initiatives to help promote the use of Irish across the club. These included:

- Increasing displays of the Irish version of the Club name in written form - letterheads, kitbags, playing gear, tickets, and scoreboards
- Increasing the use of Irish in spoken form at Club events
- Incorporating the use of Irish or bilingual signs inside and outside Club premises
- Hosting Irish language classes
- Delivering a dedicated Irish Language Week - Seachtain na Gaeilge – in March which included:
 - ✓ Gaeltok – dance workshop
 - ✓ Intensive Irish Saturday (Díanchúrsa)
 - ✓ Craic agus ceol agus cake sale
 - ✓ World Book Day – Bilingual story telling session
- Developing partnerships with local language organisations
- Producing Irish language video messaging - Tá Gaeilge sa chlub - with contributions from members of all ages
- Supporting a club member in learning to sing our national anthem - Amhrán na bhFiann
- Providing Gaeltacht Scholarships and bursaries

AN GAELIGE

**CEOL, AMHRÁNAÍOCHT,
DAMHSA AGUS DRÁMA
MUSIC, SONG,
DANCE AND DRAMA**

Throughout the year the club also offered a wide range of cultural activities for all members and age groups; attracting many first time visitors.

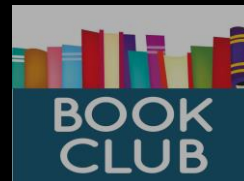
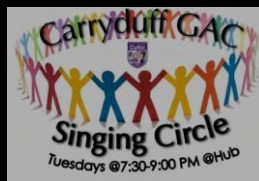
Such events spanned the year, commencing with Christmas Wreath Making through to the traditional Women's Christmas, Nollaig na mBán, in January, St. Brigid's Day cross-making, and storytelling sessions and Arts and Crafts with celtic themes later in the year.

Our Occasional Book Club and weekly Singing Circle have also proved to be highly popular additions to our calendar of cultural activities.

During the year we also worked in partnership with number of local cultural organisations and participated in local heritage activities such as the Con O'Neill Tour.

Finally, after a long hiatus, we were very proud to have some of our younger members take to the stage to compete in the County Scór na nÓg.

With excellence across all the Acts we were particularly delighted to see our Novelty Act (Nuachleas) together with the Instrumental Music Act (Ceol Uirlíse) each win a place to compete at the County Final in November 2024.



Events and Fundraising

The key focus, in what was another successful year, was to continue to build on community outreach and cohesion, providing an environment where everyone could become involved. The Events, Health and Well-being, Cultural and Coaching Sub Committees worked well together to deliver a full calendar of events with a wide appeal.

We had extremely successful fund-raising efforts by our juvenile teams this year through a series of fabulous initiatives. We are grateful to those managers who supported our efforts in this regard and while we realise it is often difficult to continually ask for money, we are encouraged by the willingness and initiative shown by our youngest members – a measure, we think, of how much the Club brings to their lives



Many of our teams took the initiative to deliver one-off fundraising events, which offered additional opportunities for our wider community to come together and socialise outside of the usual sporting occasions. Among the most successful events were a spectacular Colour Run attended by over 130 children to mark the end of the summer holidays, Bingo and Quiz Nights, Car Washes and Bake Sales, Music and Cultural events and some very really well supported raffles.

Lá na gClub in April was a particularly momentous occasion where all sporting codes and age groups - including the social codes - enjoyed an opportunity to showcase their talents and the huge success that is Carryduff GAC.

It is intended that the, now annual, Elf-Walk will return this December, and an All-Star Christmas Party will take place to bring some festive cheer and allow more opportunities for our members to enjoy activities, music and treats together.



