

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

# Review Club

VOLUME 36 - Issue 4, 2023

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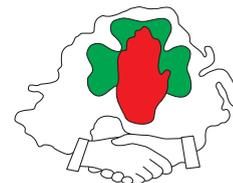
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### Club Officers

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Tel: .....

Secretary: .....

Tel: .....

Treasurer: .....

Tel: .....

The annual membership fee is £50.00 payable to:

### The Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs

c/o Unit B7 Portview Trade Centre,  
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Belfast BT4 1HE.

For telephone queries call:  
**07889 681714**

*(Please include your membership fee or completed standing order form with your application)*

### For administration purposes only

Accepted by: ..... Secretary

Seconded by: ..... Chairman

Date: .....

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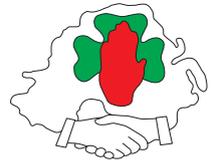
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(2) .....

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Belfast BT4 1HE.

# A promising summer for Northern Ireland's hospitality and registered club sectors



John Davidson, Chairman,  
N.I. Federation of Clubs



Harry Beckinsale, Secretary,  
N.I. Federation of Clubs

As we embark on the much-awaited summer break, we are thrilled to report that the past twelve months have been nothing short of a resounding success. At long last, we have received the greatly improved Northern Ireland Licensing Legislation, which promises to offer invaluable support to both the hospitality and registered club sectors.

The hospitality sector, alongside registered clubs, has undoubtedly borne the brunt of countless challenges in recent times. However, there seems to be a glimmer of hope on the horizon. The current trajectory suggests an upward trend, and the recent spell of glorious weather has undeniably played a significant role. With the amended legislation in effect, our esteemed members can now enjoy the privilege of utilising outdoor facilities, which were previously forbidden. On a separate note, we continue to handle a steady stream of Helpline calls from concerned members regarding member cards, which grant points on purchases. It's worth noting that this feature was the final amendment made to the licensing regulations.

Interestingly, even journalists have found themselves utterly bewildered, mistakenly assuming that such perks for members were illicit.

Nevertheless, after diligently explaining that registered clubs operate under a registration framework, rather than a license, the journalist who contacted us expressed profound gratitude for the thorough clarification provided. It is heartening to witness the power of knowledge and understanding dispelling confusion.

Although a handful of clubs have regrettably succumbed to the challenging circumstances, it brings us great joy to announce the establishment of several new clubs. This not only reflects resilience but also contributes to the growing strength of our Federation.

Despite operating on a voluntary basis, our commitment to assisting management committees remains unwavering. Thanks to our successful Heliplines, we can provide valuable guidance and support to those in need. It is with deep appreciation

that we also acknowledge our exceptional association with suppliers, as their unwavering support enables us to reciprocate and fulfill our responsibilities.

Achieving our present standing has been a journey spanning several years. We recognise that other sectors have been firmly established for far longer. However, we take pride in keeping our membership fee unchanged since the inception of the Federation. Remarkably, a modest sum of only £50 per year secures all the benefits and privileges, owing to the generous support we receive and the voluntary ethos that drives our sector.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to those in Legislation, various government departments, and our elected representatives, who have been instrumental in paving the way for our achievements today. Their unwavering support and guidance have been invaluable.

Lastly, we would like to emphasise that our assistance is available to members around the clock, 24/7. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us via telephone, text, or email, and we assure you that we will deploy our utmost efforts to resolve any issues you may face. Your satisfaction and peace of mind remain our top priority.

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## Federation visit Hinch Distillery

On Wednesday 1st June 2023 the Federation Executive Committee arranged to gather for their monthly meeting at the Harland & Wolff Welders FSC, the last meeting prior to the summer recess, although the range of services to members will of course continue as normal.

Following the meeting we travelled to the Hinch Distillery, having received an invitation to tour the beautiful state-of-the-art facility located between Tempo and Ballynahinch, County Down.

The tour of the complex was most informative and provided an interesting insight to the vision Mr Terry Cross had in establishing the distillery. It

really is a credit to him and his management team.

It was also great to meet Michael Morris who is well known in registered club circles from his days in the drinks industry. The ensuing conversation touched on days past and experiences throughout Michael's days in the trade.

Thanks were also extended to Hinch Sales Manager, Heather McCracken, who helped finalise the visit, including the hospitality which followed the event.

This is certainly a place to visit for a day out with family or friends.



(Centre) Federation Chairman, John Davidson, pictured with Heather McCracken and Michael Morris at the recent Federation visit to the Hinch Distillery.

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# Confidentiality of committee meetings

The confidentiality of committee meetings is paramount to the effective management of a club. Discussion in committee should remain confidential between committee members.

The minutes of committee meetings should merely record the motions and amendments and decisions which are agreed and, again, remain confidential. This does not mean that there are never circumstances in which the membership ought to be informed of what takes place during committee meetings.

In all clubs there are issues which are of immediate concern to all the membership. The committee may have discussed some matter referred to it by a general meeting for consideration. In such cases, the Secretary should arrange for a suitable notice to be posted on the club notice board.

The general membership does not have a right to inspect the committee's minutes.

However, a club's auditors will have a right to inspect the committee's minutes in

order to confirm that certain transactions have been authorised.

