

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

# Review Club

VOLUME 37 - Issue 2, 2024

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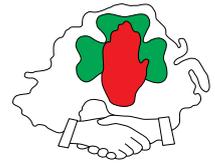
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# Federation navigate challenges and explore new opportunities



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



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

Similar to others in the hospitality sector, registered clubs are equally faced with staffing difficulties and increased running costs, not least of which is related to energy.

Of course we are also additionally aware of the increase in the National Minimum Wage being introduced on 1st April this year, which also increases the pressure on businesses and the management committees of registered clubs.

Recently, we have been receiving a number of calls from members who are in receipt of correspondence from MPLC, a licensing body which has been around for some years now. We totally object to this license on the basis that registered clubs are

private and as such not open to the public. This is just another expense. You can read more on this topic on page 6 of this month's magazine.

At long last we have established a date for the 2024 AGM! It is planned for Saturday 25th May 2024 at 11am in the HQ of the RAOB in Belfast, and we hope to see a full attendance. Clubs are urged to ensure they are represented as this is the first AGM since the Covid-19 pandemic break-out in March 2020.

Thankfully the Legislative Assembly has been re-established, which will hopefully resolve many of the ongoing issues to the benefit of everyone, allowing us to move forward to a more positive future.

Now that the licensing amendments have been introduced, registered clubs can benefit from such things as the ability to advertise their facilities to members and guests, hence removing the restrictions of the previous legislation.

An additional benefit of the amended legislation is the ability of clubs to utilise space on their property outside the clubrooms.

Naturally, permission needs to be obtained and you must follow the proper application procedure. In this regard we are pleased to have guided a number of clubs to achieving

their objective. Should you require guidance, please call the Helplines or email [info@nifederationofclubs.com](mailto:info@nifederationofclubs.com) and we'll be pleased to help you.

Let's all look forward to what will hopefully be a good spring and summer after what seems to have been a very long, cold and wet winter.

John Davidson  
Chairman

Harry Beckinsale  
Secretary

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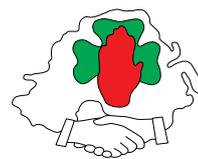
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## Minutes of the Executive Meeting



Hosted by the Harland & Wolff Welders FSC  
on Wednesday 6th March 2024

The Chairman, John Davidson, opened the meeting requesting that the Secretary, Harry Beckinsale, read the minutes of the previous meeting, which were duly proposed and seconded as a true record by Gerry Gallagher and Tommy McMinn.

A lengthy discussion took place on proposed details for the forthcoming AGM to be held on 25th May 2024 and hosted by the RAOB HQ in Belfast.

It is intended to highlight a number of issues affecting the day-to-day management

of clubs, not least of which is related to the complex area of employment legislation.

Clubs insured with Rollins Club Insurance may already have this included in their club policy, but this may not always be the case. It is our intention to raise this as a specific item on the agenda with advice being provided by an expert on the subject.

A financial report was provided by the Treasurer, David Larmour, which was passed as a true record by Joe Patterson and Philip Mallon.

A report on the number of new members joining the Federation followed. Maintaining the annual membership fee is important to us, and despite club representatives at past AGMs suggesting the fee be increased, we are delighted that it has remained unchanged since the inception of the Federation at only £50 per year.

It was suggested that a series of meetings with suppliers be arranged in the coming months to thank them for their valuable support. The size of the registered club sector can often

be overlooked, but with registered clubs numbering approximately 500, with a respective membership in excess of 247,000 of the adult population, it is a major player in the hospitality and leisure sector.

At this point the meeting was brought to a close, with thanks being made to the management of Harland & Wolff Welders FSC for the generous hospitality provided.

Harry Beckinsale  
*Secretary*

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# Federation AGM announcement

The Federation is pleased to announce its Annual General Meeting (AGM), scheduled to take place at 11am on Saturday 25th May 2024 in the RAOB HQ Club located at 17 Church Street, Belfast BT1 1PG.

This AGM is the first since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted our plans for the last AGM in March 2020. We are eager to reconvene and engage in fruitful discussions with all of our valued delegates.

