

**We're Not Brazil...
We're Northern Ireland**

**The Irish Football Association
Strategic Plan 2013/2018**





Qualify & Deliver

Foster & Create

Reach & Build

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WE'RE NOT BRAZIL...
WE'RE NORTHERN IRELAND



WE'RE NORTHERN IRELAND...
to promote, foster and develop football for all in Northern Ireland



PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

WE ARE NORTHERN IRELAND

AT 133 years old, the Irish Football Association is the fourth oldest governing body in the world. From the start the Irish FA has always been about organising football for people, and ensuring that a simple field game could flourish and grow into the "beautiful game" we know today. The Irish FA's first vision was a simple one:

To promote, foster and develop football in Northern Ireland

Without this clear purpose, no organisation could have succeeded for as long as the Irish Football Association has now done.

From a footballing point of view, the Association of 133 years ago lived in simpler times, and was a simpler organisation. In those days global, to us, meant games against England, Scotland, and Wales and occasionally we ventured farther afield. However, from the moment the first president of FIFA Jules Rimet, mooted a World Cup back in the 1920s, the die was cast.

The last 20-30 years have accelerated football's impact on society and the world at large. Euro '96, Hillsborough, the Premier League and the Champions League have all helped to bring the power of football to a new level, and new audiences worldwide. Football is now a truly global game.

We are one of the oldest football associations across the globe, but we cannot let tradition hold us back from the modern era of the game. We are excited to have developed a five year strategy that will take us forward into a period that will see extensive changes to football in Northern Ireland.

Yet despite these changes, to us, football remains a simple business, and our vision remains a simple one:

To promote, foster and develop football for all in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is a small country, with a population less than one third the size of the city of Rio de Janeiro. As our fans on the terraces sing "we're not Brazil, we're Northern Ireland" and our influence on the game is disproportionate to our size. As a member of the International Football Association Board we the Irish FA sit as an equal, helping to set the rules of the game.

As a country with fewer than 960 registered domestic clubs, we have still qualified for three World Cup finals, and nurtured players such as the incomparable George Best. We believe that when our five year strategy is realised we will have nurtured a senior team that can reach the finals of a major tournament.

The £29.2m development of a new state of the art 18,000 seat national stadium will be more than a new ground for the national team; it will be a symbol of a new Northern Ireland. We want all fans of the sport to know that Northern Irish football is for all, and create a family friendly atmosphere throughout all levels of the game, free from racism, sectarianism, sexism or hooliganism.

Football is a business like any other, and the current economic climate is challenging. Our clubs still face the twin challenges of declining ticket revenue and increasing player wages. To enable greater investment in player development, we must deliver league structures and guide club reform to attract more fans to the stands. This must be encouraged by improving fan facilities and by fostering a greater use by the communities in which they are embedded. By doing so, we will ensure the stability of our domestic game beyond the next five years.

Leading the development of the sport from grassroots to an international level the Irish FA faces the same issues as any football association around the world and we can make the same contribution to the disadvantaged and marginalised in our own communities and help our society prosper. Therefore, if we lead our national team to glory but leave behind the communities, fans and volunteers that surround our grounds then we will have failed. We believe that football has a power that stretches beyond the white lines that confine a ball to a pitch.

Brazil we may not be, but we are Northern Ireland; and we believe that football gives joy to our fans, and can bring our communities together.

Jim Shaw, Irish FA President



INTRODUCTION DEVELOPING THIS STRATEGY



MUCH thought and planning has gone into this document, *We're not Brazil... We're Northern Ireland*, and it is our most comprehensive attempt to put down in one place what we as the governing body of football in Northern Ireland hope to achieve.

It is our blueprint for success in the next five years, and our roadmap to the continuing fulfilment of our vision to promote, foster and develop football for all in Northern Ireland.

In an era of change for both Northern Ireland as a society and for the game, both professional and grassroots, we believe that the objectives and actions we have set will allow the Irish FA to be adaptive and responsive to changes to the game, and our stakeholders.

That is why we have taken the step to produce this document in both traditional hardcopy and as an electronic softcopy. We hope to make use of interactive technology to link to multimedia and digital content, online resources and accompanying documents. We hope that as a 'live' document it will create an immersive experience that our fans and stakeholders can continue to return, to track our progress on our goals.

The foundations of our strategy are six long term objectives across three areas International, Domestic and Grassroots.

Qualify for a major tournament

Deliver a National Stadium

Foster a balanced, flourishing senior domestic game

Create a healthy domestic game at all levels

Reach beyond the game

Build a culture of lifelong participation in football

To Qualify, Deliver, Foster, Create, Reach and Build are the six principles that have informed every action we have committed to undertake.



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INTRODUCTION INFORMED BY OUR VALUES

PITCH

THE Irish FA's values are a reminder to all staff, players, volunteers, partners and fans of the spirit we hope to instil on the pitch, and in our wider work. They act as long term, constant guides for the way we carry out our business and have informed the development of this strategy. However, we believe that to really matter they must be demonstrable both now and in the future, and so we have provided examples of how we have used these values in past, and how we will continue to do so in the future.

Together forming the word 'PITCH' our values are:-

PROFESSIONAL We must be professional in all we do, meticulous in our planning and execution, leaving no stone unturned and nothing to chance.

In 2010/11 the Association engaged with an independent group to review and make proposals for the alteration of the Irish Football Association's articles and regulations. Chaired by Timothy Quin, this group investigated, researched and consulted widely both within Northern Ireland and elsewhere. They brought forward proposals which were overwhelmingly approved by the membership at a general meeting. This could only have been achieved by the group's meticulous planning and execution in conjunction with the Irish FA's officials and directors.

INCLUSIVE Football is truly for all and must be inclusive. Everyone loves the game regardless of gender, religion, politics, race or sexual orientation. We must continue to work to ensure all groups feel comfortable and welcome within the game in whatever role they fulfil.

It is always easy to claim inclusivity, but in Northern Ireland at times, such claims can be found wanting. The Irish FA's World United initiatives provide living support for our claim of inclusiveness. We have brought together over 20 nationalities and 100 participants involved in football training sessions and matches. The Irish FA has become the medium for the integration of these disparate asylum seekers and refugees into mainstream society. Football is the universally understood medium through which all other manner of training, social activities and opportunities can be explored. Football in Northern Ireland is truly for all.

TEAM The Irish FA must work as a team, each with his or her own task as part of a greater whole – knowing our roles and supporting and encouraging other members of the team as we seek to achieve our winning goals.

When Northern Ireland's international team line up at Windsor Park for an international match, there is another team which works hard off the pitch. The staging of an international match brings together staff and expertise from right across the organisation. The match is planned and executed within the operations department, but for its successful implementation there needs to be support and action from the International administration, technical, marketing and communication, community relations, facilities and finance departments. Everyone needs to know their role and the bigger picture. We can't all score the winning goal against England, but there is a team behind the team playing a role in that event, and in every other match we stage.

CARING AND CONFIDENT The Irish FA must show a duty of care for all involved in the game. It is not good enough to leave it to others – to all players, officials, supporters, referees, administrators – everyone. We must show and be shown care and concern. The Irish FA must be confident that what we are doing is correct in all aspects of our work.

Many who are homeless in Northern Ireland, mostly men in the 17-25 age range have lost hope. They are dependent on drugs and alcohol, are long term unemployed, and generally show lack of motivation and enthusiasm. In conjunction with the East Belfast Mission, the Irish FA's Belfast Street League has shown these young men they have a reason to look forward, and participation in street football becomes the highlight of their week. Some have gone on to take coaching courses and many have seen huge improvements in their lives. Others have found a renewed enthusiasm leading to educational and employment opportunities. By making caring a goal in itself we have helped young men find their confidence.