In addition, clubs registered under the Friendly Societies Act are obliged to permit members to examine all books, including all minute books, at any reasonable time. This is a good reason why the minutes should read like a telegram and not like a social history.

There are, however, few clubs registered as Friendly Societies. Such clubs are different from those registered under the Clubs Order.

No member of the committee is entitled to inform anyone of the proceedings and deliberations of the committee.

If a club is to be served well, then it is essential that the committee should be free to conduct their affairs in a frank and open way. Surely, few people would serve on committees if they knew that their views were repeated outside the confines of the committee room and, as is so often the case, misinterpreted by being taken out of context and made to appear contrary to the original intentions.

Committees are therefore entitled to insist on the confidentiality of their proceedings and the right of quasi privilege in the conduct of the affairs of the club while, at the same time, keeping the members informed of matters that affect them generally, but not in respect to individual members.

Proceedings in committee are not privileged, but

qualified privilege may apply where the person who makes the communication has an interest or duty, legal or moral or social, to make it to a person, or persons, having a corresponding interest or duty to receive such a communication. On the whole, the spirit of this principle has been upheld by the courts. It appears that the courts will not usually intervene in respect of domestic decisions, and cannot demand explanations. If reasons are given, however,



the courts reserve the right to consider their sufficiency. It may be said that normally decisions of a committee made in accordance with the rules, and made fairly, cannot be overturned.

In conclusion therefore, what is said in committee should not be repeated outside the confines of a committee meeting, and committee minutes should remain confidential.

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# Clubs continue to raise funds for charity



Congratulations to the Jumna Street Linfield Supporters Club and the West Belfast Pigeon Club for their outstanding fundraising efforts in support of the Northern Ireland Hospice!

Your dedication and generosity are truly inspiring. Your contributions will make a meaningful impact on the lives of patients and families who rely on the hospice's services. Well done on your remarkable achievements, and may your compassionate actions continue to inspire others.



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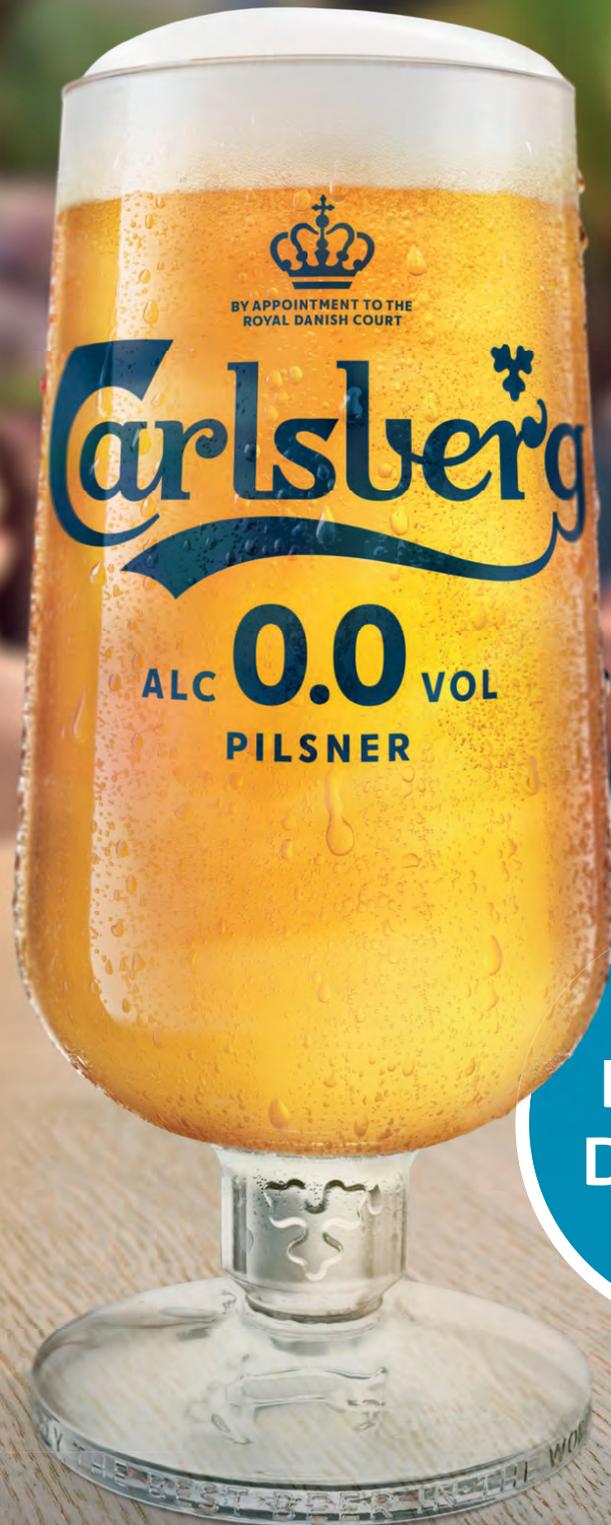
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**Q.** Whilst considering a membership applicant, I have discussed the applicant with several members of the club and have reached a negative view of him. A question has been raised over whether I should abstain from the committee vote because of my discussions regarding the prospective candidate; it is claimed that I am now 'bias'.