We extend a warm invitation to all clubs affiliated with the Federation to ensure their representation at this crucial event. Your presence and input are highly valued as we collectively navigate through important agenda items, including the recent amendments to licensing legislation.

It is important to note that there are no restrictions on the number of delegates that each club can send to the AGM. We encourage maximum participation to ensure diverse perspectives and comprehensive deliberations.

As customary, refreshments will be provided to all attendees, fostering a convivial atmosphere for networking and collaboration.

We urge you to mark your calendars and prioritise this significant event. Please ensure that the AGM on 25th May, 2024, is duly noted in your diaries. Your presence and engagement are integral to the success of the Federation's endeavours and we eagerly anticipate your participation and meaningful contributions.

## Belfast 89FM's Nigel Blair announces his retirement

It was with sadness that I recently learned that friend, broadcaster and columnist Nigel Blair had to retire due to ill health.

I was first introduced to Nigel upon his return from Spain some years ago, and little did I know the friendship that would result from that initial encounter.

The talented multi-instrumentalist joined me in the resident band at the Ulster Sports Club in Belfast, but beyond that, we became friends, to the extent that I was honoured to be his best man when he married his beloved wife Lily.

Outside of music, Nigel was a valued staff member in my family business before becoming a program host on Belfast 89FM with



Nigel Blair (right) pictured with Harry Beckinsale and Billy McFarland (centre)

his very popular Sunday show, which provided numerous local entertainers with a platform to promote their talent. Sadly, Nigel's health has required him to take a step back to a more relaxed lifestyle.

I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to Nigel for his dedication and commitment to Club Review, and particularly for his friendship over the years.  
*Harry Beckinsale*



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## Motion Picture Licensing Company



We have once again been contacted by a number of clubs who have received letters, emails and phone calls from the MPLC - the Motion Picture Licensing Company Ltd.

We can confirm that MPLC is a legitimate organisation, but clubs only need to obtain a licence from them under specific circumstances.

Crucially, clubs do not need an MPLC licence to show content such as sports, music channels or Sky News. Therefore, for most clubs the only license that is required is a Television Licence. In the NIFC's experience it is rare that a club would need to obtain an MPLC licence as most clubs do not screen films or drama series.

MPLC itself represents licence holders such as film studios and television production companies which produce content such as dramas and comedies. If a club showed any of this content then an MPLC licence may need to be obtained.

However, clubs which only show channels such as Sky Sports, BT Sports, Sky News, sports shown on free to view channels such as BBC One or Channel 4 or a music channel are unlikely to be required to obtain an MPLC licence.

If you are unsure of what licence you require, please let us know and we will try to assist.

*Examples of programmes that do and do not require a licence are:  
Six Nations, Match of the Day, Euros, World Cup, Sky Sports - No licence  
BT Sports, Sky News, Sky Atlantic, Sky Movies - No Licence  
Eastenders, Coronation Street - MPLC Licence is required*

### **Sky UK have provided the following statement:**

*The showing of Sky's own paid for channels and partner channels does not require an MPLC licence because the Sky Subscription Agreement covers this licence directly from the licensor (by virtue of Sky's underlying rights agreements with the rights owners).*

*MPLC should be explaining to clubs that an MPLC licence is not required should the club just wish to show channels such as Sky Sports, Sky News, music channels and sports shown on terrestrial television such as Six Nations, Match of the Day, Euros, World Cup etc.*

If clubs are concerned at the information they have been provided with by MPLC, please let us know. Clubs can also raise their concerns directly by emailing the MPLC Head of Licencing, Tyrone Samuel, at [TSamuel@mplc.com](mailto:TSamuel@mplc.com)



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# New NIC rates

National Insurance Contributions for employees are being cut again from 6th April 2024, with reductions also coming in for self-employed workers in April.

The Chancellor announced further NI changes for both employees and the self-employed in the Spring Budget on 6th March 2024.

The main NI rate for employees will be reduced again from 10% to 8% on 6th April. This follows the previous reduction from 12% to 10% in January.

The Chancellor also announced another cut to self-employed Class 4 NI contributions. The rate was already set to decrease from 9% to 8% from 6th April - now it will go down to 6%.