HONESTY Being honest, saying it as it is, not being underhand or devious – honesty and integrity must be watch words for the Irish FA.

Often being honest is not appreciated, but the Irish FA has to deal in a straight and direct manner with many issues on an annual basis. Perhaps the best example of this is the appeals process. Decisions made at all levels of football in Northern Ireland are appealed directly to the Irish FA, and we need to handle these without fear or favour, working on the facts, the articles of association and the rules or regulations concerned. In any appeal there is always a winner and a loser, but we have to be, and are, impartial in every case presented to us.

INTRODUCTION

ENGAGED WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

WE have consulted extensively throughout Northern Ireland on our six objectives and principles, and to develop the content of our plans. We are grateful for all of the opinions offered, and we have made every effort to take them on board and reflect them in this document.

As early as February 2012 we held special meetings of the Irish FA Board and Council to develop a frame of reference for this strategy, from which we developed our six long term objectives. Throughout February, March and April we consulted on these objectives with the four Divisional Associations, alongside the Northern Ireland Boys', Schools' and Women's Football Associations.

Teams competing in the Irish Football Association Premiership and Championship leagues gave their views on our plans for the future of the domestic game, and we are appreciative of the elected representatives who have formed the Northern Ireland Assembly – All Party Group on Football to support football and ensure the power of the game is recognised across government policy.

We are also grateful to the input and leadership of Association of Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs (AONISC) in representing the views of football fans.

We have developed our actions by drawing from the Irish FA's own internal planning papers, and the learnings of independent evaluations and best practice, both in football and other sport. We have also sought to align our actions with the policies and aims of our sponsors, partners and government policies within key departmental documents such as the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure's (DCAL) and Sport Northern Ireland's *Sport Matters*.

If you're a stakeholder in Northern Ireland football this strategy is here for you to measure us against and to hold us to. As long as you have a relationship with the game of football, whether it is as a player, coach, fan, administrator, partner, sponsor or politician, you're a stakeholder, and have a right to say your piece.

Moreover, we hope that our six long term objectives will motivate others involved in supporting the game; every council and committee member, club secretary, coach or volunteer administrator, sponsor or government partner to do the same – helping us promote, foster and develop football for all.



INTRODUCTION
ENGAGED WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS



- Governance
- Partners
- Sporting Organisations
- Irish FA



INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL

**QUALIFY FOR A
MAJOR TOURNAMENT**

**DELIVER A NEW
NATIONAL STADIUM**





2006

Jonny Evans was called up to the Northern Ireland squad for the first time in September 2006, making his debut in the memorable 3–2 victory over Spain

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL QUALIFY FOR A MAJOR TOURNAMENT

NORTHERN IRELAND has qualified for three major tournaments in the past - the FIFA World Cup in 1958, 1982 and 1986.

Since then, we have failed to qualify for 14 consecutive tournaments. To avoid further failure something must change. Our first five year objective is to qualify for a major tournament.

UEFA Euro 2016 France and 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia are the next two challenges. We acknowledge that Brazil is now beyond us, but we have confidence that by 2018 we will have produced a team who can qualify for an international tournament. To do so we must change how we spot, develop and retain the talents of Northern Ireland players.

We will ensure that every player qualified to play for our International Senior Team is as well-honed and prepared for his professional career as possible. We must identify talent from the earliest possible moment, encouraging the development of skills and interest in the sport at a younger age.

It also means that each Northern Ireland squad needs to carry a winning mentality, starting with our under 12s, flourishing at under 16 and carried onwards into the senior game. A belief based on the confidence of their development as players in diet, training, sports science, top quality coaching and psychological assistance.

Engage a world class Elite Performance Director to work alongside International Manager

It remains the role of the International Manager to shape the current players of our senior squads into a coherent and successful team. They will set the strategy for competitions and the tactics to win games. However, outside of player welfare and talent ID we are developing a new role to work with talent and shape it from the ground up.

An Elite Performance Director has been appointed to co-ordinate the development of our players, both at a senior game level and up through our youth squads (under 12, 13, 14, and 15s). Their focus will be to deliver performance enhancement, and oversee high performance coaching to better develop our players to compete in the international game.

Reconstruct elite coaching

We are ready to appoint a Player Service Manager to work directly with elite players, focusing on strength

conditioning, psychological preparation, hydration and nutrition and using the latest sport science, in partnership with the Sports Institute for Northern Ireland (SINI) to advance their game.

Our coaching programme will be delivered in appropriate regional locations and enhanced by the building of a national training centre by 2017. The establishment of a Northern Ireland Football Academy will allow the brightest stars of the future to focus on their performance both academically and on the pitch.

We will transform our Excellence Programme for 12-15 year olds into an Elite Programme. Our best young players will work with the same high performance coaches from the age of 12 until they graduate into the senior squads. This continuity will be reinforced by doubling our coach contact time with young players by 2015.

Identify talent earlier and support worldwide scouting system

Based on international research gathered by the University of Ulster, the Irish FA is introducing a policy of 'small-sided games' to focus on the development of skills in young players, by introducing the game played on a smaller pitch.

We must also identify talent earlier and from a wider pool. Our staff from our International Manager and Elite Performance Director, to our senior and elite coaches, grassroots development officers and primary school coaches, will all be equipped to start player identification from as young an age as six years old. The Irish FA will be scouting for eligible talent beyond home based players to those living in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and globally.

Consolidate elite player counselling and support

Finally we will continue to improve our player welfare, building on the work of our International Manager, and two full time player welfare staff. We want to ensure we maintain good relationships with our best players.



INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL DELIVER A NEW NATIONAL STADIUM

THE Association has a once in a generation opportunity to transform its stadia over the next five years.

The £29.2m re-development of Windsor Park into a state of the art 18,000 seat National Stadium will be more than a new ground for the national team.

It will be a new home for the Irish FA; a new conference facility for the city of Belfast; and provide new social and recreational facilities to local communities.

We hope that its construction symbolises a continuing confidence in a new Northern Ireland, and in turn inspires growing confidence and support for our team.

A further £36.2m investment is planned to develop sub-regional facilities for the benefit of both the international and domestic game. By improving and upgrading facilities across Northern Ireland, we will provide better environments to develop our players and improve the facilities for fans and supporters who come to watch the game.

In total, the NI Executive through the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) has committed £61.4 million of capital funding for football stadia and facilities. The Irish FA is committing a further £4 million (14% of the total stadium project costs), and we aim to attract further investment partners both at the new National Stadium, and for regional facilities.

The preparation, planning and execution of this work must be carried out with immense care and thought to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained from this investment. With careful thought and willing partnerships we can deliver a revitalised physical infrastructure for football, inextricably linked to local community development in Northern Ireland.

Complete new National Stadium

Plans for the new National Stadium are now complete, and subject to planning conditions work will begin on the site in late 2013. We plan to welcome fans and new supporters to the refurbished home of Northern Irish football in summer 2015.

We have completed a Community Consultation Process which together with further engagement will shape our plans for community facilities at the stadium. Through partnership we will be able to offer a community space, GP surgery, or additional sports and leisure facilities to meet the needs of the surrounding neighbourhoods and kick-start renewal.

The Irish FA will be headquartered at the new stadium. Having all of our staff in a modern, fit for purpose building will be a huge boost to our teamwork ethic and will improve our ways of working.

Create Stadium Management Company

A new management company has been created, as a subsidiary of the Irish FA, to run the new National Stadium and ensure its long-term sustainability as a venue, conference centre and museum from 2013. It will take operational control of the stadium's commercial and community facilities upon opening in 2015.