**A.** I see no reason why you should abstain simply because you have discussed this potential candidate with

other members and employees - this is the whole reason for the membership application process, so that potential candidates can be discussed to assist the committee when they come to vote on the application. It would be very difficult for any committee to reach a considered view on a membership application without discussing the applicant with other members of the club and club employees.

**Q.** We are currently redesigning our website. Is there any reason that we cannot place the membership application form on the website? We think this may aid the recruitment of new members.

**A.** I do not think there is any reason the club's membership form cannot be accessed and submitted electronically and as such it could be placed on the website. I think that clubs have

to move with the times and that an electronic submission of a membership request is perfectly acceptable.

The committee would then have to verify that the proposer and seconder listed on the form are willing to act in those roles.

The key point is that you are not advertising for new members and you are not saying that all new members are welcome. By placing the membership request form on the website you are simply allowing interested members to submit a request which will then be considered by the committee. It is very similar to leaving membership application forms around the club when a private event is being held at the club. Ultimately, the committee is still making the final decision on whether or not a prospective member is granted membership.

**Q.** The annual election for officers and committee members has been held and a dispute has arisen over the outcome of the ballot. The committee have been asked to declare the result of the ballot null and void by a group of members.

**A.** By reference to your club's rules, the ballot for officers and committee members is conducted under the direction of scrutineers. Therefore, it is for the scrutineers to declare a ballot null and void, not the committee. Any member making an allegation concerning the ballot must do so to the scrutineers who will need to consider carefully whether a new ballot is required.

If a general meeting, at which the result of a ballot is declared, demands a scrutiny of the ballot box by a majority, then arrangements should be

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made for a recount. However, a ballot, once it has been declared and accepted, stands, no matter what discrepancies a subsequent examination of the papers may reveal. Therefore, before the result of a ballot is accepted, the members must be satisfied that the ballot was fairly conducted.

**Q. The Committee wish to implement a system where members pay a lower price for drinks than their guests or other users of the club (such as when a private event is being held). Can you confirm that such a pricing policy would be legal?**

**A.** We can confirm that such policy would be entirely appropriate. With the introduction of modern tills this business model is becoming more popular in private members' clubs and provides a clear reason for guests to become members of

the club. Depending on the till system the club is using, there are a few days that this policy can be implemented, we have certainly seen cases where an employee simply chooses 'member' or 'non-member' when serving and the till then calculates the correct price based on that information. To comply with licensing legislation we would recommend that either two price lists are available or that the advertised price list is correct for non-members with members being provided with a discount to the advertised prices.

**Q. We have a long-standing trustee with health problems who has not renewed his membership for the last year and with whom we have had no contact for some time. We have written to him twice asking if he wishes to relinquish his post as trustee**

**but have had no reply. Can you advise what steps we are now able to take?**

**A.** The only way in which to remove the trustee in question is to either seek his resignation, which is unlikely to be forthcoming, or to remove him from office at a special general meeting called for that purpose in accordance with your rules. At the same meeting the committee could elect a new trustee.

**Q. In the past, the committee have had cause to expel certain members from the club due to their conduct. A question has been raised over whether an expelled member, which we refer to as a 'life ban', could ever reapply for membership?**

**A.** Under the rules of most clubs, a member who has been expelled from the club can only reapply for membership with the consent of the committee

and even if that consent is given, the committee can still vote against the admission of a candidate.

Careful consideration should always be given to the request of previously expelled members to reapply for membership. A previous committee would not have taken such a decision lightly.

Also bear in mind that whilst a simple majority is required for a committee to agree that a previously expelled member can reapply for membership, the actual re-election to membership normally only needs two votes against to exclude a candidate. Therefore an agreement that an expelled member can reapply is certainly not a guarantee of re-election.

*If you have any questions you need answered for your club, then please send them to us at: [info@nifederationofclubs.com](mailto:info@nifederationofclubs.com)*

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## Member disciplinary procedure guidance

If a committee has cause to bring disciplinary action against a club member then the following procedure should be followed.

Once a committee has considered a complaint which has been made against a member they can summon the member to attend a formal disciplinary meeting. The committee could also decide not to take any further action once they have reviewed the complaint.

The committee cannot suspend or expel a member from the club without first inviting them to a disciplinary meeting. A suspension or permanent expulsion can only take place once a disciplinary meeting has been held. You can also only suspend a member for a maximum of twelve months.

If the committee are of the opinion that this individual's behaviour has either broken specific club rules/bye-laws, or could be judged to be prejudicial to the interests of the club then they can summon this member to appear before the committee. The committee should inform them of the specific allegations that have been made when asking them to

attend the disciplinary meeting, and these reasons should be placed in writing along with the letter asking them to attend the disciplinary meeting. If this is how the committee wishes to proceed, you should write to the member and inform them that due to their conduct he/she has been requested to appear in front of the committee and include the precise details of the complaint/alleged conduct and the date and time of the meeting. You must give at least seven days notice to the member of the date of the disciplinary meeting.

The committee can also decide to withdraw the facilities of the club from the member until they have attended the disciplinary meeting. This means that the member is unable to use the club until they have attended the disciplinary meeting. It is normal that once the withdrawal takes place that a disciplinary meeting is held within two months and that at least seven days' notice of the meeting must be given to the member, in accordance with the club's rules.