Event Highlights 2024

CHRISTMAS ELF WALK
CHRISTMAS WREATH-MAKING
DARKNESS INTO LIGHT
ST BRIGID'S CROSS-MAKING
LÁ NA GCLUB
GRIMES AND MCKEE'S NEW IRELAND
SUNSET YOGA
LGFA ANNIVERSARY FUN DAY
OPENING OF PITCH 3
U10S COLOUR RUN
HALLOWEEN DISCOS
FOOTGAALF



To maintain and expand our event schedule going forward – and to reduce the pressure on the small number of volunteers who already give so much time - we will need greater support from our wider membership. However, it is equally important that our members support our efforts simply by turning up. Every ticket bought, every cup of tea or coffee purchased in the Hub and every effort made by our underage teams, supports the overall running costs of the club.

Health and Well-Being

Earlier in the year Carryduff GAC was pleased to have been selected to participate in the GAA's Healthy Club Programme. Through the Programme the club will offer opportunities to develop the physical, social, emotional and psychological health of our members and the wider community.

We kick started our healthy intentions with the 'Every Step Counts' Challenge and the associated 'Ireland Lights Up' event - an initiative designed to improve the physical and mental health of the community during the dark winter evenings - in which we completed the highest total number of steps of any club in Ulster for the 2nd consecutive year and in fact came 2nd of all GAA clubs in Ireland. An impressive 334 people took part and covered 67,918km, 22% more than the previous year. Hot on the heels of this event we were delighted to have 12 relay teams, and a walking team participate in the 2024 Belfast City Marathon.

In continuing efforts to remove the stigma associated with mental health, this year we also:

- Celebrated Time to Talk Day and the LGFA Let's Talk Programme
- Participated in the Darkness into Light walk and Suicide Prevention Overview Training
- Incorporated mindfulness activities into some of our cultural and social events.
- Hosted Movember Ahead of the Game, mental health workshop to the U14 hurlers

Healthy Activities 2024

**DEMENTIA AWARENESS WORKSHOP –
LEADING TO 22 NEWLY TRAINED DEMENTIA
'FRIENDS'**

**CPR AND EMERGENCY SPORTS FIRST AID
COURSE**

**DONOR DRIVE FOR THE ANTHONY NOLAN
TRUST**

MEMBERS' HEALTH CHECK DAY

**COMMUNITY POLICE VISIT FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE**

HEALTHY EATING DAY

**WATER SAFETY TALKS THROUGH RNLI
IMPLEMENTED A SMOKE AND VAPE FREE
POLICY AT THE CLUB**



Finally, in a long-held aspiration for the Club we are proud to have now successfully piloted and integrated the GAA For All team into our membership offer. The Programme gives adults and children with additional needs an opportunity to participate in Gaelic games in a safe, fun and inclusive environment

In our first year 26 active participants attended 22 training sessions, two blitzes and a Croke Park visit. A total of 23 dedicated volunteers completed the GAA's Autism in Sport Adaptive Games training to support the initiative.

Our All-Stars have now been shortlisted for Lisburn and Castlereagh Council's Disability Sports Team of the Year – with the award night planned for the end of November.

Development

Following a busy year of development activity in 2023 with completion of our '3 for 2023' project, the Club's Development Sub-Committee began the new year by revising and updating our site facility masterplan to take account of the amount of land available for development and the current and expected future needs of the club.



With thanks to Fr. Michael and the local Diocese we were delighted to be gifted sufficient additional land to extend the planned perimeter of our new pitch which in turn enabled us to maximise use of the space to construct a new compound for the portable goal posts and to create a new maintenance and emergency access route to our existing pitches. Páirc na nÓg - which we opened for the first juvenile boots in September – is already proving to be a huge success.

Maximising use of the limited space we have left on our existing site has been a key priority this year. We sought your views as members through our club survey in April and engaged and consulted widely with various construction experts to understand what might be possible. We also considered our membership numbers and likely future patterns of demand from different codes.

This allowed us to begin a process of prioritisation which would dictate how we might target emerging funding opportunities. We began a significant period of engagement with the local council to identify potential additional funding which ultimately resulted in a grant offer of up to £290,000 (to be matched on a 50:50 basis) to deliver a programme of activity that is designed to increase access to training space for up to 10 months a year. Having agreed a list of potential improvements, we then began to cost out the potential projects. Together with a contribution from the Club's own capital funding pot, further Entrust funding committed via Eastwood Envirowaste, and our own fundraising efforts, we are confident that we will be in a position to deliver up to £580,000 of projects over the next two years.