Adopt sub-regional facility strategy and develop a National Training Centre

In 2013, after significant consultation, we will publish alongside DCAL what is currently a four-stranded sub-regional strategy, outlining how £36.2m to be drawn down during the next comprehensive spending review period in 2015 and beyond should be invested:

The first strand is an investment in a National Training Centre. It will become a training and preparation ground for Northern Ireland's national football teams, and a base for all coaching and development work undertaken by the Irish FA. Its development is being considered as a joint venture opportunity for the Irish FA to partner alongside another institution.

A major capital intervention project will be launched to rebuild or renovate stadia and facilities at a small number of local Premiership grounds, creating modern venues for the game for both spectators and players.

An allocation from these funds will be used to upgrade the grounds of clubs designated under the Safety at Sports Grounds (Order NI 2006)

The remainder of the £36.2m allocation will be open to bids from individual clubs and consortia across Northern Ireland for community and social cohesion projects, or to develop their clubs into community "beacons" with their facilities opened up for use by local communities, or as part of a social enterprise.

Working in partnership with DCAL, the Irish FA will oversee a process to assess and designate funding for these Major Capital Interventions, Safety at Sports Grounds initiatives, and Community and Social Cohesion projects.

These four sub-regional strands will rely on a strong business case put forward by the Irish FA to help ensure DCAL secures funding and support across Northern Ireland Executive's ahead of the next Comprehensive Spending Review.



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

**FOSTER A BALANCED, FLOURISHING
SENIOR DOMESTIC GAME**

**CREATE A HEALTHY DOMESTIC
GAME AT ALL LEVELS**



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

1886

The Irish FA sits on the International Football Association Board, which has been responsible for the laws of the game since 1886



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

FOSTER A BALANCED, FLOURISHING SENIOR DOMESTIC GAME

THE senior domestic game is the pinnacle of club football in any country. Our leagues, clubs and players should offer excitement and entertainment to spectators. Capacity crowds at the Windsor Park are testament to the widening support for the national team, and grassroots football remains Northern Ireland's most popular sport.

We are not however, translating this enthusiasm into attendance at Saturday and mid-week fixtures at senior domestic league games. With the ease of transport links, there is a natural draw for fans to other domestic leagues - particularly the English and Scottish Premierships.

Nevertheless the senior domestic game, as it currently stands, is a 'business' turning over nearly £6m per annum, and employing 400-500 people. It remains a major contributor to economic and social life in Northern Ireland. To attract more fans to league matches we must continue to improve the product we offer. Our domestic game must provide competition which is the best it can be, with better clubs, better players, better coaching and better facilities.

In order to ensure a long-term stable league structure domestic clubs must reduce their debt burden. We have sought to encourage this by introducing a cap on player gross salaries within the Premier League. This has reduced the tax debt burden of clubs from £1.5m to zero over five years (2008/09 season until now). However new fans and new forms of income must be found for clubs across all divisions to survive.

Central to our plans to progress improvements within the senior domestic game is the creation of a new Northern Ireland Football League Company, to own and govern the top three domestic divisions (Premiership, Championship 1 and Championship 2). We hope this will create a dynamic professional league, with improved player development, attracting more fans into the stands.

However, new forms of income must be achieved from other sources. By tackling sectarianism, improving facilities, and encouraging higher standards of club management and governance we hope clubs will become 'Community Beacons', generating additional income through social enterprise, sponsorship and merchandising, and the use of club facilities by local communities and businesses.

Establish an independent body to manage senior football

The NI Football League Company is now incorporated. A Managing Director has been appointed and will complete the company's staff recruitment during 2013. The company has taken ownership of the three top-flight leagues ahead of the 2013/2014 season.

Review numbers of divisions and teams in our leagues, and promote elite youth development in clubs

The new company will absorb responsibility for each semi-professional league, and will undertake a number of critical reviews which will shape the future of the domestic game. Including:

A review of Northern Ireland's national competitive structure, carried out in co-operation with the four Divisional Associations, to decide the number of teams competing in three top divisions, and proposals to cap senior squad sizes.

It will review proposals to develop a network of club academies, improving player development at clubs in the top domestic leagues, and explore changes to player eligibility criteria and youth league structures to encourage more clubs to allow youth development players to take part in senior level games.

It will carry out a study into the viability of switching to a 'summer season' between February and October to allow fixtures to avail of better weather; fans to attend domestic games without competing with other domestic leagues; and intermediate and grassroots level participants to attend senior league games.

The Company will engage with the managers, coaches, players and clubs to redevelop and promote open dialogue to ensure the highest standards of player and coach welfare and behaviour are maintained across the senior leagues.

Together with the Irish FA, the Company will negotiate with clubs to agree a new salary protocol for senior domestic clubs modelled on the principles of UEFA's 'Financial Fair Play'. Together with an on-going review of the players' gross salary cap, our aim is to help clubs negotiate realistic, relative and sustainable player salaries, encourage clubs to invest in and develop young players, and to astutely reward senior ones.

Reduce debt burden among senior clubs

To secure future viability of clubs we must support the Northern Ireland Football League (NIFL) and its clubs to regrow support for the domestic game. The only way to achieve this revitalisation is for clubs to attract new audiences and be used and adopted by their communities.

The sub-regional funding will help some clubs improve facilities, and support others to transform existing facilities and pursue community projects or social enterprises, but the Irish FA wishes to help all clubs pursue successful merchandising, enhanced sponsorship, and to become 'Community Beacons' drawing support from their local communities.



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

FOSTER A BALANCED, FLOURISHING SENIOR DOMESTIC GAME

Club education will remain a key part of helping individual clubs develop this best practice, including areas such as financial management and promotion, through our Club Development Programme.

The Irish FA has appointed a Club & Community Development Officer to develop a Club Excellence Mark for clubs involved at all levels of the game. At senior domestic level the Club Mark will complement the existing domestic licences, setting accredited standards for club management, community relations and coach education for all their branches: senior, women's, boys', girls' etc.

Maximise value of senior football

Tackling all forms of discrimination and sectarianism head-on has helped attract new audiences and levels of sponsorship to the International Game; however where it is present it continues to limit the commercial appeal of domestic club football, and limits the support and use of club facilities by local communities and minority groups.

By 2015 the Irish FA will publish a new and comprehensive Good Relations and Fans Charter to address barriers to support which continue to exist: songs, flags, sectarian behaviour and foul or unacceptable language. We hope this will encourage clubs, fans and supporters clubs to challenge sectarianism at domestic league matches and clubs to develop their own good relations projects.

This new charter will be developed in partnership with organised Supporter groups and Club Supporter Liaison Officers. It will follow the best practice guide produced by Football Supporters Europe in June 2013 which the Irish FA played a key role in developing through the Pro Supporters Network.

Community Relations activity, and UEFA's *Ten Point Plan* to tackle sectarianism and racism in the Irish League is already audited in clubs who are part of the Domestic A Licence. By 2016, standards in community relations will be embedded in every senior club and will be audited annually either as part of the Domestic Licence or Club Excellence Mark.

In 2014 the Irish FA will lead a sustained nationwide Respect campaign to tackle sectarianism and racism head on. Targeting all levels of the game we plan to work with Northern Ireland Football League to co-ordinate a zero tolerance approach to sectarianism and racism, and set an example to every club, league and association across Northern Ireland, backed up by unwavering disciplinary measures.



Through our Sub-regional funding, our Club Development Programme and Club Excellence Mark we hope to give clubs the tools to develop a greater following from fans and communities across the sectarian divide; and from new supporters among young people, women, minority communities, disadvantaged groups such as homeless people and people with disabilities.

The Irish FA alongside its system provider First Sport International is embarking on a project to provide self-service data management to all member leagues and clubs. The system will offer an online platform to modernise the administration of club management, player registration, refereeing and discipline, score and fixture management. It will be rolled out to Premiership clubs in 2014, followed by Championship clubs.