When a member appears before a committee, the following procedure is suggested:

- *The secretary reads out details of*

*the member's alleged offence*

- *Whoever is charged with conducting the case of the club gives the facts and indicates clearly the rules alleged to have been broken i.e. the grounds for the case*
- *Where witnesses are to be called, for the club or by the defending member, they remain outside the room until required to give their evidence; after then, they remain in the room*
- *The member remains in the room throughout the hearing; he must be allowed to cross-examine the club's witnesses*
- *When these witnesses have been heard, the member makes his own statement and calls his own witnesses to speak in his defence.; both he and the committee may put questions to the witnesses*
- *After all the evidence has been heard, it is usual, but not essential, for the person presenting the club's case to sum up and to make any additional comments on the evidence given*
- *Similarly, the member accused must be allowed to make any further statement he wishes and this concludes the presentation of the case*
- *Then the committee retires to consider their decision; alternatively, the member and all the witnesses withdraw while they do so*

meeting then the meeting can be held in their absence. It is good practice, however, to try and work with the member to enable them to attend their disciplinary meeting if at all possible.

The committee can decide to take no action against the member, to issue a reprimand (effectively a warning), to suspend the member for up to 12 months or to expel the member.

A suspension must be for a definite period, and the date when it expires recorded in the minutes. For a member to be suspended 'until he appears before the committee' is improper. The suspension should not exceed one year. It is not open to the committee to suspend a member sine die, which means 'with no date fixed.' For the period of suspension a member is denied entry to the club premises and the enjoyment of its privileges. Nor should he be admitted to another club as an affiliated member.

A member is liable to pay subscriptions, even if under suspension. He has no right to the return of any subscription paid in advance should he be expelled or resign. If the subscription is increased in accordance with the rules he is liable for the altered rate agreed upon, if the rules so provide. Any suspended member who has not paid when the time for paying subscriptions has elapsed will cease to be a member. A member under suspension remains liable for his/her subscription, but forfeits all privileges of membership while the suspension is in operation.

The committee should hold the disciplinary meeting and, after reviewing any points this member has to make in their defence, the committee will then ask the member to leave the disciplinary meeting whilst the committee make their decision. The committee can allow witnesses to appear and give evidence which the committee can consider before making their final decision. Should a member decline to appear at a disciplinary

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Should a committee member commit an offence, then disciplinary treatment must be imposed in exactly the same way as any other club member. If a member of the committee is suspended, they are unable to attend meetings of the committee. The majority of club rules provide that a member of the committee who is suspended automatically vacates his seat as his absence does not constitute a 'reasonable excuse' for non-attendance. Accordingly, if he has been absent the stipulated number of times under the rule governing such matters, he vacates his seat. If accused though, a committee member has no right to be present when the remainder of the committee are considering the case.

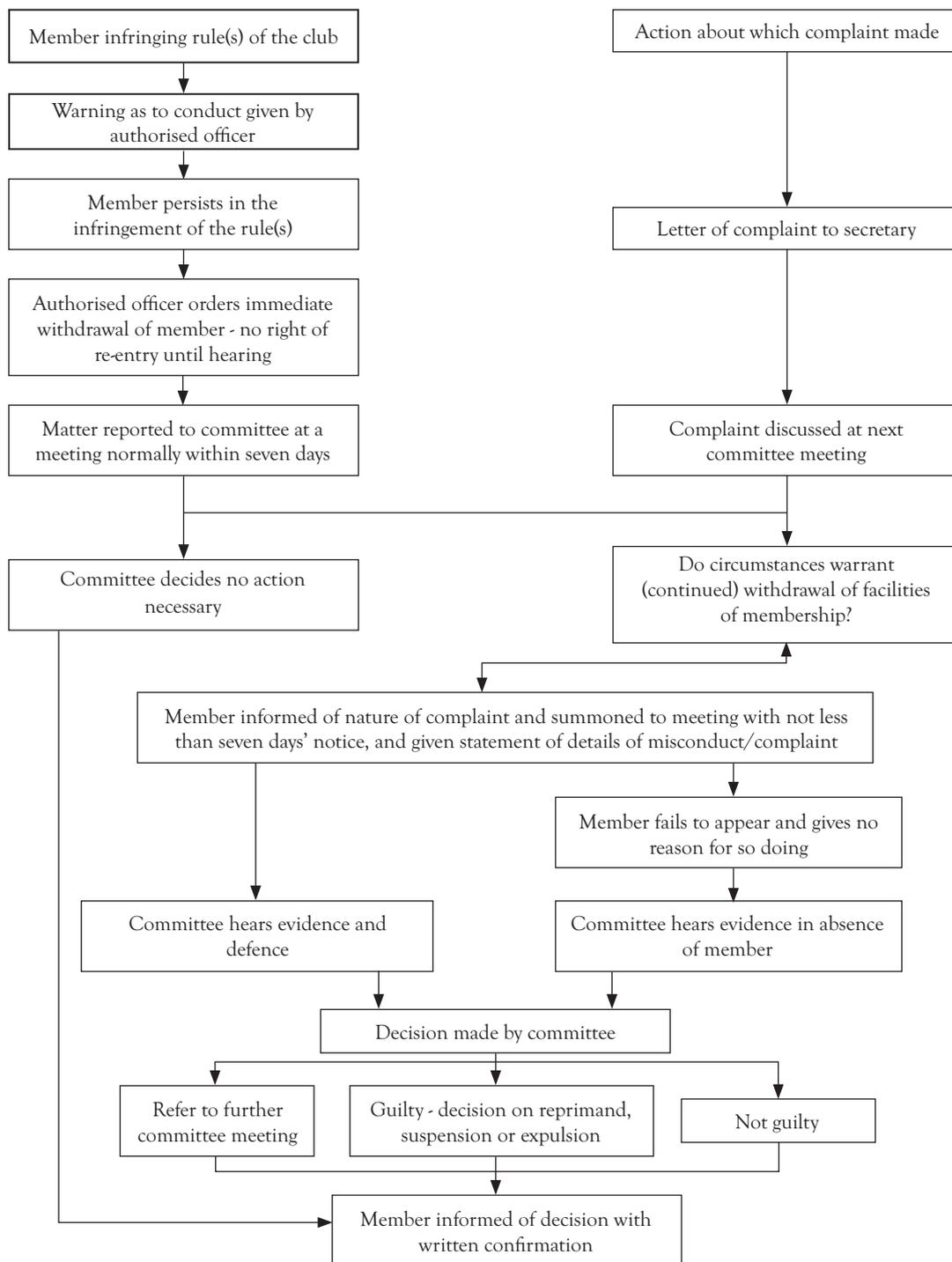
Names of members suspended or expelled should not be posted in the club; it is sufficient to inform the steward and doorkeeper. All correspondence relating to expulsions and suspensions should be carefully filed, including the letter conveying the decision of the committee.