As announced in the Autumn Statement, self-employed Class 2 NI contributions will also be scrapped in April - a change that's been in the pipeline since 2015.

On the surface, these cuts in NI are good for workers. But it's not always easy to figure out from the headlines exactly how tax cuts like this affect us.

Lower NI contributions should mean you keep more of your earnings in 2024, however, it's important to consider these cuts in the context of previously announced tax rises, 'stealth' taxes, and wage growth.

In particular, as wages go up but income tax thresholds remain frozen, more people will be pulled into paying tax for the first time or tipped into higher tax bands. This is known as 'fiscal drag'.

## What are the new NI rates?

The amount you pay in National Insurance is determined by whether you are employed or self-employed and how much you earn.

### Employed

Currently, the National Insurance rate for most employees is 10% on income of £12,570 to £50,270 a year (£1,048 to £4,189 a month) - this rate is changing to 8% from 6th April 2024. The rate for any income over £50,270 a year (over £4,189 a month) will remain at 2%.

You do not pay National Insurance on your first £12,570.

### Self-employed

If you are self-employed, your National Insurance Contributions are calculated using your annual profits.

Currently, you pay Class 2 National Insurance Contributions at £3.45 a week if your self-employed profits are £12,570 or more.

But from 6th April 2024, those with profits above £12,570 won't be required to pay Class 2 National Insurance - and you will still have access to contributory benefits such as the state pension. Those who make voluntary contributions can carry on doing so at £3.45 a week.

When it comes to Class 4 National Insurance contributions, at the moment you pay 9% on earnings between £12,570 and £50,270, and 2% on profits above £50,270. The main rate will go down from 9% to 6% from April 2024, as opposed to the previously announced 8%.

# New National Minimum Wage rates

Employers should be aware that all minimum wage rates increase on 1st April each year.

From 1st April 2024, the National Living Wage will be extended to include those aged 21 years old and over.

This includes all National Minimum Wage rates and the National Living Wage rate.

The table below shows the current rates and new rates from 1st April 2024:

	Current rate (since April 2023)	New rate April 2024	Increase
National Living Wage (23 years old +)	£10.42	£11.44 (21 years old+)	9.8%
National Minimum Wage (21-22 years old)	£10.18	N/A	N/A
National Minimum Wage (18-20 years old)	£7.49	£8.60	14.8%
National Minimum Wage (16-17 years old)	£5.28	£6.40	21.2%
National Minimum Wage (apprentice rate)	£5.28	£6.40	21.2%

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## How can you manage long-term sickness absence effectively?



What do you do when an employee's absence develops into long-term sickness? What if the prognosis does not indicate a return to work and they continue to submit medical certificates?

It's important to keep in contact with employees when they are absent due to sickness, even when the sickness is deemed long-term sick. An employer should never leave an employee on long-term sick with no contact. Regular contact ensures the company are aware of any updates on the medical condition and also provides an opportunity for the company to regularly update the employee on any company developments.

*Employees on long-term sickness absence may continue to accrue certain benefits and entitlements, depending on their employment contract and company policies, such as:*

- **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**  
Eligible employees are entitled to receive SSP for up to 28 weeks of sickness absence. SSP is paid by the employer and is subject to certain eligibility criteria.
- **Holiday Entitlement**  
Employees continue to accrue their statutory holiday entitlement while on sick leave, including any holiday entitlement specified in their employment contract.
- **Pension Contributions**  
Depending on the company's policy and the terms of the pension scheme, employees may continue to accrue pension contributions during their absence.

- **Contractual Benefits**  
Employers may provide additional contractual benefits, i.e. private healthcare, life insurance or income protection insurance. The continuation of these benefits during long-term sickness absence will depend on the terms of the employment contract and any relevant insurance policies.
- **Accrual of Service**  
Employees typically continue to accrue service during periods of sickness absence, which may have implications for their entitlement to certain benefits.

It's important for employers to review the terms of the employment contract, company policies, and legislation to understand the entitlements and obligations during long-term sickness absence.