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL

CREATE A HEALTHY, DOMESTIC GAME AT ALL LEVELS

UNLIKE other sports, anyone can start a football club. This ensures the widest possible accessibility, unmatched by any other sport.

There are male and female adult leagues and cups, a network of boys' club leagues, school competitions, girl's development camps and disability competitions. Girls and women's football is rapidly growing; almost 1100 female players take part in the game at 50 clubs. Our primary school coaches work with approximately 9,000 girls in 250 schools each year. The vast majority of players, coaches, administrators and volunteers operate outside the senior game in a series of competitions which take place across the length and breadth of Northern Ireland.

The number of amateur teams outnumbers our semi-professional clubs by 900. With more than 30,000 adults and thousands of children involved in the recreational game, football is not only part of the community, it is a community.

Ensuring we foster support and capture the strength of our teams and club network is always difficult when our staff and financial resources are limited. Therefore, professionalising, modernising and standardising our systems across the domestic game will help us make the best use of existing resources, whilst growing the capacity of skills and volunteers will help us meet the demands at the grassroots level of the game. Health and safety, coaching quality, child and player welfare are concerns that affect all clubs. The challenge for the Irish FA is how to ensure resources and expertise are provided to meet the growing costs, and complexities of the recreational game.

Introduce a club mark to support and develop amateur football clubs

The Club Excellence Mark is an additional component of the Irish FA's club development pathway. Clubs in all leagues can take part in an education and accreditation programme. The pathway delivers training, support and advice to clubs through seminars and workshops. Clubs take part either as part of the licensing system, the McDonalds accreditation scheme at grassroots level, or the club and volunteer programme currently being rolled out at all levels of the game.

A benchmark of quality, the Club Excellence Mark award will be rolled out in early autumn 2013, targeting women's, boys' and disability clubs, as well as select senior or intermediate clubs.

By 2014 the Club Mark will be open to all grassroots and intermediate clubs. The progressive award will aid the advancement of intermediate clubs onto Domestic League and UEFA Licences, and encourage club associated social enterprises, and accredited community engagement.

The Club Mark and club education programme will help all clubs in the areas of player and coach development

and assist grassroots teams to become more familiar with best practice in legal and financial management; player registration; Irish FA, FIFA and UEFA regulations.

We will continue to support leagues to run educational programmes, part funded and supported by the Department for Social Development, on football administration and development.

Streamline and modernise models of football administration

Many of the tools for club education and registration will be moved online, as the Irish FA online club management platform is rolled down from the senior domestic leagues.

This will benefit smaller teams by offering clubs their own website, possibly providing online ticketing where relevant, better opportunities to raise funds through e-commerce, and the ability to sync data such as scores, bookings, and player registration information with the Irish FA online. It will be supported by FIFA and Coca-Cola and allow the Irish FA to communicate efficiently with every club in Northern Ireland.

The introduction of an online club management platform will also aid the Irish FA plans to harmonise rules across all leagues and divisions. Whilst each division will retain individual quirks and characteristics, core regulations concerning; player eligibility criteria, league structures, and player registration will become standardised.

Many clubs in Northern Ireland still do not have club or player insurance. The Irish FA will begin phasing in mandatory enrolment for insurance of clubs operating within its leagues. By 2017 we plan to have all clubs covered by their own public liability and indemnity policy, and encourage the practice of voluntary player to player cover.

Consider establishing amateur board to further develop the game

The four Divisional Associations have historically provided an additional structure for association football outside the Irish FA's domestic leagues. With their co-operation we will incorporate their fixtures into our online management system, and work with them to review the structures and club fixtures in the intermediate and recreational game.

Create clear strategies for women's, boys' and schools' football

Currently too few girls make the transition from schools to club football.



DOMESTIC FOOTBALL CREATE A HEALTHY, DOMESTIC GAME AT ALL LEVELS



In 2014 we will publish our first Girls' and Women's Football plan that outlines how we will achieve 20% growth in female player participation by 2017, and builds on the work of our SCORE Pilot project which assisted clubs to establish contact with their local school through provision of coaches. Consultation on this strategy has been on-going since early 2013.

By 2015 the Irish FA plan to host the first annual Women in Football Conference to showcase developments made by the Girls' and Women's Football Strategy, and encouraging more girls and women to get involved in football.

Through our partnership with Vauxhall we will deliver a three year programme of after-school coaching, widening access to fully qualified Irish Football Association 'A' and 'B' Licence coaches to post primary schools across Northern Ireland.

Together with Coach Education Courses for teachers and a pilot 'Blitz tournament' encouraging uptake of football as a primary sport amongst grammar schools, we aim to widen our involvement in schools football.

We are widening the availability of coaching courses, issuing around 500 entry level coaching licences each year, and we aspire to have a licenced youth coach for all boys' and women's clubs by 2017.

We plan to introduce courses for specific positions or disciplines, such as UEFA Goalkeepers Coaching, UEFA Fitness Coaching and we will introduce a specific Small Sided Games Coaching qualification. This will complement our mandating of small sided games for 6-11 year olds from 2013, instilling a focus on skills, in all clubs, from an early age.



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

REACH BEYOND THE GAME

**BUILD A CULTURE OF LIFELONG
INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL**



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL



1882

Our first game against England finished 13-0 which remains a record for both international teams

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL REACH BEYOND THE GAME

WHEN we talk about grassroots we often associate it only with the grassroots of the amateur game. For the Irish FA however football plays another role - at the grassroots of society.

Our football led Community Relations work is world leading, research led, and regularly evaluated; it has been praised as a model of best practice by both UEFA and the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB). It is not an add-on activity which is nice to have, but is central to the delivery of football by the Irish FA. It began 12 years ago with the launch of the Football for All (FFA) Strategy which aimed to tackle sectarianism in our sport, and create a safe and inclusive culture throughout all levels of the game.

It has led to the mantra of 'Football for All' being adopted as the strapline of the whole organisation, and to a Community Relations department operating at the heart of the Irish FA; leading engagement with communities that support the game, and using football to reach out to people who can be supported by it.

Managing, developing and leading football in a society with the issues that face Northern Ireland is a challenge, but it also has rewards. Over the past 12 years our Football for All, European Union (EU) Peace funded project has sought to tackle sectarianism, deal with Northern Ireland's divided past, prevent crime, promote interculturalism, empower women, support homeless people and invest in volunteers.

Using the power of football, we have in the past five years reached out to almost 1500 people affected by conflict in Northern Ireland, built trust through projects in four interface areas, tackled issues with hard to reach communities and encouraged young people affected by the 'troubles' away from anti-social behaviour and into football.

The Irish FA is on a journey to make the game more vibrant, dynamic and inclusive; broadening support for the national team, domestic clubs and the game at grassroots. At the same time we want to continue to partner other sports, agencies and government to use our sport, our clubs, and our fans, to reach out into our communities, and help support them.

We believe in the transformative power of football. As its governing body in Northern Ireland we want to use the power of the sport to reach beyond the game, to promote Good Relations upwards from the grassroots of our sport, and outwards across society.

Work to minimise all discrimination and launch a **RESPECT** programme

By 2014 the Irish FA will have developed a 3 year International Fans Strategy to promote new fan driven Good Relations initiatives tackling poor mental health, sectarianism, homophobia, sexism and racism, and co-ordinate fan driven activity with the Irish FA's own good relations work

e.g. 'Give Sectarianism the Boot' marketing campaign.

This is the first project of its kind and we aim to share this process with other governing bodies across Europe. In 2014 the IFA will work in partnership with the AONISC and UEFA to organise an annual Football for All International Fans Seminar.

The seminar will be an opportunity for the Irish FA, clubs across Northern Ireland, and fan groups from across Europe and the rest of the world to share their experiences of developing fan driven self-policing projects. Projects such as the 'Sea of Green' initiative; encouraging fans to adopt the national team's Green and White and new Northern Ireland football songs free from sectarianism. It will also create an occasion for international 'Fan Friendlies' matches between fan groups.