Most rules state that a committee's decision in all disciplinary matters is final, and therefore a disciplined member would have no right to seek a Special General Meeting in order to appeal to the general membership against a decision. Some rules however, include an appeal rule which provides arbitration facilities to aggrieved members.

Such rules differ from club to club and the extent to which appeal rules apply will often depend on how the club is registered. For example, a club which is incorporated with the Financial Conduct Authority is obliged to include a disputes rule. However, such a rule cannot deal with an appeal against expulsion due to the fact that this subject has been excluded from the statutes.

If an aggrieved member is unable to apply for arbitration under the rules, then he

# Member discipline and misconduct flowchart



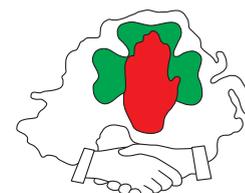
*This flow chart is for explanatory purposes only and is not a substitute for the rules. For all formal purposes the rules should be consulted.*

may seek the guidance of a solicitor and, if so advised, take proceedings against the club through the courts. A court will not interfere with the findings of a 'domestic tribunal' if it considers the tribunal, or in the case of clubs the committee, has acted fairly and in accordance with its own rules. That confidence is most likely to be justified if the committee have paid full attention to their rules,

and followed the procedures outlined above.

In summary therefore, a member cannot be expelled or suspended, unless he has been informed of the charge against him and given due opportunity of being heard in self-defence by being summoned to appear before the committee. The rules governing suspension and expulsion must be carried out

to the letter; then if the decision arrived at is bona fide (without malice) no court will be able to interfere with it.



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## Membership recruitment

Apart from financial control, the key to a club's future success lies in the ability to recruit new members. In most clubs, whatever facilities are available, only one third of the total membership uses the club regularly and its hard core is less than this. The aim, therefore, is to increase the total membership in order to increase the proportion which makes up one third.

Membership recruitment is a matter which should be discussed regularly by committees. Without a continuous programme of membership recruitment, a club will eventually weaken.

Club committees often place the onus of responsibility

for recruiting new members on themselves, rather than correctly placing it on the membership. It is the members who must propose and second new members, not just the committee.

It does seem that people are often encouraged to become involved in membership recruitment if there is some form of reward involved.

One of the most successful recruitment schemes is known as the 'bounty system,' whereby a member who introduces a new member receives some form of payment, usually by way of a bar voucher. For example, if a club's membership subscription is £10, the payment of a £10 bar

voucher to the introductory member (which will actually only cost the club the value of the stock, rather than the whole £10) has in many cases created a great deal of interest.

A further method, which has often proved successful, is the announcement that the club intends to close the membership book. You would be surprised how many people will suddenly wish to become members of a club if they think the club will be difficult to join. I suspect that human nature dictates that most of us wish to belong to something which has an element of exclusivity.

Experience has also shown that many clubs will recruit new members and will lose them

at the following year's renewal time.

It is believed that one of the reasons for this is that new members are not always made as welcome as they should be. All clubs, by their very nature, tend to have established groups and sections and these can seem daunting to a new person using the club for the first time. Three or four new members' evenings should be organised during the course of the year to which all members who have joined during the previous period are invited.

These social occasions are a great way to help 'break the ice' and forge friendships with existing members



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## Sky Sports signs new Football League deal

Sky Sports has signed a new five-year deal with the English Football League (EFL). The new agreement means that over 1,000 matches will be broadcast each season - a record number of games for any club football agreement.

