

COUNCILS AND GAA LINE OUT CLIMATE ACTION GOALS

Under a new partnership agreement between the County and City Management Agency (CCMA) and the GAA to develop a National Sustainable Club and Community Programme, the Climate Action Regional Offices will represent the local authority sector to co-ordinate the development of this initiative.

This innovative partnership between the CCMA and the GAA, which was announced at the beginning of this year, will work to capitalise on the leadership roles held by both organisations within their communities, as well as their reach and ability to engage with citizens of all ages to promote environmental awareness, climate action and local sustainable development.

With over 3,600 clubs in the country, including GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations, and with membership of over 875,000 people, of which approximately 50 per cent are under the age of 18, the GAA is in a unique and focal position to bring about real change at community level as well as engagement with their clubs and, in particular, the youth of Ireland on these topics.

The local authority sector, consisting of over 29,000 staff nationally, along with developing and implementing their own climate action, environment protection and sustainability development measures, are likewise uniquely placed to support and mobilise action at a local and community level.

The Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), which have been established to build capacity within the local authority sector and to drive climate action at a regional, local and community level, are strategically positioned to co-ordinate the programme, on behalf of the local authority sector, from both a regional and national perspective.

PROVIDING ROBUST LEADERSHIP

This partnership builds on the GAA's status as a Sustainable Development Goal Champion and aligns with local government commitments under the National Climate Action Plan and the Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities, which identify local government as being ideally placed to provide robust leadership in advancing Ireland's transition to a sustainable low carbon economy by the year 2050.

Indeed, the Climate Action Charter, which has now been signed by all local authorities, specifically identifies the cultivation and active participation in partnerships with



Pictured at the launch in Croke Park in January (l-r): Alan Dunney, Eastern & Midlands CARO; Helen O'Rourke, CEO of the LGFA; Michael Walsh, CCMA Chairman; Ciarán Hayes, Chairman of the National Local Authority Climate Action Steering Group; John Horan, Uachtarán CLG; Alan Malone, Camogie Operations Manager; Katie Aherne, DCCA, Diarmuid Lyng, former Wexford hurler, and Jimmy D'arcy, GAA.

community and voluntary groups as a mechanism for improving the use of resources and reducing carbon impact across the state.

A steering group, composed of representatives from the local authority sector, the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association, have begun work on the development of a Green Club toolkit, ahead of the roll-out of a National Sustainable Club and Communities Programme in 2021.

GREEN CLUB TOOLKIT

The Green Club toolkit will be developed for and through a pilot scheme proceeding later this year, which will include a small number of clubs throughout the country. The toolkit will focus on the four key action areas of Energy & Water Efficiency, Biodiversity, Waste Management & Plastic Use, and Transport & Travel.

A toolkit for local authority staff will also be developed alongside one for GAA clubs to enhance local authority

service delivery to participating clubs on the programme. The development of the toolkits will provide both a bottom-up as well as a top-down approach to community engagement and to projects implementation, developed under the four key areas of the programme.

Speaking at the launch of the partnership programme in Croke Park on 24 January, John Horan, Uachtaran Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (CLG) said: “An increasing number of clubs are seeking guidance in the area of sustainability, and our members are very anxious to play their part in the fight against climate change.

“The collaboration with the local authority sector is an ideal partnership to help us to develop our clubs sustainability within and for communities, and to reach people in every corner of Ireland with information that will help them to make changes in their own lives to support the effort against climate change and adapting to evolving challenges.”

Michael Walsh, CCMA Chairman, said: “The GAA and local authorities both represent local leadership, community, legacy and vision. We each have relevant networks, knowledge, existing partners and facilities. Working together we can have huge impact and enable the necessary behavioural change in our communities.”

TRAINING PLAN

The programme brings together two organisations rooted at the heart of communities throughout Ireland to guide and enable the communities to implement sustainability and climate action initiatives, according to Ciarán Hayes, Chairman of the National Local Authority Climate Action Steering Group.

“The local authority sector is working on building our capacity in this area, most notably through the Local Authority Climate Action Training Plan. which is currently being rolled out across the sector. With this sustainable club and community programme we aim to provide clubs and communities the opportunity to play their part in transitioning Ireland to a low carbon climate resilient society,” he added.

In his Annual GAA Congress Report, GAA Ard-Stiúrthóir Tom Ryan stated that GAA clubs have been innovators in addressing many of Ireland’s social concerns and are already rising to the challenge of supporting sustainability.

Several strategic partners have been identified as being vitally important to the success of this programme going forward, across the countrywide network of GAA, LGFA and Camogie clubs. The local authorities and the GAA now look forward to working with these partners to deliver an effective and successful programme.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Examples of the strategic partners which the steering group aims to work with include the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), Met Eireann, The National Biodiversity Data Centre, Climate Ireland, An Taisce (through their Green Schools Programme), the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Comhairle na nÓg and ECO UNESCO.

With the GAA and local authority partnership now underway, the next steps involve the development of the Green Club Toolkits and the pilot scheme with a small number of clubs, which are

SUSTAINABLE CLUB AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMME INITIATIVES

It is envisioned the Programme will include the following initiatives to achieve its overall aim of enabling and mobilising clubs and communities to take necessary sustainability and climate action:

- Development of a Sustainable Club toolkit.
- Sustainable Club Workshops.
- Promotion and Support of Sustainable Energy Communities (an SEAI National Programme).
- A Sustainable Development Goal Action Module in the GAA/PDST Transition Year Future Leaders Programme, with contributions across GAA/LGFA/Camogie Association input at all levels of the Mainstream Education System (with the Department of Education and Skills).
- Green Procurement Guidelines and Support.
- Further Developing Croke Park as a World Exemplar Stadium in Sustainable Development.
- Alignment to Statutory Funding Streams.



Former Wexford hurler Diarmuid Lyng pictured with Ciarán Hayes, Chairman of the National Local Authority Climate Action Steering Group, John Horan, President of Chumann Lúthchleas Gael (CLG), and Michael Walsh, Chairman of CCMA, at the launch of the GAA-Local Authority Strategic Development Goal (SDG) initiative at Croke.

scheduled to start over the new few months.

Before the start of the pilot scheme, clubs around the country are being asked to complete a sustainable club questionnaire to get a baseline level of understanding on where clubs currently stand with sustainability and climate action, in terms of awareness and local initiatives undertaken.

A Sustainable Club Workshop has been scheduled to take in May with a select number of clubs, who have volunteered to take part. This workshop will aid with the identification of what will go into the toolkits. The Commencement of the National Sustainable Club and Community Programme, planned for early 2021, will be announced in due course.