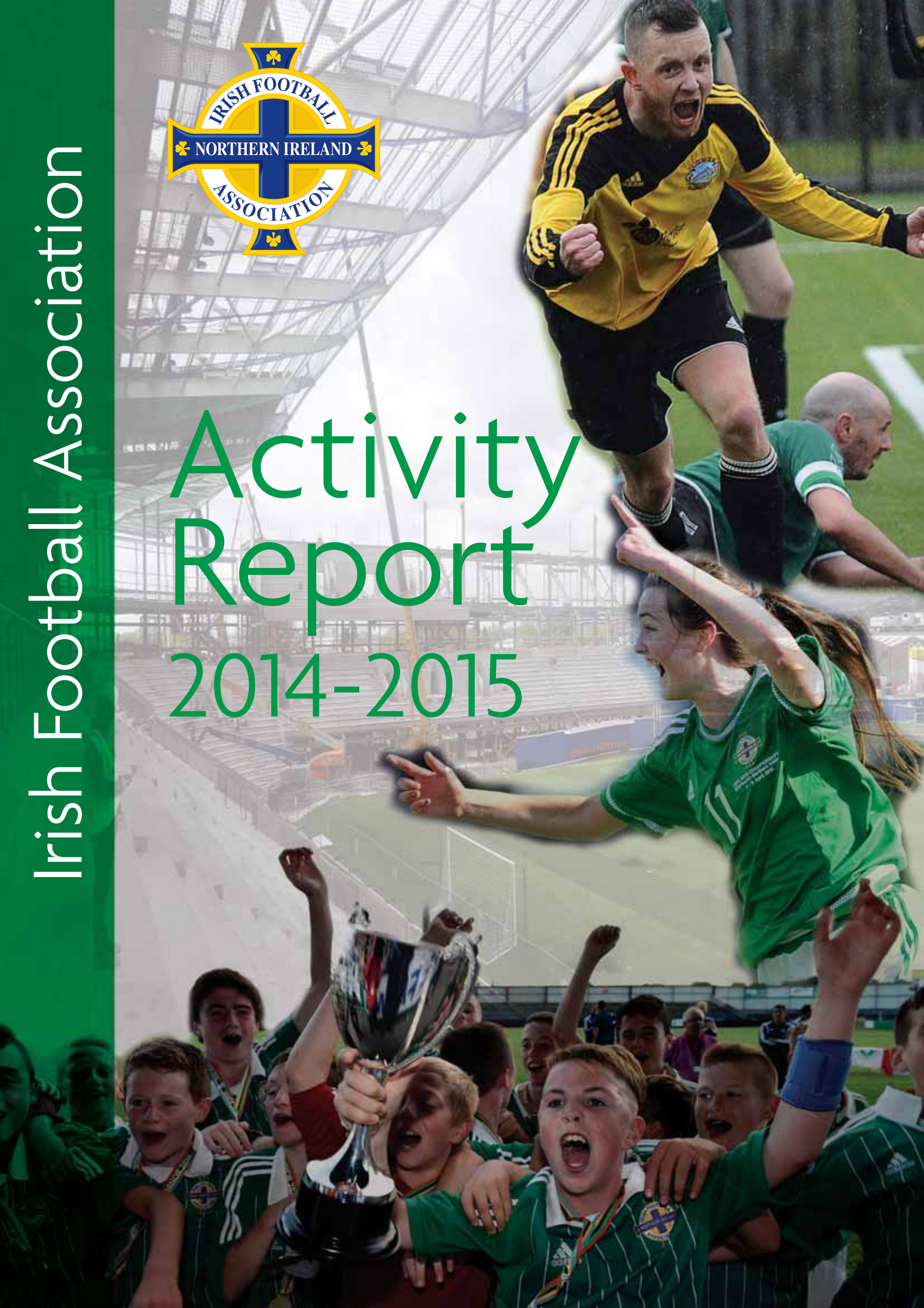




# Activity Report 2014-2015





A view of the new East and South Stand at the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park.





**Jim Shaw**  
President, Irish Football Association

Another year and how the Northern Ireland football landscape has changed over the past twelve months on the senior international front.

Northern Ireland is in second place in Group F in the qualifying phase for Euro 2016 with four wins out of five games and one point behind group leaders Romania. This is probably the best position we have ever been in for qualifying for a major tournament. The team has produced excellent performances in the games and we are now getting the results that are deserved. We are at the halfway stage in the France 2016 qualifiers and if we continue to replicate what we have done in the first five games we can qualify for the finals in France which would be a magnificent achievement for Northern Ireland.

I congratulate manager Michael O'Neill, his support staff and all the players on the transformation in our fortunes and long may it continue.

I also credit the supporters of the international team who have through their attendance and support at the games have been a key factor in the extra motivation for the players. I

particularly applaud the large number of supporters who have travelled to the three away games. I hope all our supporters are rewarded by a trip to France in 2016.

Apart from being in a strong qualifying position two Northern Ireland records have been established in the tournament, the first time we have won three consecutive competitive games and the first two away consecutive wins in competitive games.

The U17 men's international team had success in getting to the Elite stage of the U17 European Championship and performed admirably against Belgium and Netherlands, two of the best teams in Europe at this age.

At this time last year I referred to the introduction of our Elite Development Programme and after twelve months we can now see the early benefits of this approach and in time it will produce more top players for Northern Ireland and sustain success on the international stage.

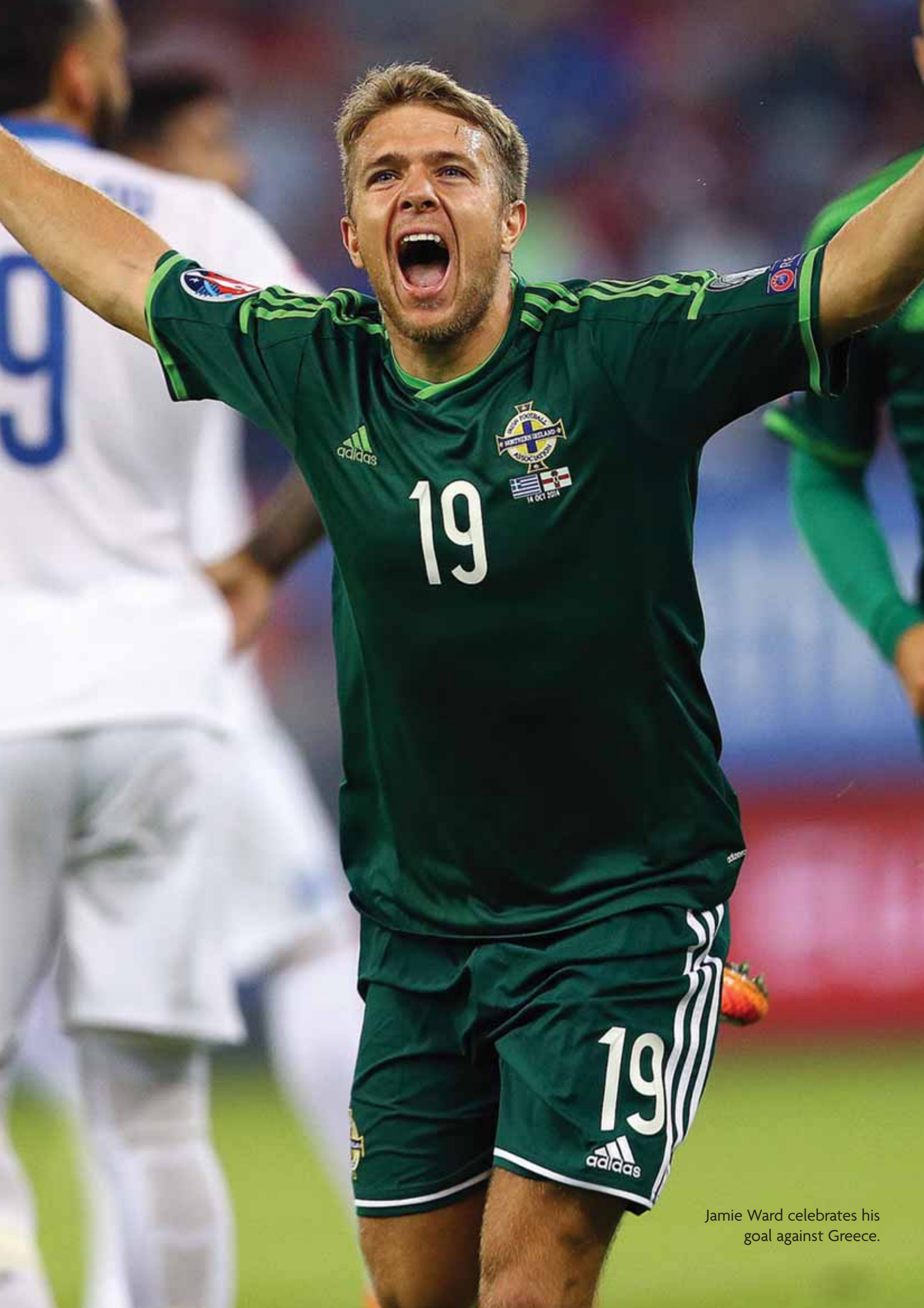
The Woman's U19 international team also reached the Elite stage of their European Championship and we hosted the Group games in Belfast in April past. With England and Norway, two of the top European countries in Women's football, we were outclassed but the experience of playing against the best will help in improving our girls for challenges in the future.

The Irish Football Association has been nominated as hosts for the European Women's U19 Championship finals in 2017 which in itself is an honour and demonstrates UEFA's confidence in our ability to host such a prestigious tournament.

The Association successfully hosted the 129th annual meeting of IFAB in Belfast at the end of February. Further details are included in the body of the report. Credit is due to the IFA staff who organised and managed this key event which is hosted on a rota basis by its five constituent members.

Looking at the domestic game it appears that all member Leagues throughout the football pyramid had a successful season with the Premier League at the top level being particularly competitive and





Jamie Ward celebrates his goal against Greece.

attracting increased levels of spectator support. I congratulate and thank all those volunteers throughout our game who by their commitment make it possible to maintain the domestic game at all the various levels.