Development Plans 2024-26

OUR PLANS INCLUDE:

- **INSTALLATION OF A NEW 60M X 30M 3G TRAINING FACILITY**
- **INSTALLATION OF FLOODLIGHTS TO JUVENILE PITCH 3**
- **IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYING SURFACE OF PITCH 2**
- **INSTALLATION OF NEW DISABLED ACCESS TOILET FACILITY NEAR PITCH 3**

We have already undertaken a significant amount of preparatory work and hope to be in a position to begin our tendering process for contractors following receipt of a formal letter of offer from Lisburn and Castlereagh Council in the next few weeks.

The Hub

Although somewhat constrained by size, we are fortunate to have our Hub facility onsite which provides a central meeting point, a place to socialise and a place to host team meetings for members and visitors. It also offers a steady fundraising avenue for the club, and we appreciate every cup of tea and bar of chocolate bought there.

The Hub calendar was once again packed throughout the year, hosting team meetings and get togethers, blitzes and awards evenings, music groups and book clubs, language classes and cultural mornings, not to mention our regular weekend drop-ins as parents attended training with younger children.



We are grateful once again to have had the support of a dedicated Hub team - for many people this meant helping several times a week - without whom we could not have offered this level of service throughout the year. Going forward teams will be encouraged to provide volunteers from across their cohorts of parents and guardians to help keep the Hub open as much as possible.

We are always pleased to welcome new members to help out and look forward to welcoming plenty more in 2025. Please make yourself known to any of our committee members should you wish to volunteer.



Volunteering and Engagement

As an organisation that relies entirely on volunteers, we have continued to be grateful this year to those who have dedicated their time and energy to help with the running of the club. Without the commitment and passion of you as volunteers, we as a club could not operate. Whether you have been coaching, organising events, maintaining our facilities or helping with logistics, your contributions do not go unnoticed. Each effort, no matter how small, plays a vital role.



Over the last year our 238 volunteer coaches and 30 plus mentors turned up many times a week to support the development of our teams. As games commenced, more volunteers appeared to flag pitches, set up sound systems, work the line, manage the Hub and the gate, prepare after match refreshments, and undertake car parking and clearing up duties.

For one-off events, we had musicians, dancers, face painters, firemen, farmers and language and cultural enthusiasts give their time freely to help create memories.

Meanwhile our voluntary Executive Committee members worked year-round to respond to member needs, develop future plans, manage resources, communicate and engage members, identify additional income streams, address player and parental concerns, comply with safeguarding requirements, source and deliver training and liaise with schools. At the same time, they worked with County, Provincial and National representatives to apply rules and regulations, raise challenges and manage player injury fund applications.

In the background we also had architects, engineers and project managers advise us on development work, funding experts spend hours on grant applications, and, on a regular basis, we had volunteers involved in litter picks, bin emptying, car park duties, coffee making, cleaning toilets, brushing out changing rooms, selling tickets, organising events and activities. We even had our youngest volunteers wipe tears and cajole and support small children at summer camps and nursery academies. In fact, in recognition of the enormous contribution made by some of our youngest volunteers, the club has this year recommended four of them for the Sports Inspire Award, a recognition scheme jointly administered by Ulster GAA, Ulster Rugby and the IFA. We await good news.

To all those who answered the call - fostering teamwork and promoting our games and culture in the process - thank you. Thank you for being the driving force behind our club's success. Your willingness to step up and lend a hand ensures that we can continue to provide quality training, competitive opportunities and social and cultural events for all members. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose you bring creates a welcoming atmosphere that enriches everyone involved.

During 2025 we will be making a concerted effort to increase our pool of volunteers and understand what skills our members have. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a dedicated membership and we look forward to building on our success together.