Running from the 2024/2025 season to 2028/29, the deal will see 1,059 EFL matches shown live across existing Sky Sports channels or live via a Sky Sports streaming destination available on TV and mobile devices.

Each League weekend fixture round will see 10 live EFL fixtures shown. Five matches will be shown from the Sky Bet Championship and supporters

of Sky Bet League One and League Two teams will now benefit from greater coverage than ever before with five of their games being broadcast live.

Fans will also be able to watch every match - again, for the first time ever - from the Carabao Cup and EFL Trophy.

**Each season, Sky Sports will broadcast a minimum of:**

- 328 Sky Bet Championship matches
- 248 Sky Bet League One matches
- 248 Sky Bet League Two matches
- All 15 Play-Off matches
- All 93 Carabao Cup matches
- All 127 EFL Trophy matches

# Dealing with the summer challenges

In the summertime, when the weather is high... you can start seeing the increase of absences and stress levels of a business owner. Northern Ireland is finally starting to see the start of that good weather, how long for? Who knows?

However, the start of the good weather begins a chaotic time for someone trying to run a business as it's the start to barbecues, outdoor events, holidays and parties, which also then leads to the increase of absences and dealing with a loss of productivity.

Any absence disrupts business; however, those employees who "pull a sickie" are the absences that really impact the business. Summer already sees an increase in absences with employees booking holidays, taking time off to be with their families, and employers can prepare for this and plan for the workload. However, when you have unplanned absences, this can lead to increased pressure on the staff having to pick up the pieces.

## How do you deal with this?

While you have every right to suspect that someone doesn't have a genuine reason to be off sick, you still need to tread carefully when approaching. All suspicions are hearsay unless you have supporting evidence. For example, posting on social media that they are out enjoying the sun or at a party. This evidence can be enough to proceed to a disciplinary process; however, the level of punishment would be determined on the policies and procedures and the facts of the case. No evidence doesn't necessarily mean you won't be able to deal

with the absence. This can be discussed with the employee and their absences monitored, as persistent absences can lead to a disciplinary at a later stage depending on company policy.

Another issue that tends to increase in the summer is the rise of hungover employees. What employees do in their own time is their business, however it still has an impact on an employer's business if they choose to attend work hungover. A hungover employee struggles to perform their duties to the standard they usually work, which can lead to an increase in mistakes and lack of productivity. Hungover employees can also be damaging to reputation if they are customer facing, or there can be health and safety issues if they are required to operate heavy machinery or drive as part of their job.

## What can be done?

There are a few steps employers can take to try and reduce this type of disruption. Employers can provide employees with information regarding alcohol and how damaging this can be if they drink heavily and attend work. Have a strong alcohol and drugs policy outlining the responsibilities of all employees and the actions the company can take if they find employees to be under the influence of alcohol. It is important to act immediately if there is suspicion, investigating with the employee, keeping a written record of any incidents and sending the employee home if you think they are a risk.

We understand there are more important things an employer should be doing during the summer months than

having to deal with employee issues, so if you need any support or guidance on the aforementioned or any other HR matter, call Lockton today and we'll be delighted to help.



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## Get your game on: Sky Sports bring the hottest summer of sport straight to your club

Summer is finally here, which means an unmissable line-up of sport for your members. There's all the action from both the men's and women's Ashes - the first time ever that the games will run concurrently - as England and Australia continue to go head-to-head in one of sports fiercest rivalries.

**There are four more Tests still to play in the men's game they include:-**

- Second Test (Lord's) - Wednesday June 28th - Sunday July 2nd (11am start)
- Third Test (Clean Slate Headingley) - Thursday July 6th - Monday July 10th (11am start)
- Fourth Test (Emirates Old Trafford) - Wednesday July 19th - Sunday July 23rd (11am start)
- Fifth Test (The Kia Oval) - Thursday July 27th - Monday July 31st (11am start)

**The women's series has a mixture of cricket formats and include:-**

- First T20 international (Edgbaston) - Saturday July 1st (6.35pm start)
- Second T20 international (The Kia Oval) - Wednesday July 5th (6.35pm start)
- Third T20 international (Lord's) - Saturday July 8th (6.35pm start)
- First one-day international (Unique Stadium, Bristol) - Wednesday, July 12th (1pm start)
- Second one-day international (The Ageas



Bowl) - Sunday July 16th (11am start)

- Third one-day international (Taunton) - Tuesday July 18th (1pm start)

*All the matches are live on Sky Sports.*

Meanwhile, Formula 1 heads to Silverstone for the British Grand Prix and all races, qualifying and practice sessions are exclusively live on Sky Sports F1. Watch all the action from Friday 7th July until Sunday 9th July.

There's also action from the Hungarian and the Belgium Grands Prix on Sunday 23rd July and Sunday 30th July.

The Rugby World Cup starts in France at the start of September but before that, some of the Southern

Hemisphere's heavy hitters, including World Champions, South Africa, go head-to-head in the Rugby World Championships.

**The games include:**

**Saturday 8th July**

South Africa v Australia  
Argentina v New Zealand

**Saturday 15th July**

New Zealand v South Africa  
Australia v Argentina

**Saturday 29th July**

Australia v New Zealand  
South Africa v Argentina

Blink and before you know it, it will be the start of the football season. The fixtures

for the Premier League 2023/24 season have been announced and the season begins on Friday 11th August with newly promoted Burnley taking on the champions, Manchester City. Kick off is at 8pm.