In the Association competitions the Challenge Cup was won by Glentoran. Carrick Rangers won the Intermediate Cup and Harryville Homers won the Junior Cup with Glenavon III winning the Harry Cavan Youth Cup. Linfield Ladies won the 2014 Challenge Cup. Congratulations to the winners of our five knockout competitions.

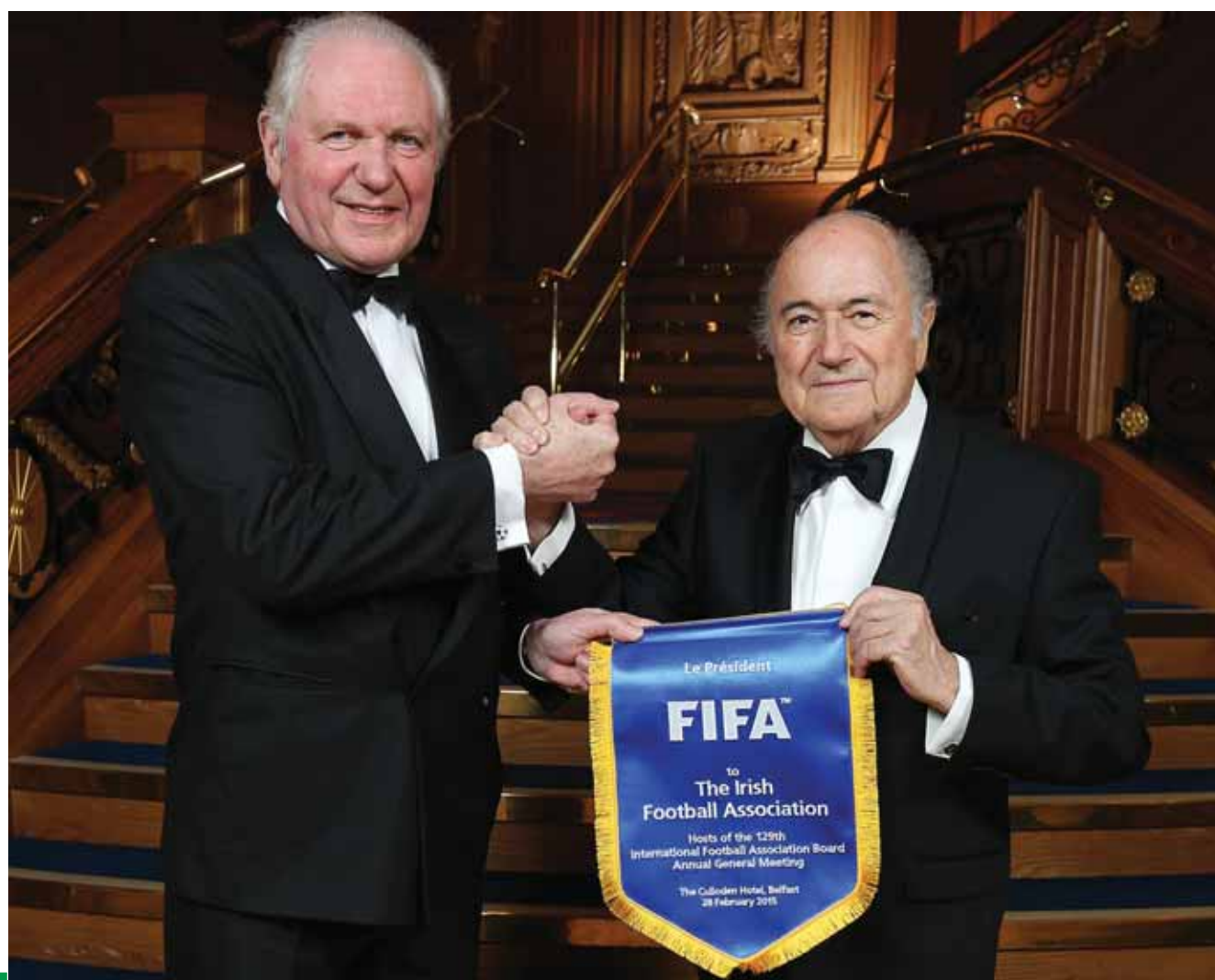
This time last year the physical redevelopment of Windsor Park, as the new National Football Stadium, was due to start after the Irish Cup Final and now the project is well advanced and due for completion by the end of this year. This will deliver the modern facilities we need for the future and help to ensure our place in international football. All our staff will vacate Windsor Avenue and other premises and relocate to the office accommodation within the East Stand of the Stadium. The recently identified problem with the West Stand will be disruptive but we will take all necessary actions to

ensure that the games in the short term are successfully played.

I would like to thank all Sponsors associated with the IFA for their support during the past year and I hope that their involvement yields for them the benefits that their input merits.

I also thank the press and media for their contribution and assistance to the promotion and success of football throughout Northern Ireland.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Board of the Association and the Chairman Dr. Les Caul, the Chief Executive, Patrick Nelson, the staff of the Association, the Council and all Committees for their support and dedication over the year and look forward to their continuing support to deliver the ambitious strategies that we are implementing.'



Jim Shaw receives a pennant from FIFA President Sepp Blatter.



Welcome to the 2014/15 edition of the Irish Football Association's activity report. As always, the intention of this report is to shine a light into all corners of the work we do on a daily basis, to show our various stakeholders how we utilise our various funds for the good of football right across the province.

It is only right at this point that I start by mentioning the two intertwined stories of the redevelopment of the National Football Stadium, and the resurgence of the senior men's international team. Work on the stadium started only a matter of hours after the 2014 Irish Cup Final was played, and twelve months later, the new look stadium is taking great shape, as anyone who has been to one of our games will know. The East or Railway Stand has now taken perfect shape, the South East Quadrant is all there, and the South Stand structure is now well past the half way line.

However as we all now know, subsidence in the West Stand was discovered shortly after the win over Finland at the end of March. This has meant some significant replanning of the remaining parts of the project, starting with making the West Stand safe by demolition. Also ahead of the next game with Romania in June we need to complete the spectator accommodation in the East Stand and beyond to ensure we maintain our 10,000 capacity. The project team are completely focused on achieving this goal, and are putting every effort into making the stadium ready not only for this game, but for the future of Northern Ireland football. The finished stadium will indeed be something everyone associated with our game can be proud of, a fitting home at last.

Writing more of maintenance, maintaining the form of the senior men's team is something we are all hoping for. Sitting second to Romania in Group F of the Euro 2016 qualifiers is a tremendous achievement so far and we hope our form can continue for the remaining five games. Being four points clear of third place and eight points clear of fourth place is a solid platform



**Patrick Nelson**  
Chief Executive Officer, Irish Football Association

from which Michael's squad can attack the second half of the campaign. Much work has been done, but we all hope much more is to come between now and the end of 2015.

Turning to work in the underage international squads, we qualified this season for the elite rounds of the under 17 and women's under 19 UEFA tournaments. Whilst we didn't manage on either of these occasions to progress to the final round, we did get the news that Northern Ireland has been awarded the hosting rights for the women's under 19 UEFA finals tournament in 2017. This is a great opportunity to showcase our country to the best young female footballers in Europe, and of course to play against them as an equal partner. Needless to say, the planning is already well underway for this prestigious tournament!

Jim Magilton is now two years into his mission to make our elite young players the best they can be and preparing them for their professional careers. A new structure has been put in place which significantly increases player contact time, and strength and conditioning regimes have been introduced. Jim has also taken over as under 21 manager, assisted by Damien Johnson, a 56 cap international we have been delighted to bring into the coaching team. Jim and his team have made great strides in two years, and there is much more to come

in this area.

Domestically, this has been Crusaders' year as they held off all comers to become the Danske Bank Premiership champions for the first time in eighteen years. Ten years after they were relegated, they have now managed to take all of the senior domestic honours back to the Shore Road. With Glentoran winning the Irish Cup for the second time in three years and Cliftonville retaining the NIFL League Cup, the senior honours were shared around this season, showing as it does the breadth of quality at the top of our game.

On the community relations front, we said goodbye to almost fifteen years of EU Peace funding, which we had used over all of that time to help make our communities better through football. The end of Peace funding for now has not however meant the end of our community development work, which has continued apace, especially in the areas of outreach, community and club development. I should also pay tribute here to our Homeless World Cup squad who travelled to Chile to compete last summer, and returned home with a trophy in only our second appearance in this competition.

Organisationally, more changes have taken place this season. We have set up a wholly owned subsidiary company, IFA Stadium Development Company Limited, whose remit will be to manage and commercialise the National Football Stadium when it is completed. Former IFA board member Trevor Annon chairs this company, and has been joined by Tim Husbands, John McCollum, Dr Cameron Ramsey, Hugh Wade and myself on the board. We have also completed the recruitment of our senior leadership team, with Oonagh O'Reilly becoming Director of Sales and Marketing, and Louise Doyle joining as

Director of the National Football Stadium. With a set of clear long term objectives in our sights, it is important that we continue to recruit the right people to help us hit our targets.

This season we also had the privilege of hosting the annual general meeting of the International Football Association Board, the global law making body of football, for the first time since 2009. Chaired by our President Jim Shaw, the top football lawmakers in the world, including FIFA President Joseph S. Blatter visited Belfast at the end of February. As well as the law revision meeting itself, our guests were taken to Stormont for dinner with First Minister Peter Robinson, and visited the award winning Titanic Belfast building.

Finally I would also like to use these pages to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers who make football in Northern Ireland what it is through their sterling efforts throughout the season. Without all of their work, you would not see all of the happy faces and enjoyment portrayed through this activity report, and I thank everyone involved for this. Whilst on the subject of staff and volunteers, I am delighted to note that seventeen of our people have now started UEFA's Certificate in Football Management, which will give each of them a formal and valued qualification by the time they graduate in December.