*Employers can manage long-term sickness while also mitigating costs to the company by implementing several strategies:*

1. **Early Intervention**  
Encourage early reporting of sickness absences and intervene promptly to offer support and any adjustments required to assist a return to work.
2. **Phased return to work or adjusted duties**  
Develop structured return-to-work programmes that include amended duties and focus on gradual reintroduction to work duties, phased return schedules and accommodations as needed.
3. **Flexible Working Arrangements**  
Offer flexible working arrangements such as part-time hours, remote work, or adjusted schedules to accommodate employees with ongoing health conditions.
4. **Health and Well-being Initiatives**  
Invest in health and well-being initiatives aimed at promoting employee wellness and preventing long-term sickness.
5. **Employee Assistance Programmes or Rehabilitation Services**  
Provide access to an EAP or rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, counselling, helplines, financial advice or vocational rehabilitation.
6. **Manage Costs**  
Implement effective absence management policies and procedures to monitor and control sickness absence costs.
7. **Occupational Health Support**  
Utilise occupational health services to assess employee health needs, provide medical advice, and facilitate the return-to-work process.
8. **Formal Case Review Meetings**  
If the prognosis and medical advice shows that there is no likelihood of a return to work, a formal case review meeting can be held to establish whether there is a case of incapacity, taking into consideration any disability or reasonable adjustments that may need to be made and medical reports obtained.



Ronnie McCullough,  
Managing Director  
Tel: 07835 255794



Nicola Curry,  
HR Consultant



Alan Hall,  
Health & Safety Specialist

9. **Training**  
Provide training to managers and employees on managing sickness absence effectively, recognising early signs of potential long-term sickness, and accessing available support resources.
10. **Review**  
Continuously monitor absence management strategies, company policies and procedures and review their impact on employee well-being and company costs.

By implementing these strategies, employers can manage long-term sickness while minimising its impact on employees and the company's bottom line.

# HMRC set to close its helplines

HMRC has decided to close its tax helpline for half the year, leaving taxpayers reliant on chatbots and online services during the shutdown period.

According to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the closure of the self-assessment telephone helpline will span from April 8th to September 30th, with only priority cases being addressed during this timeframe.

This decision comes amidst ongoing challenges faced by HMRC, including prolonged waiting times and widespread criticism of its services.

While assistance will still be available for those unable to access online resources

during office hours, the exact procedures remain unclear.

The move, following a trial last year, has already sparked criticism from industry bodies, with concerns raised about the potential for increased errors in tax returns.

Over 12m individuals have to complete self-assessment forms annually, further highlighting the significance of the helpline's closure.

*In addition to the self-assessment helpline, changes also affect other HMRC helplines:*

- The VAT helpline will operate for only five business days per month before the deadline for filing VAT returns.

- The PAYE helpline will cease taking calls from customers regarding refunds.

Critics have argued that the transition to online services may be premature due to the complexities of tax matters, with the suggestion that the inability to seek clarification from HMRC will lead to inaccuracies in tax filings.

Harriett Baldwin, Chair of the Treasury Select Committee, agrees with these concerns, emphasising that taxpayers should not be compelled to use online platforms until it is demonstrated that they understand how to navigate HMRC's intricate website. This move comes amidst mounting dissatisfaction with

HMRC's customer service, with reports indicating prolonged wait times for assistance. MPs on the Public Accounts Committee highlighted the deteriorating quality of support, attributing it to increasing tax complexities and a growing number of taxpayers seeking assistance.

The average wait time for a call to HMRC has risen, with a significant portion of callers experiencing delays exceeding 10 minutes. This trend has been consistent over recent years, indicating systemic challenges within HMRC's customer service infrastructure.



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**Q.** At the moment our stewardess attends committee meetings, however, since the AGM, a new committee member is saying this is illegal. Would you clarify this?

**A.** There is nothing unlawful about employees attending board or committee meetings. You will find in most businesses that employees will be part of board meetings to differing degrees.

It is therefore for the committee to determine if they

wish to invite her to attend committee meetings. If the committee decide to invite her to attend then this is fine and is completely lawful. A person invited to a committee meeting can also be asked to leave the meeting at any point, particularly if a matter for discussion would be a sensitive subject or a conflict of interest.