**Other mouthwatering fixtures that weekend, live on Sky Sports include:**

Saturday 12th August - Newcastle v Aston Villa at 5.30pm; Sunday 13th August - Brentford v Tottenham at 2pm, followed by Chelsea v Liverpool at 4.30pm; Monday 14th August - Manchester United v Wolves at 8pm.





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## 'Semi Colon' show shines light on mental health awareness

On June 5th, 2023, I had the privilege of attending a truly inspiring show hosted by 'Semi Colon', a platform dedicated to raising awareness about mental health.

The event was a testament to the power of collective action and showcased the significance of recognising the signs of mental health issues and their profound impact on people of all age groups. With a diverse range of charities in attendance, the show underscored the urgent need to prioritise mental health in our society.

Mental health remains an often neglected aspect of overall well-being, overshadowed in a lot of cases by physical health concerns. However, events like the 'Semi Colon' show are changing this narrative by shedding light on the importance of mental health awareness.

By bringing together various charitable organisations, the event sent a clear message: **mental health affects us all, regardless of age or background, and it's high time we address it head-on.**

One of the most remarkable aspects of the show was the variety of perspectives showcased. Mental health issues can manifest differently in individuals, and the 'Semi Colon' show successfully captured this complexity.

Through poignant performances, engaging talks, and personal stories shared by individuals who have experienced mental health

challenges, the event fostered empathy, understanding, and a sense of community. It was a powerful reminder that mental health is not something to be ashamed of, but rather a common human experience that deserves compassion and support.

Moreover, the presence of numerous charitable organisation underscored the multifaceted nature of mental health. These organisations are working tirelessly to provide resources, assistance, and advocacy for those affected by mental health issues. Their presence at the 'Semi Colon' show demonstrated their commitment to creating a society that is better equipped to address mental health challenges, break down stigmas, and offer much-needed support.

The event also highlighted the importance of early intervention and education. By raising awareness about the signs and symptoms of mental health issues, individuals are better equipped to recognise and seek help for themselves and others. The 'Semi Colon' show acted as a catalyst for dialogue, encouraging open conversations about mental health in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

By normalising these discussions, we can chip away at the stigma surrounding mental health and create a more inclusive and compassionate society.

However, the success of the 'Semi Colon' show should not be a fleeting moment of



Colin Patterson and Cheres Bates of Semi Colon, are pictured with Micky Meehan (centre) from Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues.

inspiration but a catalyst for lasting change. Mental health awareness must extend beyond a single event or a dedicated month. It requires continuous efforts, government support, and community engagement to ensure that mental health receives the attention and resources it deserves. It is essential that we prioritise mental health services, provide accessible and affordable treatment options, and invest in research to better understand and address mental health challenges.

In conclusion, the 'Semi Colon' show was a remarkable event that brought together charities, individuals, and communities to raise awareness about mental health. It showcased

the collective power we possess to address mental health challenges and offered hope to those who may be struggling. Let us take inspiration from this event and carry the torch of mental health awareness in our daily lives. Together, we can foster a society that embraces mental health with compassion, empathy, and understanding.

Finally, it would remiss not to give thanks to the following artists who freely provided their services to make this a truly memorable evening:- David & Zoe Curry, Lisa Harbison, Colin & Amber Beckinsale, Crystal Ashworth, Tony Hughes, Bill McIntyre, Phillip Croker, Cheres Bates, Colin Patterson, Marty Hunter and dancers Abbie & Evie Cassells.



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## Conal Montgomery and his band - Black Dog Moon



Nigel Blair, Belfast 89FM.

This month I am sharing the music and life of Conal Montgomery and his rock band Black Dog Moon.

I was introduced to the music of Conal Montgomery in 2021. He had just completed his second solo album, *The Corner Stone*, all self-penned by Conal. It was a musical story from the heart, each song a perfect story relating to life's characters of the place he loves so well, Killyleagh in County Down, and he lives there to this day.

This album and the preceding album 'Happy Being Free', a reference to his current way of life after having an addiction to alcohol, and to his credit, he has been in his own words, "Dry from 2016". Not an easy journey, but one that sobriety brings with it an appreciation of all the good things in life, including the love of his precious family.

Both albums ranged from folk to country, and the faint veil of rock which is where Conal led the way as lead vocalist in rock band 'Sweet Leaf' for many years. During his first interview with me at Belfast 89FM, the

conversation came round to local venues of entertainment and festivals. Conal indicated he would like to do the festival scene. At this point I said to him, "The thing to do is have your own festival, you have an abundance of talent and know-how, direct your efforts to this, I can imagine a sure fire success."

Quite simply, that's what he did, creating the Corner Stone Festival at Killyleagh; it was a complete success and sell out at the Dufferin Coaching Hall and Inn.

The second festival to take place at the same venue also sold out in a matter of a few days. I had Conal back at 89FM recently to speak of the forthcoming festival. During the interview he told me, "I embrace all types of music, and the rock band I have formed, 'Black Dog Moon', headlined the festival held on the 10th June.