In 2013 and beyond, the Irish FA will play a key role as part of the International Pro-Supporters Network with countries from all around Europe participating to develop a Fans Handbook, which highlights fan driven Good Relations initiatives.

Following the success of the English FA's **RESPECT** campaign at grassroots level, the Irish FA will roll out a **RESPECT NI** programme to maintain acceptable levels of behaviour at all levels of the game. A consultation will be carried out in late 2013, benchmarked against FIFA recommendations, and detailing measures to ensure everyone can enjoy the game in a safe environment on and off the pitch; players, referees, managers, parents and spectators alike.

In consultation with fan groups and clubs, by 2015 the Irish FA will publish a comprehensive Good Relations and Flags Policy to address on-going barriers to support, including divisive issues such as songs, flags, sectarian behaviour and foul or unacceptable language. We hope this will encourage clubs, fans and supporters, both at international matches and domestic league matches, to challenge sectarianism and develop their own good relations projects.

Use the power of football to foster community and personal development

In 2013 the Irish FA launched a Good Relations Citizenship and IT educational resource for teachers, Irish FA staff and coaches, and volunteers instructing children at key stage two level. The resource will be available to schools and community groups across Northern Ireland, and will be available to coaches and community groups leading football coaching.

The Irish FA is working alongside the Department for Social Development (DSD), Comic Relief 'Sport for Change' and UEFA Social Responsibility / UEFA Respect to deliver special initiatives and projects that bring ethnic minorities, homeless people, excluded youth and women into grassroots football, and to encourage vulnerable individuals to seek support.



GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL
REACH BEYOND THE GAME



The Irish FA's 'World United' programme currently has 60 participants from over 20 nations, holding weekly training sessions to support refugees, asylum seekers and people from newly arrived communities to participate in football and volunteer in their community. By 2016 we aim to double the size of the programme, and have it recognised across Europe as a model of best practice for tackling racism.

By 2016 we want to replicate our crime prevention and anti-sectarian project, 'Limestone United' to four or more new interface areas in Northern Ireland. The project has already been working with 50 young people aged 11-15, and the Police Service for Northern Ireland, at youth centres in North Belfast to reduce anti-social behaviour through football skills coaching and community relations engagement.

Building on the success of our Street Leagues project, in 2013 the Irish FA entered the first ever Northern Ireland team to compete in the Homeless World Cup in Poland where we won 'best new team'. Our Street League projects use football to reach out and work with homeless people in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry, resulting in 92% of players finding a new motivation for life. Building on the continued success of these projects we plan to enter a team in future international competitions.

The Irish FA has helped establish the Belfast United Forum, a forum of 14 community groups and football

clubs working together to use the universal power of football as a hook to promote social interventions. In 2013 the forum will launch new interface football plans and a new Football For All introductory award.

Furthermore, with valued support from SEUPB and Derry City Council we have set up a new Community Relations office in Derry~Londonderry and established a North West Football for All Advisory Panel to ensure we give more value to the community in this area moving forward.

Strengthen partnerships targeting social need

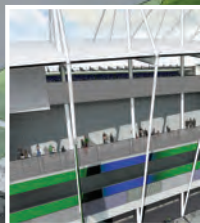
The Irish FA is committed to deepening its relationships with existing supporters, and seeking new partnerships to develop its Good Relations work. We have invested in a 'social impact tracker' to generate quantitative information on the impact of project work that will feed into research and future project development.

In 2015 we will follow up on a 2005 baseline attitudinal survey to evaluate the impact of our Good Relations work through Football for All, 10 years after we first sought to impact the views and perceptions of football across sport, communities and society in Northern Ireland.



DELIVER A NEW NA

QUALIFY, DELIVER, FOSTER,



WE BELIEVE...
We cannot let tradition hold us back from
the modern era of the game



NATIONAL STADIUM

CREATE, REACH AND BUILD

IFA⁺



WE BELIEVE...

That when our five year strategy is realised we will have nurtured a senior team that can reach the finals of a major tournament

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL

BUILD A CULTURE OF LIFELONG INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

WHEN children first play football they dream of being Messi, Maradona or Best. Those that fall in love with the game may later get involved through coaching, spectating, or volunteering. Most will play recreational football. A skilled and lucky minority will know the thrill of scoring a match winning clincher, deep into injury time at the end of a domestic league season. Fewer still will know the pride of playing for the national team.

For many – other than through a TV subscription – it can be too easy to lose contact with football. There is an armchair army waiting to be mobilised, waiting for their childhood passion to be rekindled and harnessed. There are others who may take up football from another sport; some who never believed sport, of any kind, was an option in their life; and more who just need encouraged back into the game.

The Irish FA is committed to fostering a lifelong involvement in football that is open to all. It will involve us reaching further into disability football, developing new forms of the game such as futsal and veterans competitions, and encouraging and developing a volunteer network to support our communities and our clubs. We believe in football for all, because we believe football can be enjoyed by all.

Evolve and Celebrate Football in Northern Ireland

The way in which association football is played is forever evolving. Futsal is a variant that has emerged from street football, and is gaining popularity. Played predominantly indoors, on a smaller pitch and with a smaller ball with less bounce, it is suited to Northern Ireland's mild yet inclement weather.

The Irish FA hopes to encourage a 'culture of futsal', with its emphasis on technique and close quarter skills, through exhibition matches, and the creation of dedicated Futsal leagues and competitions.

The small sided game, which will be mandated for younger players, is also a format that lends itself to veteran's football. Rather than hang up their boots, we want those that admit they can no longer run the length of a standard pitch or compete in the senior game to be part of a pilot to help establish veteran's leagues or competitions.

By 2016 we want to showcase the best of the game in Northern Ireland in a celebration and festival of football. Highlighting emerging talent, hosting futsal and veteran football exhibition matches, youth small sided games competitions, and bringing together the cream of Northern Ireland's coaching and playing talent in a family friendly public event.

Develop and promote a positive plan for disability football

The London 2012 Paralympic Games raised the bar in terms of public expectation and awareness of disability sport. Our Hearing or Visually Impaired, Wheelchair and Disability clubs and teams have hundreds of players participating in local and national competition.

Our Disability Department delivers schools coaching and regional competitions, working with children of all ages and ability.

Working in partnership with government, educational, healthcare and charitable organisations we are developing a disabilities football plan, to widen participation and build on the renewed interest and awareness of disability sport.

Excite our young people and give them a voice in the future of football

Our young people are the future of the game. By 2014, the Irish FA is seeking to have established a Football Youth Forum. Giving children and young people a voice in the way football in Northern Ireland is developed and governed for the first time.

Our Grassroots Development Officers are working in conjunction with schools, councils and clubs to enhance our football camps.

In 2013 we will make it easier for parents to enrol their children through online registration, helping improve talent ID, making it easier for around 3500 children to take part in high quality skills coaching and competition during the school holidays.

Our international team players will act as football ambassadors for the Irish FA Football for All and RESPECT programmes at sports and football camps across Northern Ireland.

Capture the passion of volunteers in football and the community

Domestic league and grassroots clubs rely on willing volunteers across every section of the game. The only way to grow our capacity to develop talent on the field is by empowering and up-skilling the passionate individuals who give up their time as coaches, referees, club secretaries, fundraisers and administrators.





1890

Penalty Kick: William McCrum, goalkeeper for Armagh club Milford FC, lobbied the IFA to introduce the spot-kick in 1890. The penalty was made a rule a year later

The Irish FA has been developing a volunteering policy as part of a strong partnership with Volunteer Now. By 2014 the Irish FA will have developed a new Irish FA Club Excellence Mark and Volunteer Policy to support training and capacity building for the local game.