**Q.** We only have one candidate for the position of chairman so we understand that they will be elected automatically without a contest. Several members have asked if they can be allowed to vote for or against this person. Is this permissible?

**A.** If there is only one candidate for the position of chairman then they will be automatically elected at the AGM. There is no way to challenge such an appointment and the members are unable to vote against this person's election if they are the sole

person standing for the position. The members can, of course, remove the chairman at any time by calling a SGM. We would also encourage members to stand for positions to ensure a contest is created to allow members to vote for their preferred candidate.

**Q.** Are employees able to use the club's gaming machines? We have members who consider it unfair for an employee to win a jackpot, perhaps aided by watching the machine.

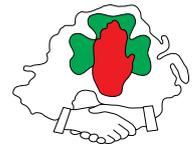
**A.** Opinion is divided on whether it's possible for a person to determine when a machine might pay out, although we are aware that there is a common perception that watching machines gives rise to an unfair advantage.

Gaming machines have to adhere to strict average pay-outs and this is calculated over the course of a machine's

entire life and is therefore unpredictable. It may be that a machine goes months between the jackpot being won, or it may be that two jackpots occur on the same day. With the advent of extra features such as nudges and hi/lo features, it is even more difficult to calculate if a machine is about to pay out.

It is, however, preferable to avoid any possibility of an unfair advantage, real or imagined, and as such it is good practice to prohibit club employees from using the club's gaming machines.

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



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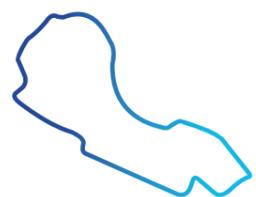
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## Unmissable live sport on Sky

Big Premier League clashes, the first major of the season and the return of the Chinese Grand Prix!

April promises to be an unmissable month of live sport. For football fans, the Premier League fixtures are headlined by fierce rivals Manchester United and Liverpool going head-to-head at Old Trafford in a match that always promises fireworks. And the rivalry will be just as intense in the Scottish Premiership when Rangers and Celtic clash in a massive Old Firm derby. Not to forget about the EFL, where the month of April is even more exciting as the season finale begins to take place with Norwich v Ipswich proving a very important game for both sides.

It's also the first golf Major of the season, with the sport's finest meeting at the iconic Augusta National for the Masters between 11th-14th April. Defending champion Jon Rahm will be looking to hold off a strong challenge from the likes of Rory McIlroy, Scottie Scheffler and Viktor Hovland.



© Courtesy of Getty Images

There's also uninterrupted live coverage of the Japanese Grand Prix and we also see the return of the Chinese Grand Prix. Can anyone stop Max Verstappen from claiming another Driver's championship this season?

Of course that's not all, there's Super League, Premier League Darts, the NFL draft and much more.

Don't forget to promote all this content by using your MySkySports.com account to create posters and social media posts - helping members to plan ahead and visit your club more, so you can establish yourself as the best place to enjoy live sport.



### A selection of sports fixtures in April:

- Thursday 4th April..... Premier League Darts 7pm (Manchester)
- Friday 5th-7th April..... Formula 1 - Japanese Grand Prix
- Saturday 6th April..... Norwich v Ipswich 12.30pm (EFL Championship)  
Brighton v Arsenal 5.30pm (Premier League)
- Sunday 7th April..... Rangers v Celtic 12pm (SPFL Premiership)  
Man Utd v Liverpool 3.30pm (Premier League)
- Monday 8th April..... Spurs v Nottingham Forest 8pm (Premier League)
- Tuesday 9th April..... Leeds v Sunderland 8pm (EFL Championship)
- Thursday 11th-14th April..... The Masters at Augusta National
- Saturday 13th April..... Arsenal v Aston Villa 5.30pm (Premier League)
- Sunday 14th April..... Liverpool v Crystal Palace 2pm (Premier League)  
Bournemouth v Man Utd 4.30pm (Premier League)
- Monday 15th April..... Chelsea v Everton 8pm (Premier League)
- Thursday 18th April..... Premier League Darts 7pm (Rotterdam)
- Friday 19th-21st April..... Formula 1 - Chinese Grand Prix

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# ‘Corrymeela was and is the best thing that happened to me.’



images L-R:  
Nicole preparing food at Corrymeela  
Nicole and the Corrymeela kitchen team  
Nicole and Mona

Meet Nicole—new mum, and one of our dedicated cooks at Corrymeela. Nicole’s childhood was marked by adversity, but amidst the struggles and pressures she faced, Corrymeela Community member Mona faithfully brought her along to our Centre year after year.