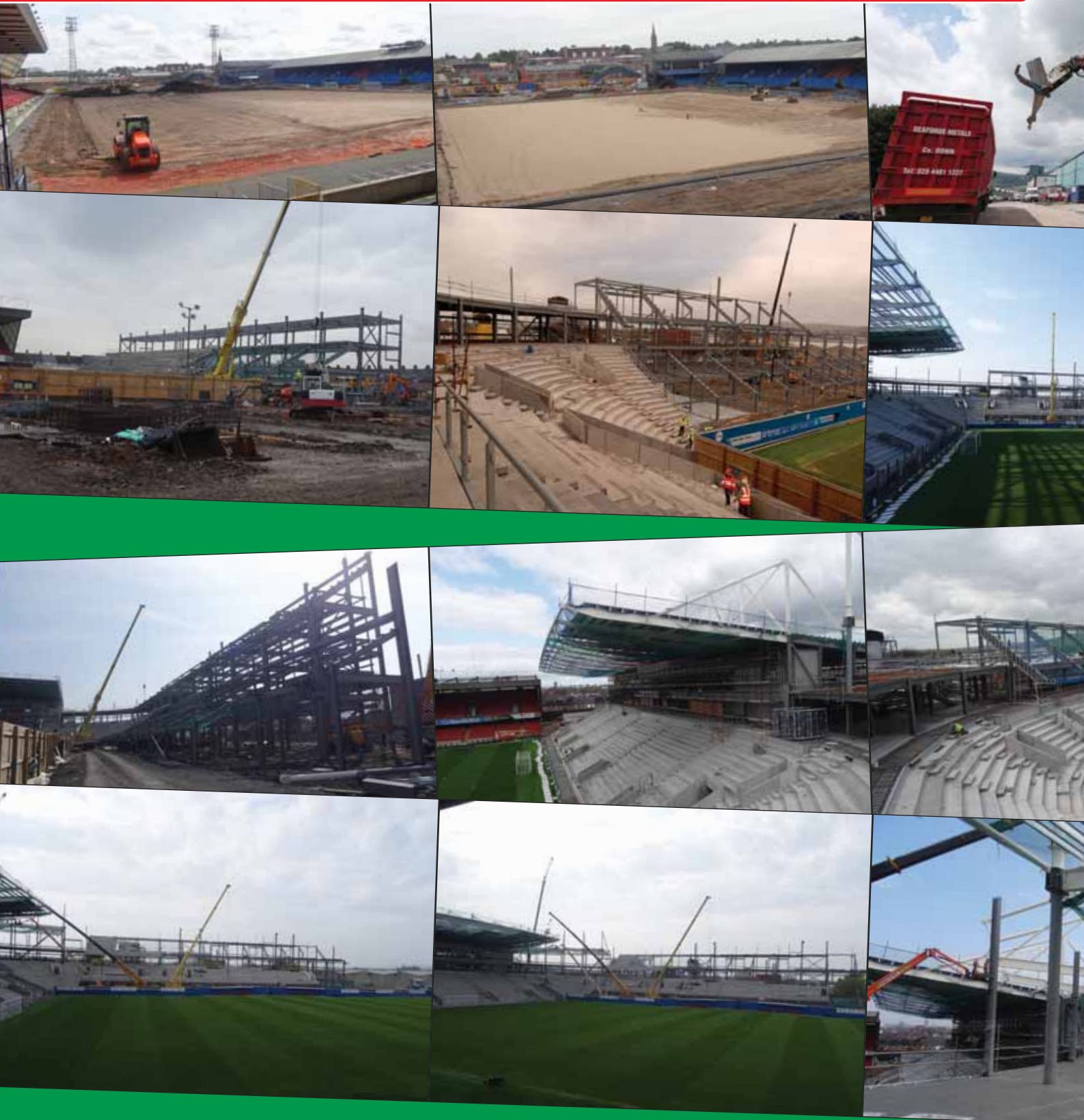
I hope you enjoy this report on our activities through the 2014/15 season, and like all of us, I'm sure you're already looking forward to next season!



Launching the IFA Child Safeguarding app for Android devices – Patrick Nelson, Jim Shaw, Carál Ní Chuilín and Jim Gamble.



# The National Football Stadium at Windsor Park

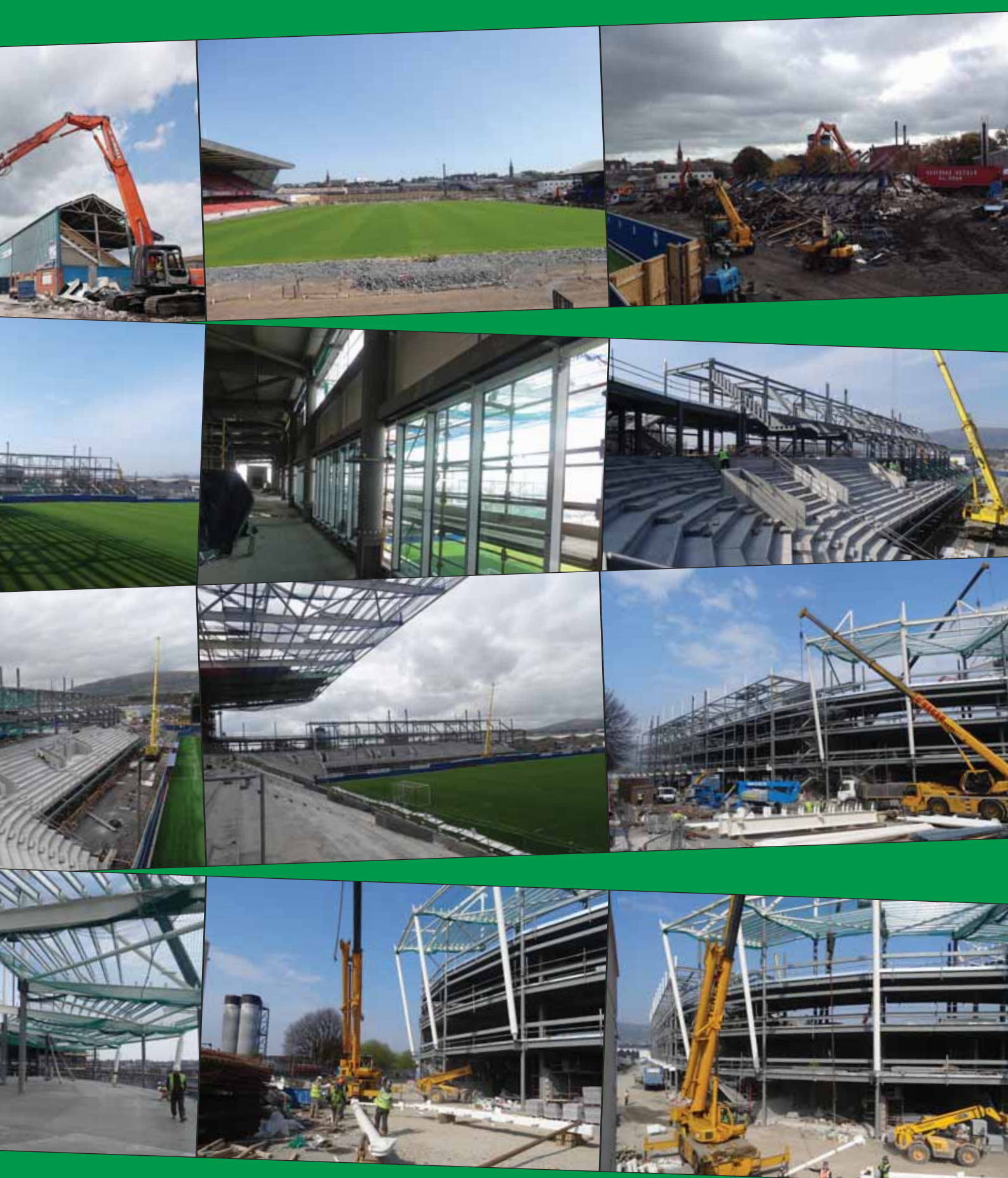


In the 12 months since the last update the work at the National Football Stadium has progressed well despite some unexpected site problems.

The major milestone on our critical path last year was the reconstruction of the pitch in advance of the October International against the Faeroe Islands which was achieved.

In the intervening period progress on the construction work has been significant. The East Stand which includes the new IFA Headquarters, the South East Quadrant and the South Stand are well underway and the new modern structure is changing the skyline in this area of Belfast. Internal concourses, stairwells and lift shafts, administration offices and welfare facilities are now filling out the East Stand. The spectator bowl has extended from the North East corner to beyond the centre line on the South. When the remainder of South structural steel work is in place





including the roof over the terraces the impact will be truly impressive. The refurbishment of the North Stand has also commenced and the upgrading of the seats, welfare facilities and concession outlets to the rear concourse will dramatically change this building.

We cannot ignore the recent damage caused to the West Stand and how this has potential to impact upon the programme for the overall delivery of our new stadium. We as an organisation are working with our consultant designers, our building contractor, the Department of Arts Culture and Leisure and the licencing authorities to minimise the impact. We are, along with UEFA, determined to host our games within this Euro campaign at our National Stadium.





# Men's International

## Senior Team

In May 2014, the Association accepted an invitation to play two matches in South America against World Cup bound Uruguay and Chile in their respective countries. The matches provided Michael O'Neill the opportunity to introduce some younger players to the squad and in both matches, the team performed very well despite losing narrowly (1-0 to Uruguay and 2-0 to Chile) but the benefits of the matches and the tour for the manager were invaluable.

In September, Northern Ireland began their Euro 2016 qualifying campaign with a match against Hungary in Budapest and despite losing a goal with 15 minutes remaining, Niall McGinn and Kyle Lafferty struck in the last 10 minutes to give the team a valuable 3 points in the opening match.

The winning habit continued in October when the Faroe Islands visited Belfast and goals from Gareth McAuley and Kyle Lafferty plus a penalty save from Roy Carroll ensured a 2-0 win and another 3 points. The second match in October saw Northern Ireland travel to Athens to play Greece in what many felt was to be the most difficult away fixture, but an early strike from Jamie Ward and a magnificent solo effort from Kyle Lafferty gave Northern Ireland a 2-0 victory and another 3 points giving a total of 9 points from the opening 3 matches.

In November Northern Ireland had another away fixture, this time in Bucharest to play Romania but unfortunately the winning streak was halted by the Romanians who scored 2 late goals to seal victory. Prior to the qualifying match in March 2015, The Association accepted an invitation to play a friendly match against Scotland at Hampden Park and in a tight match a single goal with 3 minutes remaining gave the home side the victory.

The Euro 2016 qualifying campaign re-commenced in March with a home match against Finland and two fantastic strikes from an in form Kyle Lafferty gave Northern Ireland the victory (2-1) and moved Northern Ireland to 12 points in the qualifying campaign.

The next qualifying match is in June 2015 at home to group leaders Romania.