A steering committee will be established to oversee volunteer development in club and community settings, and by the end of 2013 the Irish FA will have developed an annual calendar of training and support events for volunteers, encouraging those passionate about the sport into voluntary positions in clubs, coaching centres or community groups.

Collaborate through sport to make a difference

The Irish FA works in partnership with Ulster Rugby, Ulster GAA and Peace Players International to support

Game of 3 Halves; a cross community, cross sport, good relations project providing value based coaching to deliver social interventions in interface areas throughout Northern Ireland.

We will use these links to help increase volunteer numbers in sport each year and strengthen the Good Relations Forum.

The Irish FA intends to introduce a Football for All Introductory Award for community groups involved in Good Relations projects, and will host the annual joint community volunteer awards with Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby beginning in 2013.

With support from the Department for Social Development, the Irish FA, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby will deliver annual joint workshops and community relations events as part of our joint 'Sport in the Community' programme.



IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

DELIVERING OFF
THE PITCH



IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
DELIVERING OFF THE PITCH



2003

The Green and White Army is the name given to the fans that follow the national football team



IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
DELIVERING OFF THE PITCH



TO Qualify, Deliver, Foster, Reach and Build; to make these strides on the pitch, we recognise the need to work hard off the pitch. The Irish Football Association intends to become a world-class organisation with a winning mentality at all levels. We believe the objectives we have set out in this strategy are ambitious but achievable and within our reach.

If our ambition 'on the pitch' is to develop a world class team, it will require us to develop the best players using the latest techniques in sports science to hone their skills and prepare them mentally for the international game.

Likewise if we are to become a world class organisation 'off the pitch', and take full advantage of the leadership role we play in domestic and world football we must become an organisation that is consistent in its approach, dedicated to the same vision, and efficient and business like in our operations. Moreover we must not lose our commitment to doing the right thing for football in Northern Ireland.

The Irish Football Association is no longer a small business. We turn over around £11 million per annum and we will spend more than £61 million on capital projects during the life of this plan. We employ 115 people on a full time basis, and many more on a part time basis. In addition to this, there are literally thousands of people who volunteer their time every week to be involved in Northern Ireland football. In order to do justice to this effort and our resources we need to plan, and we need to make choices

on what we do or don't want to do.

Every pound we choose to spend on the men's international team is a pound we can't spend on a grassroots project in Newry or Strabane. Conversely, if we spend too many pounds on grassroots projects, we may not have enough for the ever more competitive and demanding elite world of international football.

Doing the right thing is not about size and having huge resources, it is about a state of mind, and a determination to carry out tasks and projects in the right way.

The more successful we drive ourselves to be commercially, and the more efficient we can become in our administration of the sport, the more we can invest scarce resources back into the game. This will not be an overnight process, all change is difficult and we must balance the need to create a modern commercially successful organisation with actions that demonstrate that we as the governing body of the sport are making the correct decisions.

We must, however, be bold in how we change as an organisation, and energise everyone involved in the Association along similar lines, whether they are council or committee members, staff or volunteers, board members or match observers, players or coaches.

As an organisation with a 133 year old history we recognise the responsibility this confers, but to realise our belief in football and belief in Northern Ireland we must create an organisation that can rise to the challenges of the future.



IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION DELIVERING OFF THE PITCH

Reform the organisational structure

To achieve our six long term objectives we must ensure the organisation is as efficient, streamlined and effective as it can be. Guided by the board the Chief Executive will undertake a review to reform the organisation structure of the Irish FA to ensure it is a 'fit for purpose' modern organisation.

Our move to a permanent new home in a redeveloped Windsor Park presents us with a new working environment with all our departments under one roof, and plans for a new open office. As we adapt to our new working environment we must capitalise on the opportunity to plan and introduce new more efficient and streamlined practices across the organisation.

Review our governance structures, and be open

In 2010, the Irish FA commissioned an independent governance review. Since then we have implemented significant changes to our governance resulting in regular independent audits classing the organisation as satisfactory. Between now and 2017 we aim to review and develop our governance to ensure our performance meets a Good or higher classification.

The board will publish an Annual Report to ensure our sponsors, partners, fans and other stakeholders can track the progress of the plans committed to in this Strategic Plan.

Develop a culture of excellence and delivery

We must demonstrate the Values of the organisation in everything we do and ensure they are understood by those representing the Irish FA both central within the organisation and across board, council, advisory panels, staff or volunteers, match observers, players or coaches.

We must act as a resource for clubs, and those involved at the grassroots of the sport. Adding support for football and public wide consultations and a professional resource to polish and develop their plans.

Produce a Strategic Financial Outlook based on a four year financial planning cycle

FIFA and UEFA plan their finances on four year cycles. Starting from the financial year 2013/2014 the Irish FA will adopt this best practice and move to a four year planning cycle for its own strategic financial planning. This will allow us to improve our own financial planning and will aid the planning of long term sponsorship and partner contracts.

Each financial year the Irish FA will produce an annual budget approved at board level. Our aim is to generate an annual surplus of between £250-500k which will be added to our reserves, with all other monies being invested for the good of football in Northern Ireland

Produce annual departmental operating plans and budgets

In tandem each department within the Irish FA will produce an annual budget and operating plan that will contribute to an overall annual budget and operating plan for the Irish FA.

Departmental operating plans will add a level of granularity to our strategic plan, and set departmental objectives that contribute directly to one or more of the seven long term objectives of the Irish FA.

Develop the infrastructure of the organisation

By 2015 we will have developed and implemented a new IT Strategy, which will seek to modernise the technology infrastructure of the Irish FA. This will include the introduction of an online club management system, and allow clubs to procure equipment and services centrally benefiting from the professionalism and economy of scale of the Irish FA.

We will be proactive in our communication, developing a long-term Communications Plan to help us reach out to more of our supporters, fans and stakeholders. We will champion both our successes on the pitch, and the work of the organisation at every level of the sport; helping to tell the stories of how football can reach beyond the game. This Communications Plan will complement a new three year Community Relations Strategy to drive forward our Football for All projects and fan driven initiatives.

Further mainstreaming of Good Relations at the Irish FA and across football

The Irish FA Board have committed the organisation to achieving the foundation level of the UK Sports Equality Standard by 2017. This involves an equality impact assessment of all aspects of the organisation.

In 2013 we will introduce annual Equality, Positive Mental Health and Good Relations training for all Irish FA Staff and Irish FA Board. Training will include awareness raising on Equality legislation, Suicide, Drug Awareness, Alcohol Awareness, Child Protection, community/fan engagement, anti-sectarianism, anti-racism, and issues surrounding identity.