"We are busy in the studio with new songs I have written, to create a new first album for the band. On 9th June 2023 we released a single, Mr Trauma."

I gave the song its debut radio spin and I can assure you, it oozes professionalism, featuring a five piece rock band so tight in their marriage of instruments and vocal delivery, you could be forgiven for thinking they had played together for years.

The sound engineer and recording specialist who delivers all Black Dog Moon's recordings to perfection is also the band's drummer Marty Galbraith. A regular teacher of percussion to students all over the globe, he



also remotely records from his studio for numerous artistes. He has supported acts such as Bob Geldof and Level 42, and many more too numerous to mention. He has played with hundreds of bands all over the world.

Bassist, Nicky Brown, was also at Conal's last interview. He is every inch the rock star, from head to toe, a larger-than-life character and a terrific performer. Nicky was in the original line-up of Blues at the Mill Fest in Ireland and the Speedy Mullin Band. A warm personality, easily approachable, he is greatly respected in the rock music fraternity.

Another great musician and band member, Robert Lyons, who was lead guitarist with 'Sweet Leaf', played with Conal in many bands over the years, and for a time was based in Lanzarote. He has written music with other island based musicians and toured with

them. He also toured the East Coast of the USA with Irish rock band 'Touch and Go.'

Last but not least is band member Daniel Martin, guitarist extraordinaire, who also happens to be the youngest member of the band. His ability, technique, and professionalism are unquestionable; he is the real deal.

The term Black Dog is known as depression in many areas of mental health. Black Dog Moon, led by Conal Montgomery, has donated funds from many aspects of their work to highlight mental health awareness, a very commendable thing to do. Their music is geared to being uplifting.

I wish them every success and look forward to my next call from Conal and more great music!

Nigel

# Could your **Club** help ensure no child faces cancer alone?



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Photo: Annabel during an individual support session with her Cancer Support Specialist Hannah.



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## Kinawley GAA 'Steps Out' in memory of Caitlin Hogg, raising vital funds for Air Ambulance NI

Kinawley GAA club in Fermanagh have helped raise over £24,000 for Air Ambulance NI, in memory of their late member, Caitlin Hogg.

Thirteen-year-old Caitlin, a dedicated and talented player for Kinawley, tragically passed away on the 8th December 2022, two days after being involved in a road traffic collision.

In the immediate aftermath of Caitlin's passing, her family chose to have donations in-lieu of flowers to Air Ambulance NI, a charity partner of Ulster GAA, raising over £5,700 after the HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) was tasked to her before transporting her to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Belfast by helicopter.

Then in late January, Kinawley organised an event which challenged Caitlin's team mates to walk 'Ten Million Steps for Caitlin', taking place around their local football pitch.

Caitlin's family, friends and people from across the entire community joined the girls three evenings a week over a six-week period and walked together in her memory in all weather conditions. This incredibly raised a further £18,391 for Air Ambulance NI.

Speaking about the 'Ten Million Steps for Caitlin' initiative, Aine Haren from the club said, "Caitlin was a beautiful young lady, both inside and out, a credit to her family. She had such a generous smile and loving nature. Her loss cast a huge shadow over the entire community and affected so many people in different ways.

"Initially we wanted to organise something so that her friends and teammates could spend time together, especially after Christmas when there is not much activity happening and the evenings are bleak and dark. The idea for the 'Ten Million Steps for Caitlin' challenge was formed, and quickly escalated.

Thirty-eight girls took part in the challenge, and put in an unbelievable effort, but it was the support from the wider community that was truly overwhelming."

Caitlin's parents, Bob and Rosemary, said, "Caitlin was such a fun-loving, caring and generous child who we miss dearly. She touched the lives of many, and her family, friends and community meant the world to her. We are so overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone who contributed to Air Ambulance NI in her memory.

"When Kinawley GAA approached us about the idea of organising a 'Ten Million Steps for Caitlin' challenge, we were truly honoured by such a gesture in memory of our darling Caitlin. Getting out and walking with the girls and the community during the bleak winter evenings that followed Caitlin's accident helped us as a family to get through a very difficult period. We will be forever indebted to everyone who took part and supported us."

Damien McAnespie, Air Ambulance NI Fundraising Manager, said, "This is an incredible donation in Caitlin's memory. To see something so positive happening after such a tragedy is humbling. Kinawley GAA should be commended on how they brought the entire community together and allowed everyone a way to express their grief in the weeks and months after the loss of Caitlin, especially for her family and young club mates.



"The combined donation from Kinawley GAA and donations in-lieu of flowers of over £24,000 will fund the air ambulance for over three days. This could help save the lives of six people in the region following a serious medical incident. The Hogg family and the entire community of Kinawley have made this happen. We can't thank them enough for their support and strength after such a devastating time."

Air Ambulance NI provides the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) in partnership with NI Ambulance Service. The service brings urgent medical assistance to anywhere in the province, operating seven days a week for 12 hours per day. The aircraft can reach anywhere in Northern Ireland in approximately 25 minutes.

As a local charity, Air Ambulance NI aspires to raise £2.5million each year, or £6,850 each day, to maintain and sustain this service so public donations are crucial.

**If you'd like to help Air Ambulance NI visit:**  
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