## Under 21 Team

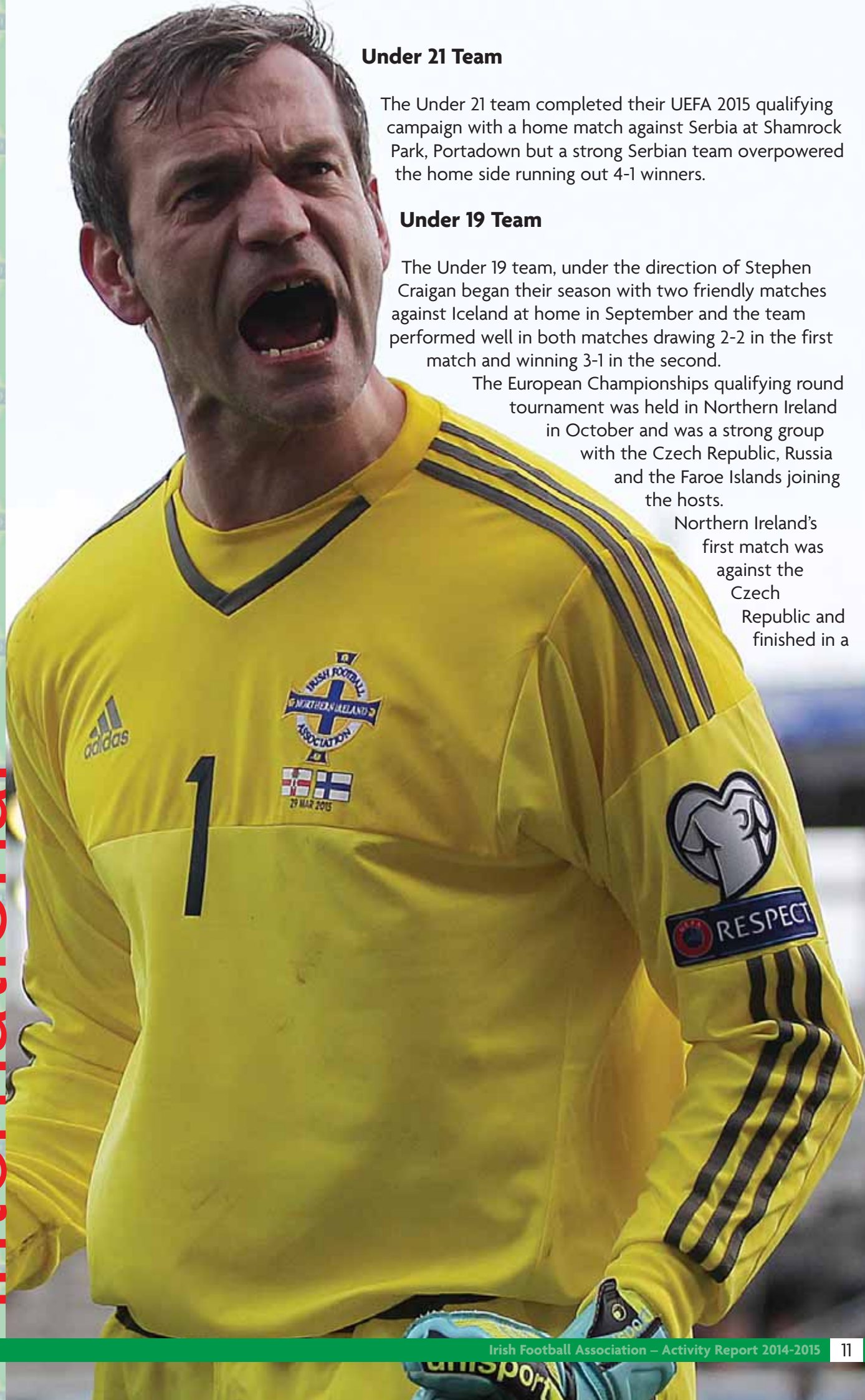
The Under 21 team completed their UEFA 2015 qualifying campaign with a home match against Serbia at Shamrock Park, Portadown but a strong Serbian team overpowered the home side running out 4-1 winners.

## Under 19 Team

The Under 19 team, under the direction of Stephen Craigan began their season with two friendly matches against Iceland at home in September and the team performed well in both matches drawing 2-2 in the first match and winning 3-1 in the second.

The European Championships qualifying round tournament was held in Northern Ireland in October and was a strong group with the Czech Republic, Russia and the Faroe Islands joining the hosts.

Northern Ireland's first match was against the Czech Republic and finished in a







2-0 victory for the visitors. The second match was equally as tough for the Northern Ireland team as they faced Russia who proved too strong winning 5-2 with Jordan Thompson (penalty) and Joshua Tracey getting the Northern Ireland goals.

In the final match Northern Ireland defeated the Faroe Islands 3-0 with Michael Newberry, Levi Ives and Jamie McDonagh getting the Northern Ireland goals. Unfortunately this victory was not enough for the Northern Ireland team to

progress to the Elite Round of the competition.

In March 2015, the Under 19's travelled to the Netherlands for a friendly match against the Dutch team and performed very well in a 1-1 draw. In November, the Under 19 team will travel to Russia for their UEFA qualifying round mini tournament for season 2015-16 where they will face the hosts, Norway and Slovakia.

### **Under 17 Team**

The Under 17 team competed in their UEFA Qualifying round mini tournament in Slovenia in September against Portugal, Turkey and hosts Slovenia.

In the first match, the Portuguese proved too strong running out 3-0 winners.

In the second match, Turkey were the opponents and in an exciting match Northern Ireland picked up the three points by winning 4-3 with Shea Conaty getting the winning goal in injury time. In the final group



match, Northern Ireland played Slovenia knowing that a victory would send them through to the Elite Round but neither side could find the breakthrough in a 0-0 draw.

However, Northern Ireland did qualify for the Elite round with 4 points in the tournament. In February 2015 Northern Ireland travelled to Iceland for two friendly matches as preparation for the Elite Round of the UEFA competition. Unusually the matches were played indoors due to the climatic conditions in the country at that time of the year but the matches proved useful for the manager despite losing both matches 1-0.

The Elite round of the UEFA competition found Northern Ireland playing in the Netherlands against Belgium, Georgia and the Netherlands.

In the first match, Belgium were the stronger team from the start and proved this by winning comfortably by four goals to nil.

The second match against the Netherlands saw Northern Ireland's best performance in the competition and in a hard fought and competitive match, Northern Ireland gained a very creditable 1-1 draw with Shayne Lavery getting the goal.

The last match in the tournament saw Northern Ireland face Georgia but unfortunately the team could not replicate the performance from the Netherlands match and went down 4-2 in the end.

## Women's International

### Senior Team

Northern Ireland's senior women's team continued their World Cup qualifying campaign in June 2014 with matches away to Bosnia & Herzegovina and at home to Scotland.

In the away match, the home side got the only goal of the game to take all three points in a closely fought match.

In the home match at Solitude, near neighbours Scotland were the visitors and it was them that found the net twice to record the victory.

The last group matches were in September with Northern Ireland travelling to Poland where they lost 2-0, before coming home to face the Faroe Islands.





In the home game at Mourneview Park, Rachel Furness scored twice and Julie Nelson also got on the scoresheet to give Northern Ireland a comfortable win and three points.

In February Scotland again travelled to Belfast this time for a friendly match and again proved too strong for the Northern Ireland team running out 4-0 winners in the end. In March 2015, Northern Ireland accepted an invitation to participate in the Istria Cup Tournament in Croatia as part of their preparation for the Euro 2017 qualifying series that commences in the autumn of 2015.

Northern Ireland played four matches in the tournament against Poland (0-2), Romania (0-1), Croatia (1-2) and Bosnia & Herzegovina (0-0, 4-5 on pens).

Despite losing each match narrowly, the tournament was valuable for the team as they look towards the new Euro 2017 qualifying tournament, in which Northern Ireland have been drawn with Italy, Switzerland, Czech Republic and Georgia at the draw in April.

### **Under 19 Team**

The women's Under 19 team began their preparations for the UEFA WU19 championships qualifying round competition with two friendly matches in Estonia in August 2014.

In the first match, Northern Ireland recorded a 2-0 victory while in the second, a single goal from Northern Ireland was enough to give them a second win in the week.

The Qualifying round competition of the UEFA championships was held in Finland and Northern Ireland were drawn against hosts Finland, Greece and Georgia.

The first match was surprisingly

**Rachel Furness celebrates scoring.**







straight forward for Northern Ireland as they recorded a huge 8-0 victory with Moya Feehan getting a hat trick, Chloe McGlade scoring twice, and Annie Timoney, Samantha Kelly and Victoria Carleton also scoring.

The second match against Greece was a tighter affair but a single goal from Moya Feehan was enough to give Northern Ireland victory and another three points in the tournament.

The last match against hosts Finland saw the home side record a 3-0 victory but the previous two wins were enough for Northern Ireland to qualify for the Elite round stage of the competition.

As preparation for the Elite Round, Northern Ireland again faced Estonia this time at home in February 2015 and recorded two huge victories (9-1 and 7-0).

The Elite stage of the UEFA competition was a different matter with the team facing strong opposition in Switzerland, England and Norway. The tournament was held in Belfast over Easter and in the first match, Northern

Ireland pushed the Swiss team all the way but in the end a single goal was enough for the Swiss to register a 1-0 victory and take all three points.

In the second match, Northern Ireland faced neighbours England but despite taking the lead through Aimee Mackin, the English team were too strong and ran out 9-1 winners in the end. The final match in the competition was against Norway who were another very strong team. From the kick off this proved to be the case with the Norwegians eventually running out 8-1 winners.

This tournament saw the infamous 18 second match when UEFA ordered the last 18 seconds of the Norway v. England match to be replayed – starting with a re-taken penalty – after the referee made a technical error in restarting the match incorrectly in law. The penalty was scored and both England (as group winners), and Norway (as best runner-up) qualified for the final tournament to be played in Israel.

### Under 17 Team

The women's Under 17 team began their preparations for the UEFA WU17 championships qualifying round competition with two friendly matches in Wales in August 2014.

In the first match Northern Ireland were the better team and finished the match comfortable winners by 4 goals to 2 with Sarah Connolly (2), Emma McMaster and Chloe Orr getting the goals.