SUMMARY TABLES

**WE HAVE SET OURSELVES
AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVES, AND
TO ACHIEVE THEM WE WILL
HAVE TO DELIVER OUR ACTIONS
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER
ORGANISATIONS**

**IN THE FOLLOWING TABLES
WE HAVE SUMMARISED HOW WE
PLAN TO MEET EACH OF OUR
SIX LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES
WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS
THROUGH COLLABORATION IN
SPORT AND OTHER AREAS OF
PUBLIC POLICY**





1920

Created the offside rule: A controversial idea in the game proposed by Billy McCracken in 1920, an international star of the day



LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
QUALIFY FOR A MAJOR TOURNAMENT

Timeframe		Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1	Put Elite Performance Head in place		
	2	Appoint a Player Service Manager		
	3	Improve player welfare		
	4	Develop sports science resources dedicated to elite group	Sports Institute for Northern Ireland	'Deliver world class services through the sports Institute; establish a network of sports scientists' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	5	Transform our Excellence Programme into an Elite Programme for players 12-16 age		
	6	Widen and introduce earlier player identification		'Improve understanding of talent identification, development and selection' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	7	Play football in more schools	Northern Ireland Schools Football Association (NISFA)	'Government to pursue a target for 2 hours physical education and sport per week' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
2014	8	Introduce a small sided games policy for young players up to 12 years of age	Northern Ireland Boy's Football Association (NIBFA) University of Ulster	
2015	9	Redevelop coaching framework for 6-21 years		'Resource and support identified governing bodies of sport to implement an appropriate coaching framework (UK or Ireland)' DCAL 'Sports Matters'



LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
DELIVER A NEW NATIONAL STADIUM

Timeframe	Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1 Complete National Stadium lease agreement	Office of First & deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)	"Develop sports stadiums as agreed with the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby (DCAL)" Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015
	2 Set up new Stadium Management Company and associated control systems	National Stadium Management Company	
	3 Plan the National Stadium development with all stakeholders following community Consultation Process	'Our Commitments... develop sports stadiums as agreed with the IFA, GAA and Ulster Rugby... Develop and agree programme of developments and specific project plans. Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015	
	4 Develop detailed strategy for sub-regional facilities	DCAL	"Enhance the image of Northern Ireland as an area of considerable artistic, sporting and creative talent." DRD Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy 2025
2014	5 Build new national stadium	Hamilton Architect's, design team and build team	'Establish world class sports services that enable world class performances by Northern Ireland athletes' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	6 Develop commercial plan to exploit new national stadium facilities	National Stadium Management Company	'Explore the potential for private and public partnerships in developing shared, sustainable facilities.' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	7 Create business case for sub-regional facilities		
2015	8 Move Irish FA to new national stadium		
	9 New Management Company to get full operational and commercial control upon opening		
	10 Manage sub-regional facilities projects		
2016	11 Sub-regional project: investment in a National Training Centre	'Complete the development of a High Performance Centre to support the sports Institute' DCAL 'Sports Matters'	
2017	12 Sub-regional project: Major Capital Intervention project		
	13 Sub-regional project: upgrade of grounds designated under the Safety at Sports Grounds		
	14 Sub-regional project: community and social cohesion projects	'Our Commitments...publish the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy to build a united community and improve community relations' Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015'	

LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
FOSTERING A BALANCED, FLOURISHING SENIOR DOMESTIC GAME

Timeframe		Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1	Create a league governance body – separate from direct Irish FA control	NI Football League Company	
	2	Develop club academies for better player development		'By 2019 to have accredited at least 700 appropriately qualified, full-time coaches available to meet demand across all aspects of sport and physical recreation' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	3	Support development of Players Association		'...the respect of professional football players' right to unionise (members of FIFPro Division Europe) and respect of the right to collective bargaining' Memorandum of Understanding between UEFA and FIFPro
	4	Improve and develop good governance in clubs (e.g. HMRC, salary capping)	Club & Community Development Officer	'UEFA is introducing...an obligation for clubs, over a period of time, to balance their books or break even... clubs cannot repeatedly spend more than their generated revenues' UEFA Financial Fair Play
	5	Deliver club education on best practice planning and management		
2014	6	Develop a Club Excellence Mark for clubs involved at all levels of the game which will include community relations and coach education	Club & Community Development Officer	"The IRFU Club Excellence Award is a Club Accreditation Scheme developed by the Irish Rugby Football Union which aims to promote best practice across a number of key areas." IRFU Handbook
	7	Lead a region wide Respect campaign	Northern Ireland Football League	
	8	Review senior squad sizes	NI Football League Company	'... the UEFA Club Financial Control Body will view more favourably licensees which used a maximum of 25 players (excluding players under the age of 21) in between any one of the two annual registration periods' UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Regulations, Edition 2012



LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
FOSTERING A BALANCED, FLOURISHING SENIOR DOMESTIC GAME

Continued

Timeframe	Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
	9 Support development of Domestic Supporters Association		'By 2019 to have accredited at least 700 appropriately qualified, full-time coaches available to meet demand across all aspects of sport and physical recreation'
2015	10 Develop self-service data management and systems for registration and club management	First Sport International	
	11 Carry out analysis of 'summer season'	NI Football League Company	
	12 Publish a comprehensive Good Relations and Fans Charter	The Unite Against Hate campaign was launched in 2009 and addressed hate crime... The Irish Football Association, along with the Gaelic Athletic Association and Ulster Rugby have taken on a leading role in raising awareness and encouraging debate around hate crime and intolerance. OFMdFM - 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy	
2016	13 Review of the national competitive football structure	NI Football League Company	
	14 Review senior youth league structures	NI Football League Company	
	15 Embed community connections via community audit process as part of domestic licence		'A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be required to provide the evidence base that will inform, not only the identification of baselines but also, progress towards the longer-term vision of this Strategy.' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
2017	16 Embed standards in community relations at all clubs		'While fans are often the spur for anti-racist action... To generate wider recognition of the problem, and greater media attention in particular, they need the support of players and the clubs they play for' UEFA ten point plan to tackle racism



LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
CREATE A HEALTHY DOMESTIC GAME AT ALL LEVELS: INTERMEDIATE,
JUNIOR, WOMEN'S, BOYS, GIRLS AND SCHOOLS

Timeframe	Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1 Support clubs to become 'community beacons' or hubs through club education and development programme	Divisional Associations NI Leagues NIBFA Northern Ireland Women's Football Association (NIWFA) Sport NI Local Councils Ulster GAA Ulster Rugby DSD, DCAL Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN) Volunteer Now Club Excellence Mark - McDonald's	'Embed a strategic and coordinated approach to the provision of shared spaces for sport and physical recreation that support community integration' DCALNI 'Sports Matters'
2014	2 Introduce the Club Excellence Mark award as a benchmark of club quality	"The IRFU Club Excellence Award is a Club Accreditation Scheme developed by the Irish Rugby Football Union which aims to promote best practice across a number of key areas." IRFU Handbook	
	3 Build closer links with Divisional Associations to review national competitive/recreational football structure		
	4 Develop and publish comprehensive women's football plan	NIWFA - Girls and Women's Strategy	'Broaden talent pool through affirmative action for under-represented groups and specifically women/girls' DCALNI 'Sports Matters'
	5 Develop and publish comprehensive boys' and schools football plans	NISFA NIBFA	Government to pursue a target for 2 hours physical education and sport per week
2015	6 Women in Football Conference	"The Women's Football Conference (the Conference) will comprise of representatives from leagues within the Women's Football Pyramid and the WFC with the objective to take steps to protect and further the interests of Girl's and Women's Association Football."	
	7 Develop self-service data management and systems for registration and club management	FIFA Coca-Cola	
2017	8 Mandatory enrolment for insurance of clubs operating within Irish Premier League		
	9 Licensed youth coach for all boys' and women's clubs		



LONG TERM OBJECTIVE
REACHING BEYOND THE GAME

Timeframe	Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1 RESPECT NI Campaign		<p>'The new hate crime legislation... will deal with crimes motivated or aggravated by "hatred based on" race, religion, disability or sexual orientation. The Government expects enforcement by the police and action by the criminal justice system to deal firmly with behaviour.'</p> <p>OFMdfM 'A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland'</p>
	2 Invest in Social Impact Tracker		<p>'A robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be required to provide the evidence base that will inform, not only the identification of baselines but also, progress towards the longer-term vision of this Strategy.'</p> <p>DCALNI 'Sports Matters'</p>
	3 Football For All (FFA) Educational Resource	<p>Schools</p> <p>Youth Groups</p> <p>Community Groups</p> <p>Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)</p>	<p>'Establish 'Active schools Partnerships' linking health, education and community sport'; 'Government to ensure that the provision of sporting facilities for pupils is integrated into the process [building new sports facilities].'</p> <p>DCALNI 'Sports Matters'</p>
	4 Participate in the development of an International Fans Handbook		<p>'The majority of reasonable, responsible supporters should be taken more seriously because they are the major long-term 'cultural investors'. Involving them and their feedback in decision-making processes will help clubs make better choices.'</p> <p>UEFA SLO Handbook</p>
	5 Launch new interface football plans and a new Football For All introductory award		<p>'Creating Shared Public Spaces:... Creating new opportunities for shared space and addressing segregation, will contribute to developing a shared vision of society and the changing of attitudes and in so doing enhance reconciliation...'</p> <p>Peace III EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 2007 - 2013 Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland Operational Programme</p>
	6 Continue to build on success of Homeless World Cup Poland, through Street League Project and future international tournaments		<p>'Equality of opportunity – promote new ways to eliminate the stigma of homelessness and any consequential discrimination and inequality.'</p> <p>Department for Social Development (DSD), 'Including the Homeless'</p>