Summers spent at Corrymeela’s Ballycastle Centre became a sanctuary, where Nicole experienced joy and belonging, away from the chaos of her surroundings.

At Corrymeela, Nicole found a safe haven that nurtured her. Inspired by the community’s ethos, she pursued her dreams, eventually becoming a skilled cook. Nicole recently landed her dream job at Corrymeela, where she enjoys preparing meals for the thousands of guests who come through our doors each year.

Now, as Nicole embarks on motherhood with the recent birth of her baby girl, she’s dreaming of providing her child with the simple joys and opportunities she didn’t have growing up.

*Help us to support young people in your community like Nicole...thank you.*

Each year we support thousands of people from different backgrounds to live well together, through residential at our Centre and in groups throughout Northern Ireland and beyond.

£3,000 would pay for 20 young people for a 2-night residential at our Centre with a full day’s programme.



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For further information on Club Fundraising contact our Supporter Relationship Manager Catherine O’Hara at: [catherineohara@corrymeela.org](mailto:catherineohara@corrymeela.org) 07515 063 303

Scan to read Nicole’s full story now:



Charity number NIC101597

**corrymeela**   
Together is better

## Different types of club category

Members' clubs may be subdivided into a number of different categories according to their constitution.

Please find an explanation of types of clubs below:

### Unincorporated Clubs

The most common type of members' club is the unincorporated members' club. These are clubs in which the club's property, both real and personal, is vested in a number of trustees elected or appointed in accordance with the club's rules.

Once they have been selected, trustees must formally be appointed to a club's Trust Deed. Without this act of conveyance taking place, a club's property will not be legally held by trustees.

Unincorporated clubs do not achieve corporate status and therefore cannot take, or be subject to legal proceedings in the name of the club. Such proceedings can only be made in the names of the trustees acting on behalf of a club.

Trustees are entitled to indemnify against all liability, costs, damages, claims and demands which are incurred

or suffered in connection with any bona fide transaction or activity carried out on behalf of the club. Such indemnification is usually underwritten by the value of the property of a club, its insurance and, depending on a club's rules, special subscriptions raised from among the membership.

It is important for trustees not to act on behalf of a club without proper instruction from a club's committee, or by resolution of the members, or outside the terms of a club's Trust Deed.

### Co-Operative Societies

Registration of a club as a Co-Operative Society gives a club the status of a corporate body with the advantages that this status brings: to take or defend legal proceedings in the name of the club; to hold property, both real and personal, as a perpetual corporation instead of through trustees; and to authenticate its acts with a common seal.

The responsibility and authority for administering this Act is vested in the Financial Conduct Authority

(FCA), Mutual Societies Registration Department.

A club registered under this Act is required to include the word 'Limited' at the end of its name in order to indicate the limited financial liability of the club. Members are required to purchase a share in the club which represents the members' sole liability of the club. The value of a share can be as low as 5p.

Unlike a company, shares in clubs registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act are usually restricted to one per member. This single shareholding should not be transferable or withdrawable.

This ensures that shares cannot be held outside the membership of the club.

Such clubs must also pay an annual fee, make annual returns and register all rule amendments with the FCA.

Whilst the administrative burden of being a Co-Operative Society may appear to be greater than that of an unincorporated club, the benefits of corporate status, with the resulting removal of the need for trustees, and the creation of limited liability of members, is a matter which many clubs find attractive.

### Limited Companies

We would not advise clubs to seek incorporation under the Companies Acts. Whether limited by share or guarantee, the constitution of a company is mostly consistent with that of a club which, as I have described above, operates as a mutual trading association.