In the second match Wales ran out winners by 4 goals to 1 with Aiobheann Jones getting Northern Ireland's goal.

The Qualifying round competition was hosted by Austria and in the first match Northern Ireland went down 6-0 to the Austrians.

The second match against the Czech Republic was a closer affair but in the end the Czech team won 2-0.

The last group match saw Northern Ireland face the Ukraine and in an entertaining match Northern Ireland won 3-2 to finish the competition on a high. The goalscorers in this match were Sarah Connelly, Rebecca Bassett and Chloe Orr. Unfortunately that victory was not enough to progress to the Elite stage of the competition.



## Club NI

2014 saw a change in our player development structures in Northern Ireland. An elite player development programme commenced in February 2014 as the County Excellence Programme had run its course.

The Elite Player Development Programme, named Club NI, was set up to develop the next generation of Senior Internationals and aiming to create a club like mentality amongst our young players. New staff were appointed under the guidance of the Elite Performance Director Jim Magilton.

The former County Excellence Programme was 1.5 hours per week for 24 weeks with the Club NI programme now increasing contact time to 35 weeks for 6 hours per week. The addition of the Sports Institute of Northern Ireland (SINI) has been a major change and welcome boost to the programme with SINI taking the lead on the Strength and Conditioning elements of the programme.

One of the main pillars of development for

any Elite Player Programme is the games element. This section has increased with games now being played from u12 upwards. It was a successful year for the young players in terms of results and performances (we do not use results as a barometer for success in youth development) as our u12 and u13 won the cross border tournament, our u13s then went on to win the Milk Cup beating Manchester Utd 5-1 in the final in what was a memorable performance for everyone who had the pleasure of watching it.

It was a busy summer and our u13 development squad were narrowly beating in the Final of the Galway Cup, again some fine football played during that week. Our u14s participated in the Hibernia Trophy in Dublin for the first time competing against Celtic, Wolves, Norwich and Sunderland. A mixture of u14/15 players took part in the Mayo International Cup finishing a creditable 3rd place. Additionally to the core 35 week programme summer camps were utilised and increase contact time and talent ID. Our u16's started their international careers with a trip to Estonia in May producing two good performances and coming away with 2 draws. The autumn period was jam packed with games as usual for the u16's with games against Finland (home) and Poland (away) in preparation for the Sky Sports Victory Shield. The Victory Shield campaign started off with a fantastic performance away in Scotland and a 2-1 win. England were next up and narrowly defeated our boys thanks to a free kick. With a chance of sharing the tournament going into the last game the Welsh arrived Ballymena Showgrounds. Our Welsh counterparts came out on top and ended up winning the Victory Shield outright. Our u17's qualified for the Elite round of the European Champions after beating Turkey 4-3 and drawing with Slovenia. The boys travelled to Holland to take on the hosts, picking up a magnificent draw. The 2 other games against Belgium and Georgia didn't lead to the wins we wanted and thus we didn't qualify for the Finals.

Easter 2015 was a memorable time for the 2000 and 2001 players. The 2000's started their international careers with a fantastic display against Belgium, drawing 0-0, and then the next day losing to Turkey. The 2001's represented Northern Ireland at the Mediterranean International Cup making it through to the last 16 with 4 wins and playing some sublime football only to be knocked out by finalists Real Madrid in what was a tournament that will live long in the memories of the young players.





## Regional Girls Excellence Programme

The Regional Girls Excellence Programme has continued to evolve and improve throughout the year with the girls now receiving more coaching time than ever before. Hosted at four venues throughout the province The Dub in Belfast, University of Ulster at Jordanstown, MUSA in Cookstown and Scroggie Road Limavady the programme provides top quality coaching and development for 170 girls aged from 9 – 15 years old. Grouped in three age bands 1999/01, 2002/03 and 2004/05 the girls get 30 sessions of 1.5 hours throughout the year. This has now been complemented with a regular Monday night “Academy” session where the sessions are focused on individual improvements and the sessions are based around what the players have identified they would like to work on. Technique is given greater importance and ensuring the players feel comfortable on the ball.

There have been monthly Festival days where the squads all come together and play inter region games at the three age groups. The players are now faster, physically, tactically and technically stronger than ever before. With the players and staff all buying into the development process about talent not only being good at the moment, it's about

committing to being good in the future. The players are all gifted and at the beginning of their learning process including regular fitness testing has enabled data to be produced from which all the girls are given specific programmes to work on at home as well as on their technical skills.

This year the quality support given by SportNI has given an extra incentive to the programme, enabling their staff to give presentations on the Parent, Player, Coach Triangle and the importance of all three parties in the development of the young

players. Presentations were given to the parents at each centre as well as the players and coaches. These events were well supported and culminated with insightful Q+A sessions and positive feedback from all involved.

Regular profiling of the girls takes place with reports completed after each session or game and reviewed not only to study the player but also used as analysis to help players and coaches identify future session requirements and areas of improvement.

All four regions are represented again this year in the U15 Bob Doherty squad. Their preparation has been assisted by a number of players and staff visiting the Aston Villa Academy in October to train alongside and play against the Aston Villa girls. This trip was funded by UEFA and it was a great learning experience for everyone involved. This squad again is the first step for the girls on the International pathway and from it the squad for the UEFA U16 Development tournament is selected.

The exciting news for the players born in 1999 and 2000 was that with Northern Ireland being selected to host the UEFA U19 Women's Finals in 2017 they would be eligible to play in this tournament. A great incentive to really apply themselves to be the best they possibly can be.













Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA, at IFAB AGM.

## The International Football Association Board (IFAB)

The IFA acted as host for the 2014/15 IFAB cycle with the inaugural meetings of the new consultative bodies taking place in Belfast in November chaired by Patrick Nelson. These groups the Football Advisory Panel and the Technical Advisory Panel saw delegates travelling from all over the world – New Zealand, Japan, USA amongst others and included a World Cup winner – Christian Karembeu (France 1998), a former Premiership star - Shaka Hislop ex West Ham and Newcastle Utd) and the most identifiable referee – Pierluigi Collina (now Head of Refereeing at UEFA). These groups discussed the use of technology, hand ball and the Denial of an Obvious Goalscoring Opportunity (the so called triple Punishment). These meetings which fed into the Annual Business Meeting helped set the agenda for the Annual General Meeting, the only meeting which has the power to change the laws, in February at the Culloden Hotel which was chaired by the IFA president Jim Shaw.

The AGM introduced the concept of return (rolling ) substitutes and further debated the triple Punishment issue with FIFA receiving permission to investigate further with their Disciplinary Committee. Sepp Blatter led the FIFA delegation as the focus of the world footballing media fell on Northern Ireland. The IFA remains proud of its role within the IFAB and is committed to playing a full role in all its work with IFA representative involved in the redrafting of the Laws of the Game which it is hoped will make the Laws easier to understand for players, referees and fans alike. At the IFAB meeting Sepp Blatter announced FIFA's intention to support the renovation of the gravestone of William McCrum, the inventor of the penalty kick, in Milford, Co. Armagh. A generous gesture which is greatly appreciated by the Association and AONISC. The IFA received high praise from all the delegations for the organisation of the weekend, and we look forward to hosting again in 2020.



Inaugural meeting of the Football Advisory Panel

(Back row) – Gijs de Jong (KNVB), Ioan Lupescu (UEFA), Shaka Hislop (CONCACAF), Andreas Rettig (Bundesliga). (Front row) – Christian Karembeu (Oceania), Patrick Nelson (IFA), Richard Jobson (FIFPro).



The Association continues to provide competitive opportunities for all its affiliated clubs through the five national cup competitions – The Irish Cup, Intermediate Cup, Junior Cup, Harry Cavan Youth Cup and Women's Cup – and this season as usual has seen lots of enthusiasm and passion as the competitions took place.

Linfield Ladies were the first club to lift silverware with their penalty shoot-out victory over Newry City Ladies at Bangor in the Women's Cup, whilst Glenavon III defeated Linfield Rangers (1-0) in the Harry Cavan Youth Cup at Mourneview Park.

In the Intermediate Cup, all conquering Carrick Rangers added this prestigious old cup to the Championship 1 trophy and the Steel and Sons Cup when they defeated H&W Welders by 3 - 1, whilst Harryville Homers retained the Junior Cup coming out of the 229 initial participants to defeat Rosemount Rec by 3 - 1 at Coagh.

In the Irish Cup a bumper 8000 crowd attended the Oval to witness a titanic struggle between Glentoran and Portadown. The Final was played at the Oval due to the ongoing difficulties at Windsor Park and the Association would like to thank Glentoran for the use of their ground and the authorities at Belfast City Council and Sport NI for their help in staging the match and permitting the use of temporary seats to increase the possible attendance. The naming rights for the final were once again granted to Marie Curie and the Association is delighted to be able to increase the profile of this wonderful cause in this way, and to have such a deserving organisation to be our partners. On the pitch itself Glentoran continued their run of success in this competition with David Scullion's goal being the difference between the teams in a match played in most unseasonal torrential rain.

Glentoran celebrate their Irish Cup victory.



At the beginning of the season Crusaders and Linfield both reached the second qualifying round of the UEFA Europa League which will help improve the Association's co-efficient with UEFA.

As with most seasons this one has seen its share of challenges and controversies. The Association's Judicial bodies – Disciplinary and Appeals - have been kept busy with the independent legal chairmen and vice chairmen exercised over issues as divergent as the ordering off from the technical area of a player-manager – the so-called 'Gary Hamilton affair' - the playing of a player who was suspended – Ruari Harkin – and the suspension of a player for a head butt incident which was subsequently overturned at appeal – Chris Casement. These issues and others have shown the importance of having independent, legally led judicial bodies which can deal with matters objectively. This has proved to be a strength for the Association, not everyone will always agree with the decisions taken, but the strength of having such unbiased, independent structures is the assurance and

It's great to score a goal in the Youth Cup semi-final.





confidence that they provide for the Association and the wider game.