SUMMARY TABLES
REACHING BEYOND THE GAME

Continued

Timeframe	Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
	7 North West FFA Advisory Panel established	Derry City Council	
2014	8 FFA Youth Forum established	Schools, Youth Groups, Community Groups, PSNI	
	9 Annual FFA International Fans Seminar		
	10 Three year international FFA Fans Strategy	UEFA, FFA Advisory Panel, PSNI, Public Health Agency, AONISC	
2015	11 Independent research team appointed and conduct follow up to 2005 Baseline attitudinal survey		
	12 Review social and economic impact of FFA on communities across NI using data from social impact tracker	DCAL, DSD Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) Comic Relief UEFA supported projects Guided by FFA Advisory Panels	'In order to ensure a consistent framework across the sector, Sporting Equals have produced the attached core monitoring form, the ethnicity and religious questions are based on the 2011 Census categories to ensure consistency at a national level' Sporting Equals Data Collection
2016	13 New comprehensive Good Relations and Fans Charter	FFA Advisory Panel Irish Football Association Board	Promote community cohesion through sport and physical recreation in the context of 'A shared Future'; Embed a strategic and coordinated approach to the provision of shared spaces for sport and physical recreation that support community integration' DCALNI 'Sports Matters'
	14 Replicate our crime prevention and anti-sectarian project in new interface areas		'The new community sport programme focusing on socially deprived areas is designed to promote community development through sport and there is a cultural diversity dimension to this initiative. The work undertaken by the Irish Football Association to deal with sectarianism and racism under their 'Football for All campaign' is worthy of note in this context.' OFMdfM 'A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland'
	15 The IFA's World United programme to be recognised as model of best practice	UEFA FARE, NICEM Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS)	'The work undertaken by the Irish Football Association to deal with sectarianism and racism under their 'Football for All campaign' is worthy of note in this context.' OFMdfM 'A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland'



SUMMARY TABLES
BUILD A CULTURE OF LIFELONG INVOLVEMENT IN FOOTBALL

Timeframe		Action	Partnership	Public Policy & Sporting Best Practice
2013	1	Develop a comprehensive disabilities plan		'Provide increased opportunities for underrepresented groups and specifically women/girls, people with a disability and older people' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	2	Introduce online registration and player ID for football summer camps		
	3	Volunteer Development Programme		'By 2019 to have 45,000 appropriately qualified, part time and volunteer coaches available to meet demand across all aspects of sport and physical recreation; Maximise the potential to use the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as an opportunity to promote volunteering in sport; Encourage employers to support volunteering in sport' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	4	Annual joint community volunteer awards		'There is a need to ensure increased recognition for volunteering and the part it plays in supporting participation in sport at all levels.' DSD 'A Volunteering and Action Plan for Northern Ireland'
2014	5	Create youth football forum	Football Youth Forum	
	6	Develop Irish FA volunteering policy		'Workforce: The importance of a qualified, competent and available workforce (paid and voluntary) is a key development input to the realisation of the strategy vision; volunteers are a key component in the delivery of sport in Northern Ireland' DCAL 'Sports Matters'
	7	Develop veterans football plan		
	8	Continue 'Sport in the Community Programme' collaboration with Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby		'Support governing bodies of sport, sports clubs and local communities; Embed a strategic and coordinated approach to the provision of shared spaces for sport and physical recreation that support community integration' DCAL 'Sports Matters' 'The new Community Sport Programme will target socially disadvantaged areas where participation is known to be low. The aim of the scheme is to increase participation by 10% by 2007.' DHSSPS (2005) 'A Healthier Future: A Twenty Year Vision for Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland 2005 – 2025'
	9	Develop interface and homeless football projects	PSNI Local clubs Community Groups	'Locally Based Regeneration and Development Strategies... support new working relationships and projects which cut across traditional sectarian and social divides thereby contributing to a process of trust building and prejudice reduction.' EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2000-2006'
2015	9	Enhance and revamp summer camps & festivals		
2016	10	Deliver an annual, inclusive stakeholders conference and festival of football		
2017	11	Create culture of futsal		

APPENDIX

CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS



1964

Manchester United legend George Best, scored 179 goals for his club. He won 37 caps for Northern Ireland and scored nine times since his International debut in 1964

APPENDIX
CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

Date	Activity	Stakeholders
13.02.12	Consult on Strategy proposed for IFA	Special Board Meeting
13.02.12	Strategic Consultation	Special Council Meeting
21.02.12	CAFA Strategic Consultation	CAFA
01.03.12	NAFL Strategic Consultation	NAFL
16.03.12	NIBFA Strategic Consultation	NIBFA
28.03.12	NISFA Strategic Consultation	NISFA
02.04.12	NWFA Strategic Consultation	NWFA
03.04.12	NIWFA Strategic Consultation	A Hall, on behalf of NIWFA
04.04.12	AONISC Strategic Consultation	AONISC and Irish FA SMT
30.04.12	IFAP Consultation	Irish FA Board & SMT
14.05.12	All Party Working Group	Various MLAs
14.05.12	IFAC Strategic Consultation	Irish FA
03.07.12	CEO Presentation on IFA Strategy	Irish FA Council
04.07.12	CR Strategy and Research	M Boyd, Irish FA
28.08.12	Chambré PA appointed to develop public document of Irish FA Strategy	Chambré Public Affairs
03.09.12	Irish FA Strategy Development Workshop	Irish FA Senior Management Team/Chambré Public Affairs
27.09.12	NI Fans' Strategy Research	M Boyd/J Bell
07.03.13	AONISC Consultation	AONISC



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Draft Irish FA Girls & Women's Football strategy

Draft Irish FA Facilities Strategy

Irish FA discussion paper on Small Sided Games

Irish FA National Coaching of Coaches Courses

Draft Irish FA Excellence to Elite document

Draft Irish FA Club Web Site Project document

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APPENDIX
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AONISC	Amalgamation of Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs
BCSDN	Belfast Community Sports Development Network
CAFA	Co Antrim Football Association
CR	Community Relations
DCAL	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DRD	Department of Regional Development
DSD	Department of Social Development
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FFA	Football For All
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GDOs	Grassroots Development Officers
IFAC	Irish Football Association Championship
IFAP	Irish Football Association Premiership
IRFU	Irish Rugby Football Union
NAFL	Northern Amateur Football League
NIBFA	Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association
NICEM	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
NICRAS	Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers
NIFL	Northern Ireland Football Leagues
NISFA	Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association
NIWFA	Northern Ireland Women's Football Association
NWFA	North-West of Ireland Football Association
OFMdFM	Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
PHA	Public Health Agency
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UU	University of Ulster
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
SINI	Sports Institute for Northern Ireland



We're not Brazil... We're Northern Ireland
Strategic Plan 2013/18

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Published by The Irish Football Association 2013
Strategy developed in association with Chambré Public Affairs LLP





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