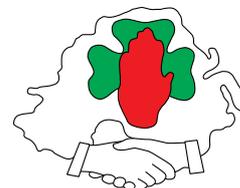
A company's memorandum and articles of association are too cumbersome for the purposes of a club's rule book and the administration required by Companies House to operate a company is often too time-consuming for most Club Secretaries.

A club registered under the Companies Acts may, by special resolution, determine to register as a Co-Operative Society.

A small number of clubs have a situation where their land and buildings are held by companies, which in turn are owned by the club. Such scenarios are usually the result of historic accident and can be the source of confusion caused by share registers not being kept up-to-date, shares not being properly recorded and Directors not being registered or removed from registration.

Clubs in this situation should seek advice on how to convert both the company and club to registration as a Co-Operative Society. Such conversion would provide one consolidating constitution that would properly serve the objects of the club.

As always, if you need any guidance on this topic please feel free to contact any of the Federation Helplines (see page 3) or email [info@nifederationofclubs.com](mailto:info@nifederationofclubs.com) and we will be only too pleased to help you.



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## Keeping your club secure

We hear never-ending stories of businesses having their premises broken into and being robbed and others of online systems being compromised by hackers. It is essential that you take every possible step to safeguard every aspect of your business to avoid this sort of occurrence, be it your CCTV system or anti-virus software.

Below are a few suggestions to help keep your club safe.

### Online Security

All the office security in the world won't help if criminals can access your personal and financial information online. That's why it's essential to have the very latest antivirus and malware software installed and updated at all times. With special packages for small businesses available from providers such as Norton, McAfee, and Avast, to mention only a few, there really is no excuse not to have online protection against malware and viruses. It is a very small outlay

but could save you a fortune in the long term.

It's also important to control direct access to your systems with individual log-ins for all staff, screen locks for when machines are left unattended and updated passwords every 30-60 days.

### Control access

Breaking and entering is a major concern for most businesses as the cost of stolen stock, equipment, and personal belongings can soon add up. Ensure all accessible windows have locks fitted, and that people are appointed to lock them before leaving the premises. Doors too should comply with British Standard PAS 24-1 'Doors of Enhanced Security', ideally with five-lever mortice locks. You should also keep careful note of who has access to and possession of keys.

### Ensure visibility

Security lighting is a good way to deter thieves from

approaching your property and will draw attention if a crime is taking place. Just make sure it complies with local legislation and won't affect your neighbours.

CCTV will also help detect and prevent crime as well as providing evidence. Smaller premises may only need a few cameras, but you are recommended to engage a professional installer who will be able to advise on the best system and camera locations for your premises.

### Raise the alarm

Monitored alarms will help to drive away intruders and ensure staff or the police will be on their way if the alarm persists. Consult a registered alarm specialist to find, install and maintain the ideal system for you.

### Protect valuable equipment and documents

Make sure computer servers and sensitive paperwork are stored



safely and securely, and limit the number of people with keys or access codes. Mark or tag company equipment so that it can be traced back to you if lost or stolen.

If laptops are used for financial matters, you can even use GPS software to track them in the event they're stolen. You should also use document shredders to dispose of paperwork with sensitive personal, financial or commercial data, and arrange secure collection.

These are just some of the main points to consider, and you shouldn't be put off by the expense. These costs will pale next to those incurred if you can't trade due to a break-in, or lose your customers' information online.

## Risk assessments

By law clubs must conduct a risk assessment. The purpose is to highlight risks and weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions, or should do more.

Employers should ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Risk assessments are a very important step in protecting employees and the club itself, as well as complying with the law.

### Do:

- Write a policy. This lets your employees know about your commitment to health and safety and how they can

bring items of concern to the attention of the committee.

- Pick a competent employee to help you. This can be one of your employees or someone from outside your business.
- Walk around the club to see the risks yourself. You will be able to see exactly how people undergo their daily tasks and if there are any potential risks.
- Look through previous accident or illness records. These might have been caused by risks that are still likely to happen in your workplace.
- Think both short and long

term. Risks might not just affect people in the short term, a certain task might have risks in the future.

- Record your findings. Writing down the risks lets you show your employees so they can understand them as well as allowing you to review your findings at a later date.
- Date findings and any changes needed. You can then look at this later and see if the changes have made any difference.