Once again the IFA Regions Cup squad, managed by Harry McConkey, has qualified for the Final Tournament of the competition which will be played in Dublin in June, where they will compete in a group made up of regional squads from Croatia, Poland and Germany. Qualification in the tournament in Moldova saw Harry's team defeat sides from Moldova (5-1), Ukraine (4-0) and Spain (1-0) with Richard Thompson of Dollingstown scoring 5 goals. The continued success of this squad provides opportunities over a two year period for non-senior amateur players to compete at international level and the Association appreciates the continuing hard work of Harry McConkey in preparing and managing this squad.

## CLUB LICENSING & FACILITIES

The Club Licensing process continues to set out defined quality standards and procedures by which clubs are assessed for continual improvement against sporting,



infrastructure, personnel and administrative, legal and financial criteria.

Nine UEFA Licences, 12 Domestic Licences and 2 Championship Licence were awarded for season 2014-15. The unit also successfully completed the annual UEFA / SGS audit confirming that the Association as licensor continues to comply with the minimum requirements for assessing application.

The current licensing cycle to award licences for season 2015-16 saw a significant increase in the number of Championship clubs (15) engaging in the process, many for the first time, as clubs prepare for the introduction of a mandatory Championship Licence during season 2015-16 for the award of licences for season 2016-17. This will coincide with the full implementation of the Northern Ireland Football league restructure to create a second senior tier of football in Northern Ireland to commence in season 2016-17.



IFA Regions Cup squad.



## Referees

It has been a busy, challenging, but ultimately successful year in Northern Ireland for referees at all levels. Development has been the focus with focus on succession planning at all levels and a full review of refereeing taking place.

In Europe Northern Ireland's referees were active in World Cup Qualifying, UEFA Champions League and Europa League, UEFA Youth Champions League and a number of Under 17 & Under 19 tournaments. Arnold Hunter was promoted to UEFA 1st Category after successful Europa League group stage outings at Villarreal and HJK Helsinki with Tim Marshall and David Anderson both attaining their FIFA badges in December 2014. In March 2015 they were appointed to their first UEFA tournament officiating an Elite Under 17 qualification tournament in Germany.

At grassroots level the first year of the Young Referees' Programme proved successful with 16 young referees completing the first year. The attitude of these referees has been first class throughout the year, showing that the future is bright for referees in Northern Ireland. Oisín Mahon, Niall Gallagher and Shane McGonigle travelled to the Liverpool County FA for an exchange programme and feedback on all three officials was extremely positive. Oisín and Shane were joined by Ryan Kelsey and Andrew Nethery in officiating at the Harry Cavan Youth Cup final in April.

The Senior referees and assistants took part in a 4 day training course held by FIFA in February 2015 at the Europa Hotel, Belfast. The course was an intensive 4 day course looking at Laws of the Game, tactical approach, fitness and consistency. Guest instructor Steve Bennett gave a valuable insight into FIFA training techniques and this has allowed us to feedback the guidelines referee observers, championship officials and grassroots referees embedding a consistent training programme from top to bottom.

It has also been a busy year for female referees with Ruth-Anne Wright, Vikki Finlay and Lauren Murray taking part in a development programme held by the English FA at Warwick University. This has allowed them to get feedback from experienced female FIFA officials in England and work with development officials from all levels as part of the programme. Vikki and Rachel Smith will officiate at the upcoming UEFA Under 19 tournament being held in Northern Ireland.

A special mention must go to our Referee Coaches who have completed well over 200 reports on referees and assistant referees this year. David Redfern and Tommy Fairfield have been providing assistant referees' with specialist feedback since the start of the season with Basil Marshall and Norman Cowie working with grassroots referees to assist in development and work on talent ID throughout the country.



Ian McNabb on a recent referee exchanges in Malta.





## Grassroots Programme

All 13 Grassroots Development Officers (GDO's) have now been realigned to match the new 'Super Council' regions commencing on April 1st 2015. To reflect this change GDO's will now have the title of Regional Grassroots Development Officers.

### McDonald's Programme

A new 4 year sponsorship has been agreed with Mc Donald's. The new programme will focus on supporting the Foundation Mark scheme (which replaces the old Club Accreditation) and their volunteers to help raise the standards of grassroots football across Northern Ireland and improve the experience for everyone involved.

As part of the programme, McDonald's will be giving Northern Ireland Foundation Mark clubs with a junior team the opportunity to order a brand new Adidas strip every year for the next four seasons. This equates to over 2,100 kits over the course of the four-year partnership.

To celebrate the announcement, former Arsenal captain Martin Keown, joined with McDonald's Head of Irish Football, Pat Jennings and Northern Ireland Women's captain Ashley Hutton to launch the new deal and kit scheme at the Play Ball Facility on the Stormont Estate in October 2014 were joined by the deputy First Minister who lent his support to the new community partnership.

Other existing programmes will continue as part of the new Mc Donald's sponsorship and these include; the very successful Small-Sided Games programme with approx. 9000 children / 884 teams playing 5, 7 or 9 a side at over 50 venues throughout Northern Ireland and Coaching Masterclasses young people for coaches/volunteers at Small-Sided Games Centres.

### Nutty Krust Holiday Camps

Following on from a new extended Sponsorship deal with Irwin's Bakery the Regional Grassroots Development Officers delivered Nutty Krust Holiday







Cerebral Palsy Team

Camps at, Easter, Summer and Halloween for children aged 5-13. Participation were as follows:

- 25 Easter Camps 2014 – 1320, 10 % up on the previous year
- 59 Summer Camps 2104 – 3500, 10 % up on the previous year
- 25 Halloween 2014- 967, 10 % up on the previous year

### **Masters (35+)**

Each RGDO has been tasked as part of their work programme to deliver a 10 week training programme for players 35+ in their local region. This programme is to encourage people who have for various reasons have stopped participating in football to rejuvenate their passion in playing football and to meet new friends.

## **Disability Football**

### **Coaching**

A comprehensive coaching programme continues to develop in Special Education. Free coaching blocks remain very popular with 35 schools receiving coaching in this period with over 1000 pupils benefitting.

### **Competition**

17 Cup competitions for the various ages, abilities and ELB's took place throughout the year involving 40+ schools and support units and involving over 500 pupils.

### **National Winners**

Coca-Cola FA Cup Under 15 SLD Schools – Sandleford, Coleraine

Coca-Cola FA Cup Over 15 SLD Schools – Knockavoe, Strabane  
Primary MLD Schools – Harberton, Belfast  
Yrs 8 – 10 MLD Schools – Coleraine College  
Yrs 11+ MLD Schools – Park, Belfast

### **Coaching**

The IFA continues to work with local councils, schools and disability organisations to develop 'after-school' activities. There are currently 45 Clubs in Northern Ireland providing disability football opportunities on a regular structured basis. These clubs cater for various ages and abilities and are a key area in the provision of opportunities for those with a disability in NI with over 600 registered players.

### **Competition**

Regional Leagues operate in 2 areas for Disability Football Clubs in NI with 25 Teams competing.

### **2014 League Results**

Region 1 Winners

Premiership – Foyle Strikers, Londonderry

Region 2

Premiership - Belvoir Blades A

Championship – Belvoir Blades C

Mid-week League Premiership – Lisburn City Stars

2014 Community Cup. 52 teams from all over the UK and Ireland participated in this annual 5-a-side competition for adults with a disability at the Billy Neill complex in Dundonald. There are 4 ability bands (divisions) in this competition.

Winners

Premiership – Foyle Belles (Londonderry)

Championship – Belfast DFC

League 1 – Down SO (Downpatrick)

League 2 – Llandudno D (Wales)

The Department has secured substantial funding from the George Best Foundation through The Mary Peters Trust that will aid the development of this flagship disability cup competition over the next 5 years.





Foyle Belles, 2014 Community Cup winners.

## Deaf Football

Exciting new areas of development are progressing in the area of Deaf Football thanks to a strong working partnership with Belfast Deaf United and Action on Hearing Loss. Areas of note are an Under 18 section of Belfast Deaf UTD a Womens programme and Veterans programs in the greater Belfast area.

Belfast Deaf UTD won the 2014 British Deaf Cup for an impressive 3rd time in 4 years.

## Visual Impairment Football

Local club side Lisburn Rovers continues to operate in partnership with RNIB. Participation continues to grow and competitive opportunities are accessed through the UK VI League.

## Cerebral Palsy

The Northern Ireland Cerebral Palsy Squad played in the 2014 European Championships in Maia, Portugal. They finished in a credible 8th place. Some fine performances included a fine 1-0 victory over Germany that meant NI qualified for the 2015 World Championships. These will be held in England in June 2015.

## Learning Disability

There have been mixed results and for both the Under 19 and Senior Learning Disability Squads in 2014.

In friendly internationals the Seniors beat Wales 4-1 but lost by the same margin to England.

The U19 squad unfortunately finished in 3rd place in the 2014 Home Nations Championships that were successfully held in Belfast. They lost 2-0 to Scotland and drew 2-2 with the Republic of Ireland.

## Powerchair Football

There has been great development in the area of

Powerchair Football in the past year. Substantial funding was secured through DCAL for the purchase of the specialist chairs required to play the game. This has enabled an additional club to develop in Lisburn called Lightning. Together with the successful Trailblazers club in Newtownabbey there are now 20 players participating in this exciting strand of disability football.

## Coach Education

Coach education remains an important supporting structure in this area of football development. In this period 8 x IFA Level 1 Coaching Disabled Footballers Awards were delivered to nearly 200 coaches. 1 x IFA Level 2 Coaching Disabled Footballers Award was also delivered in this period to 16 coaches.





## Primary Schools Curriculum Sports Programme (DENI)

The Curriculum Sports programme is funded by Department of Education for Northern Ireland and is now in its 8th year. The Irish FA employs 30 full-time specialist coaches with the aim to support and complement existing current physical education programmes to help develop the Physical Literacy of Foundation and Key stage 1 pupils in Primary Schools throughout Northern Ireland. The programme seeks to improve the participant's health and well-being and encourages them to embrace a healthy lifestyle from a young age.

The lessons provided also engage children in a range of cross curricular activities to help support their literacy and numeracy skills both through class based sessions and home work projects. This year 218 schools

were involved in the programme. This equated to over 877 classes a week with 21,400 children and 1000 teachers and classroom assistants benefiting from this initiative.

During extra-curricular time, the Irish FA Primary School Coaches have also delivered a number of complementary initiatives such as Fit Families, Club Development and Coach Education workshops.