School Liaison

We have made excellent progress in our relationships with local primary schools this year. We are grateful for the continued support and promotion of Gaelic sports from the staff of both St. Ita's and St. Joseph's Primary Schools – from which we have traditionally drawn much of our underage membership. Throughout the year we supported both schools in their GAA journeys; helping with after-school Gaelic activities, providing facilities for sports days, and most recently hosting an inter-school blitz for boys and girls which saw almost 100 children grace Páirc na nÓg in games of great intensity and sporting endeavour.

Over recent weeks we have begun to foster relationships with both Millenium and Cairnshill Integrated Primary Schools. In the green shoots of these partnerships, we are supporting Millenium with their after-school GAA activities, and we would like to offer the student population of the school the same access to GAA coaching as other schools in our parish.

As a club we are also keen to assist Cairnshill Primary Scholl, which has recently taken full integrated status, with the promotion and provision of Gaelic activities. Initial meetings have been positive, and several initiatives are now progressing.

We look forward to continuing to strengthen these school ties over the course of the next year.



Governance – 2023/24 Committee Structure

Restrictions on the overall size of the Executive Committee (maximum 21) requires that we increase the use of supporting sub-Committees – particularly for Heads of Code, Health & Well Being, Events and Development where the volume of work tends to be most concentrated.

Whatever the supporting arrangements, we will continue to maximise representation to the Executive Committee and maintain the high governance and administrative standards that our membership has come to expect.

Chairperson (= DLP*)	Secretary	Treasurer	Vice Chairperson	Assistant Secretary	Registrar	Public Relations Officer
Brendan Sloan	Sandra Hughes	Conor O'Neill	Sean McGeough	Eamon Rooney	Mark Hollywood	Philp Loughran

*DLP – Designated Liaison Person (required safeguarding role)

Coaching Officer	Culture & Language Officer	Safeguarding / Children's Officer	Nominated by players Players Representative		
Orla Napier	Ana Marie Magorrian	Hilary White	Ronan Lawlor		
Committee Member	Committee Member	Committee Member	Committee Member	Committee Member	
Paul Dougan	Maria Gray	Maeve Holland	Stephen Magorrian	Mark McCartan	
Committee Member	Committee Member	Committee Member	Committee Member		
Ronan McCaughy	Niall McCullagh	Eamonn McKeever	Claire Morris		

Specific roles of additional Committee members are agreed by the incoming EC

FACTS AND FIGURES FROM OUR 2024 MEMBERSHIP SURVEY



88%

Are confident about the Club's ability to deliver improved 'on the pitch' performances



88%

Are confident about the Club's ability to maintain high quality coaching



97%

Are confident about the Club's Financial stability



94%

Would recommend Carryduff GAC to a friend



The Year That Was





2023-2024



The Year That Will Be

Our vision for the future is for success on and off the field of play through the provision of high-quality coaching at well-maintained facilities and a strong sense of community cohesion, belonging and pride.

This Executive Committee has worked hard to deliver a welcoming, inclusive club that everyone can – and does – feel a part of. We believe we are succeeding in those aims and the feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly positive. However, this is not an ambition with a start and end date; this is something that takes ongoing commitment and effort.

Your ask of us as a club, is that we are open, welcoming, transparent, outward looking, inclusive, fun and successful in our sporting endeavours. Our ask of you is that you -

Give a little of yourself to us – volunteer as little or as much as you can, in any way you can.

Attend our matches – make an effort in particular to support our younger age groups who relish the support - praise them for their efforts.

Respect our officials – remember that this is a 100% volunteer led organisation, your coaches, and all officials are doing their best to deliver professional standards in their voluntary capacity.

Support our Events – To be a community we need to be a community. We organise events throughout the year which often act as fundraisers but always act as integrators, bringing the community together.

Reach out – we want to be inclusive and open, bring someone new to our facilities, consider bringing a friend along to a match or just for a walk, introduce people for whom the GAA is not a familiar organisation.

Spread the word – speak well of your club and be proud to be a part of it.

Go raibh maith agaibh

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FORESTSIDE

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BELFAST

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