The Fit Families workshops provided opportunities for parents and their children to come together through the medium of physical well-being. The project helped provide family members with some practical and theoretical advice about how to improve lifestyle through physical activity, diet and sleep.

Club Development and Coach Education workshops were delivered throughout the year to volunteer club coaches with the aim of demonstrating how to develop fundamental movement skills and physical literacy and how this has a direct impact on a participant's ability to become competent in sports specific tasks in the future.

The Irish FA Primary School Coaches have also been active in a variety of Grassroots programmes such as Player Development Programmes, Small Sided Games Programmes and Holiday Camp coaching.

A third of Primary School Coaches have been involved in coaching in the Irish FA Club NI and Girls Excellence Programmes. The rest of the staff have been involved in youth club player development programmes across Northern Ireland. The Primary School Coaches have continued to work with the Regional Grassroots Development Officers in the coordination of Small Sided Games programmes for 5-a-side to 9-a-side across 30 venues throughout Northern Ireland. This partnership has continued in the delivery of Holiday Camps during the Easter, Summer and Halloween periods.







## Women's Domestic Football

The 2014 – 15 season kicked off for the Women's Domestic Football Unit with the launch of the IFA Girls' & Women's Football Plan (2014 – 2018) at the Culloden Hotel. The event was attended by number of IFA senior officials and FIFA Senior Women's Football Development Manager Mayi Cruz Blanco. The IFA Girls' and Women's Football Plan fits neatly into the overarching IFA Corporate Strategy and identifies key objectives within the female game for the next four years.

The eighth year of the IFA Schools Senior Cup produced an enthralling final at Ballymena Showgrounds where Holy Cross College beat Thornhill College 4 – 1 courtesy of goals from Chelsea Sherrin (3) and Katy McGillian.

The Women's Domestic Football Unit delivered the FIFA 'Live Your Goals' Schools Super Festival on Wednesday 11 June at City

of Belfast Playing Fields (Mallusk). 1,020 post primary schoolgirls from 52 schools (100 teams) throughout Northern Ireland attended the event. Our Lady and St Patricks College (Knock) won the Year 8/9 section while Down High Grammar claimed the Year 10/11 section.

As part of the FIFA 'Live Your Goals' Programme the IFA hosted the first ever FIFA 'Live Your Goals' Press Conference for the women's international team prior to the World Cup qualifying match against Scotland in June. Ashley Hutton & Alfie Wylie represented the IFA while Gemma Fay (Scottish captain) and Anna Signeul (Scottish

National Coach) were also in attendance. A number of representatives from the media were in attendance at the press conference including BBC Online, Cool FM and representatives from the Scottish FA. In addition, the Women's Domestic Football Unit organised a number of FIFA 'Live Your Goals' Match Day Activities at Solitude prior to kick off, at half time and after the match. These included face painters, stilt walkers and balloon modellers.

In July the Association was invited by the Belfast Lord Mayor Nicholla Mallon to organise and deliver a 'Festival of Girls' Football' in the grounds of the City Hall. Six Belfast teams attended the event which was played in the new IFA inflatable football pitch.

Organised in conjunction with the Women's World Cup Qualifying matches, nine Girls' Football Roadshows were delivered throughout the province. An impressive 1,024 primary and post-primary girls attended the roadshows.

1,004 girls participated in the IFA Schools Indoor Cup Regional Heats. Organised into three age groups (Year 8/9; Year 10/11 & Year 12+) the heats were delivered within six regions (Derry & North Tyrone; Fermanagh & South Tyrone; North Down; Antrim; South Down &



Armagh; Belfast) and involved 136 teams from 55 schools. The IFA Schools Indoor Cup National Finals took place on Thursday 20 November at the Valley Leisure Centre. 175 girls from 24 schools participated in the event. In the Year 8/9 category Parkhall College (Antrim) were crowned champions after defeating St Louise's Comprehensive 2 - 0. In the Year 10/11 section the final was won by St Louise's Comprehensive with a 1-0 victory over St Mary's College (Derry). In the Year 12 + section St Louise's triumphed against Holy Cross College in a penalty shoot-out (6-5) after the game finished 0 - 0 in normal time.

As part of the of the IFA 'Reach for your goals' programme, funded through the UEFA Women's Football Development Programme, 10 women undertook the UEFA 'C' Licence between 27 October – 2 November at Seaview (Belfast).

The annual Women's Club Development Conference took place on Saturday 22 November at Rathmore Grammar School. Organised into two streams; one for coaches and one for administrators, the day involved 45 volunteers from 26 girls' and women's clubs. In addition to working with club officials the event gave 12 girls aged between 12 and 15 years of age the opportunity to undertake an introductory referee course. The innovative course was aimed at encouraging more girls to get involved in refereeing and outlined the referee development pathway currently in existence for females in Northern Ireland.

The IFA Women's Futsal Cup concluded on Friday 28 November. Organised over four consecutive Fridays at the Shankill Leisure Centre the competition involved 8 teams and 89 players. Cliftonville Ladies overcame Linfield Ladies in the final to claim their first trophy in the six year history of the event.

Supported by Belfast City Council the women's football season concluded with the Female Football Fiesta at the Shankill Leisure Centre on Sunday 14 December. Incorporating U13, U15, seniors and a new masters section the event involved 196 players and included Belfast Deaf United Ladies and Women's World United. This was



the first time that a disability team and an ethnic minority team had competed alongside the mainstream women's football clubs. Both teams thoroughly enjoyed participating and gave a great account of themselves at the tournament. Belfast Lord Mayor Nichola Mallon was in attendance at the event and praised the IFA for their continued work in developing women's football.

The IFA Female Football Leaders Programme Graduation took place on Friday 16 January at Stormont Buildings. Hosted by MLA Michelle McIlveen the graduation celebrated the achievements of the seven female leaders.

The IFA Girls Junior Futsal Cup concluded on Sunday 2 February at the Shankill Leisure Centre. 38 teams at U11, U13, U15 and U17 participated in the four week programme which involved 294 players.

112 girls from 6 schools (Belfast Royal Academy, Girls Model, Mercy College, Hazelwood College, Lismore Comprehensive and Clounagh JHS) attended two pilot Schools' Futsal Tournaments in Shankill Leisure Centre and Craigavon Leisure Centre on the 26 and 27 February, respectively.

## Coach Education

### National Coaching Weeks 2014

During June 2014, the Irish FA Coach Education department delivered a wide range of courses attracting a record number of local coaches as well as top international coaches and players from around the world. A total of 310 coaches attended the various courses including the UEFA Pro, A and B Licences, the IFA Goalkeeping Diploma, the IFA Youth Certificate, Coaching Disabled Footballers Awards and other grassroots courses.



## Regional Courses

In the past year the Irish FA organised an increased number of Regional UEFA B Licence (part 1) courses throughout the province (Greysteel in September, Seaview in October, Greysteel again in January, Belfast in March and Omagh in April 2015)

150 local coaches participated in these regional courses. A further 900 attended the Irish FA Level 1 courses and 500 attended the Irish FA Grassroots Intro courses which were organised by the GDO's.

## IFA / UEFA Pro Licence awards

The Irish FA held their Pro Licence award ceremony at the Culloden Hotel on Thursday 23rd October. Fifteen coaches received this top coaching qualification, which is acknowledged across the world as the top coaching award in football. Many guests from both the football world and local business attended the lunch. The Irish FA were delighted to welcome the former International and current Bolton manager, Neil Lennon, as guest speaker, along with

Michael O'Neill, manager of the N Ireland International team.

## UEFA A Licence Goalkeeping

UEFA are currently training up tutors from the 4 Home Nations Associations to deliver the new UEFA A Licence Goalkeeping Course. Alan Simpson and William McFredrick are currently working towards this qualification in order for the Irish FA to be in a position to deliver this new award in 2016.

## New advances in IT

Coach Education has recently improved and modernised their IT administration systems. The National Coaching Weeks brochure was digitised for 2015 via a cross media campaign involving an online pageflip brochure, as well an online application process.

The Irish FA in conjunction with Academy Soccer Coach has also extended the portfolio of 'online learning' modules available to coaches on Nutrition and Safeguarding. This online learning has been incorporated into the IFA level 1 course and since it launched in Oct 2014 it has been extremely well received by the candidates.

## Community Relations

Over the last year, the Community Relations Department has evolved, and now takes the form of the innovative and dynamic, Football and Social Responsibility Unit, based within the Football Development Department at the Irish FA. We have made ground breaking achievements and advancements in our work, engaging individuals on an international, domestic and grassroots level through the use of sport for education and outreach.

## Team NI were Champions at the Homeless World Cup in Chile

The NI Street Soccer team were crowned as champions of the Accion Total Cup, at the Homeless World Cup tournament in Santiago, Chile. Following 9 months of trials, training and preparation, the 8 man squad travelled to Chile, many having overcome adversities of drug addiction, homelessness and alcoholism, in order to make the life



Homeless World Cup team.

changing trip. The final saw NI defeat Denmark 10-6, and return to Northern Ireland as champions both on and off the pitch.

The Street Soccer project currently runs in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, providing weekly football training, educational support and personal development opportunities. The project provides a supportive environment for marginalised men, and encourages them to engage with their local community, and participants from different communities.



## Women's World United took on the Female MLA's at Stormont

The Women's World United team, made up of women from a range of ethnic backgrounds, communities, both local and newly arrived, took on a team of MLAs in a match to mark Community Relations Week. With weekly training, friendly matches and a new kit, the Women's World United team were ready to take on the opposition, and after an exciting match, won 4-1.

Women's World United provides weekly football training for women in a fun, safe and inclusive environment. The project provides skills development workshops, supporting the women in their personal advancement as well as their footballing ability.

## Young People had the chance to have their say on Football for All

Year 12 pupils from schools across Belfast and Derry/Londonderry had the opportunity to participate in an interactive workshop exploring the power of football in breaking down barriers. Participants heard from Jim Magilton and Declan Devine on their football journey, and how the sport affected their lives and their communities, and had the chance to ask questions.

A key focus of the event was the development of the new National Stadium. At the start of the event, only 41% of young people said they would feel comfortable going to watch NI play at the Stadium. Following an insight into the Football for All campaign, and inclusive work of the Irish FA, this rose by 35% at the end of the event – a significant increase.

Our work with young people continues on a regular basis, with our Youth Forum. Coming from Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, the 15-18 year olds engage in a variety of activities to develop their skills in communication, leadership and teamwork. The main purpose of the group is to provide an opportunity for young people to have a meaningful voice in NI football, and to provide feedback on initiatives being developed by the Association.



Social Development Minister Mervyn Storey with representatives of GAA, Ulster Branch and David Martin, Deputy President of the IFA.

## Funding and Projects

### 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport' Programme

The Irish Football Association delivered a range of programmes as part of the DCAL funded 'Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion through Sport' Programme (2012 – 2015). This funding has provided invaluable support to some of our existing programmes using sport for social development purposes, as well as support for new and innovative projects:

- Health Programme
- Disability Football Programme
- Club and Community Development Programme
- Football for All
- Enterprise Programme
- Small Sided Games
- Good Relations and Coach Education Programme

### UEFA Respect Diversity

The Irish Football Association secured support from UEFA's Social Responsibility Unit for a number of projects to be rolled out across the Football Development Department. This support has allowed us to develop and implement the following projects:

- NI Masters Football Programme for men and women (35 years+)
- 'Girls on the Ball' Education Programme for Year 10 girls
- IFA Schools Quality Mark
- Futsal
- Values Based Coaching



- Annual Football Development Conference

## Multi-Sport Partnership

The Irish Football Association, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch) have developed a positive relationship through the delivery of collaborative programmes, sharing experiences and methods of best practice using sport. There is a strong willingness for the three governing bodies to build on the significant progress made as a result of the partnership, particularly as part of the DSD funded programme 'Sport in the Community'.

It is apparent that the partnership is much stronger and strategic together, particularly with regards future funding to support our work in the areas of community development, good relations, club and volunteer development, and diversity programmes.

## FIFA Support

The Irish Football Association recently secured support for a TV project between the IFA and NIBFA, to stream live games on the Internet. This online streaming facility will cover Mini Soccer Festivals, National League Games, Highlights Programme and all annual Cup Finals.

The partnership with provider Exsporté will run for the next three seasons, and will provide a number of other benefits to the game such as increased talent identification opportunities, improved match analysis quality and increased volunteering opportunities.

The Irish Football Association have also secured over \$500,000 from FIFA's GOAL programme to help support our player development programme. The project will look to engage young players in an academic and educational and training programme. The Irish FA have identified the need for a partnership with a post primary school to maximise our engagement and provide a more strategic and sustainable approach to developing our young players

involved in the Irish FA Elite Football programme.

## 'Sport in the Community'

'Sport in the Community' is a joint club and volunteer capacity building programme with the Irish Football Association, Ulster GAA and IRFU (Ulster Branch). The programme is funded by the Department for Social Development, has been running since 2012 and is in its final year of delivery.

Since its inception, the Irish Football Association has developed a wealth of resources for clubs and volunteers, an Irish FA Volunteer Policy and the Club Excellence Mark accreditation programme. Through the IFA Club and Community Development Officer and IFA Volunteer Development Officer, we have also delivered a range of club and community development programmes, diversity programmes, volunteer promotion and development programmes:

- 23 volunteer programmes delivered
- Over 1500 volunteering opportunities created
- Over 600 volunteers engaged in the programme
- Over 400 new volunteers engaged in the programme
- Over 100 clubs are actively engaged in the IFA Club Excellence process
- Over 15 clubs have achieved IFA Club Excellence 1 star

On 25 March 2015, Social Development Minister, Mervyn Storey MLA, announced a funding boost of £175,000 to three of Northern Ireland's sporting bodies to support volunteering. The Department for Social Development (DSD) has awarded the Irish Football Association (IFA), Ulster GAA, and the Irish Rugby Football Union's Ulster Branch funding to support their joint 'Sport in the Community – a home for lifelong volunteering' programme.







Crusaders u17 winners

Windmill Stars u12 winners

Lurgan Town u11 winners

## Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association (NIBFA)

NIBFA membership for season 2014/15 has reached 1156 teams, with an estimated 18,000 players participating in 9 Leagues and development centres.

### NIBFA Knock Out Competitions

For age groups from U11 to U17 these serve as the boys' football equivalent of the FA Cup. The popularity of the 9 a side format introduced in the U11 age group in 13/14 was extended to include the U12 group this year again with great success. The growth of the small sided games is credit to the IFA development strategy. To show NIBFA support to this work we offered a Cup competition and a supplementary plate competition for teams eliminated in the first round. The standards on show reflected the great development work

going on at clubs throughout the country.

The 2014/15 finals were held at Mid Ulster Sports Arena, Cookstown, on Bank Holiday Monday 4th May.

### Mallusk Games Festivals 2014 - (39th Annual Tournament)

First Saturday – Small sided games festival with 112 teams and over 1000 children for 8, 9, 10 and 11 year olds helping to promote the advantages of small sided games in player development.

Second Saturday – 11 a side festival of football U12 to U16 inclusive

### NIBFA National Youth League

Now completing its 7th season the league attempts to provide a more consistently competitive competition. Currently 133 teams compete in six age groups split into divisions with opportunities for promotion and development progress in the U12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and U17 age groups. The league works closely with the IFA on their various programmes for player development. Full details of the league and its competing teams can be found on [www.nibfanational.co.uk](http://www.nibfanational.co.uk)

Under 11 Plate	Linfield	2 v 0	St. Oliver Plunkett
Under 11 Cup	Lurgan Town	2 v 1	Portadown Youth (AET)
Under 12 Plate	Lurgan Town	2 v 1	St. Oliver Plunkett
Under 12 Cup	Windmill Stars	2 v 1	Oxford Sunnyside
Under 13 Cup	Portadown Youth	4 v 2	Lisburn Rangers
Under 14 Cup	Glentoran	4 v 3	Cliftonville
Under 15 Cup	Glentoran	4 v 2	Linfield
Under 16 Cup	Linfield	4 v 3	Cliftonville
Under 17 Cup	Crusaders	3 v 2	Linfield



# Northern Ireland Schools' Football Association (NISFA)

## Inspiresport NISFA Schools Quarter Final Festival (Wednesday 25th February 2015 at Mallusk)

One of the biggest events in school sports took place at Mallusk Playing Fields on Wednesday 25th February when the Northern Ireland Schools Football Association (NISFA) hosted the Inspiresport Quarter Finals Football Festival Day.

Spectators were treated to 21 exciting and competitive matches across 8 different competitions, with 42 teams and over 600 talented players involved. The festival was not short of goals either, and had an astounding total of 93 goals across all age-groups. The proceedings began at 11.30 am and continued until late afternoon with exciting drama from start to finish.

## Inspiresport NISFA Schools Final DAY (Wednesday 29th April at Ballymena Showgrounds)

The fifth Schools Cup Finals Festival day was held at Ballymena Showground's in association with new sponsor Inspiresport on Wednesday 29th April 2015. This year there were 20 teams involved in 10 exciting Finals.

### Inspiresport Schools Cup – 2015 Roll of Honour

Inspiresport Youth U18 Cup – St. Columb's College  
Inspiresport Youth U18 Plate – Foyle College  
Inspiresport Senior U16 Cup – Belfast Boys Model  
Inspiresport Senior U16 Plate – Edmund Rice College  
Small Schools Cup (U15) – St. Colmcille's HS (Crossgar)  
Inspiresport Intermediate U14 Cup – St. Columb's College  
Inspiresport Intermediate U14 Plate - Lismore  
Small Schools Cup (U13) – St. Joseph's (Donaghmore)  
Inspiresport Minor U12 Cup - Holy Cross (Strabane)  
Inspiresport Minor U12 Plate – Devenish College



## INTERNATIONALS

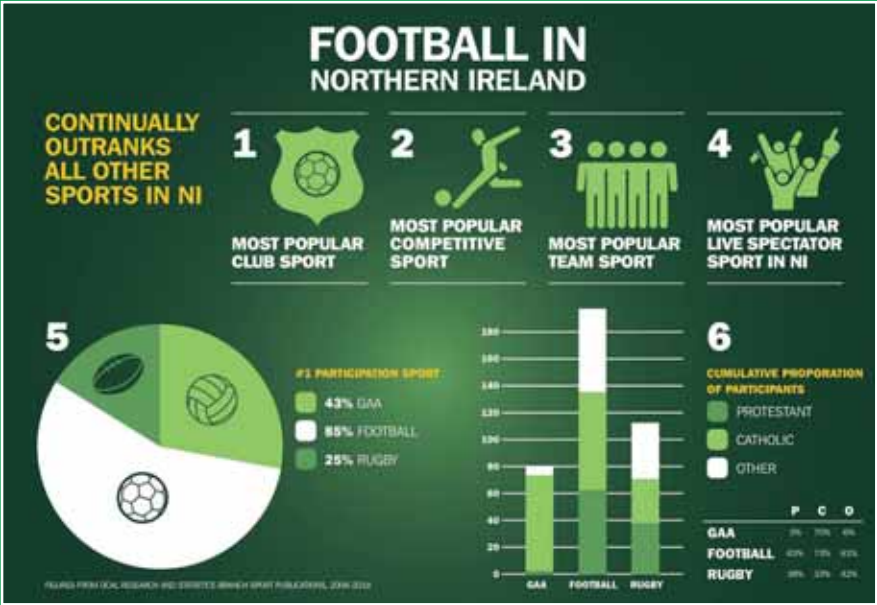
### U-18

At Under-18 level Northern Ireland regained the Lynn Nicholson Trophy with a 6-1 victory against Guernsey and 1-0 victory against Jersey. The squad were very unlucky throughout the Inspiresport Centenary Shield campaign but showed real character throughout the competition and performed right until the very end. The squad earned a 2-2 draw against England at Eastleigh FC in their opening fixture. They were then narrowly defeated 3-2 by the Republic of Ireland at Ballinamallard FC. They did however earn two victories in their final two fixtures of the competition with a 2-0 win against Scotland at Comber Rec FC and a 4-1 win against Wales at Ystard Mynach.

### Inspiresport U18 Centenary Shield: Final League Table

Teams	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Republic of Ireland	4	3	1	0	7	4	10
England	4	2	1	1	7	3	7
Northern Ireland	4	2	1	1	10	6	7
Scotland	4	1	1	2	3	7	4
Wales	4	0	0	4	3	10	0









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