### Don't:

- Over complicate things. A risk assessment doesn't have to be a long-winded process; just note risks and steps being taken to reduce the them happening.

- Forget to do a risk assessment. Make a date to complete the process at least once a year.

- Muddle along. If you feel stuck, ask for help. There are many different channels to get help from, your club's insurance provider, for example.

- Brush risks under the carpet. No matter how insignificant a risk, you still need to make a note of it and set up precautions to stop it. Examples of risk assessments can be viewed online at: [www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm) These examples will give you a useful idea of how an assessment should be structured and undertaken.



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## Armagh club receives Ulster GAA Club Health & Wellbeing Award



The Ulster GAA Club Health & Wellbeing Award is a recognition of a club's efforts in building healthy practices into their everyday activities, while also responding to the wellbeing needs of their members and their communities.

Clan na Gael are energetically involved in the National GAA Healthy Club and Green Club programmes, providing physical activities for all ages, genders, and abilities. The "friendly club" has been warmly received by the wider community providing an opportunity, for older members of the community to come together each week.

The Lurgan club is active in the GAA's inclusive All-Stars initiative, providing members with additional needs the

opportunities to be included in Gaelic games, not only for participation and exercise but also for the social experiences.

Clan na Gael also work with local partners to provide programmes around a wide range of areas including healthy eating, mental fitness, substance abuse and gambling awareness.

The club were presented with their award by Diane Graham and Nicola McGregor from the Ulster Independent Clinic. Diane commented, "On behalf of the Ulster Independent Clinic, we would like to congratulate Clan na Gael Club, who have been recognised for their impressive efforts in delivering a significant and inclusive programme for their local community."



The Clan na Gael club in County Armagh were worthy recipients of the Ulster GAA Club Health & Wellbeing Award, presented in association with the Ulster Independent Clinic at the recent Ulster GAA Awards.

Ulster GAA President, Ciaran McLaughlin added, "Ulster GAA is delighted to present the Club Health & Wellbeing Award to Clan na Gael in recognition of the tremendous work they carry out in supporting the holistic health of their members and the community they serve.

"Engraining a healthy philosophy while integrating wellness into day-to-day activities ensures that GAA clubs are at the heart of their communities and make them a beacon for health in their local areas."

## UGAA donate £20,000 to Air Ambulance NI



In April 2023, nine high-profile GAA personalities from each of Ulster's counties took on a 15,000ft skydive to raise money for both the AANI service and the Patrick G. Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University of Belfast, an event which received tremendous support from across the province.

Ulster GAA representatives recently visited the AANI HQ outside Lisburn to hand over the contribution and meet with some of their team to find out more about the life-saving work they carry out on a day-to-day basis.

In addition to the proceeds raised by the skydive, donations were also received from last month's Ulster GAA Awards and annual Stewards' Dinner, while awareness of the charity's vital service was raised through coverage in matchday programmes and online campaigns throughout the season.

Ciarán McLaughlin, Ulster GAA President, commented, "At Ulster GAA we have been delighted to partner with Air Ambulance NI and be able to support and publicise the hugely important work they do across the wider community."



Damien McAnespie, Area Fundraising Manager for Air Ambulance NI, commented, "We were absolutely delighted to be Ulster GAA's chosen charity over the past year, with a significant amount of

funds being raised through the skydive and other events. I want to pay massive thanks for their support and contribution which is helping to save lives in our communities."

[www.airambulancenir.org](http://www.airambulancenir.org)

# Are you up for a challenge?

Whether you want to run, walk, jump, row, bike or hike, we would love you to join #TeamNICHS and help us continue the fight against chest, heart and stroke conditions in Northern Ireland.

If you don't see anything you like below, get in touch and we can talk about some other ideas.

Download a copy of our fundraising guide at [www.nichs.org.uk/fundraisingguide](http://www.nichs.org.uk/fundraisingguide)



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Belfast Half Marathon 

Dragon Boat Race 

Tower Museum Abseil 

Mourne Seven Sevens 

Dublin Marathon 

Christmas Fundraising 

Twilight 

Hearty Hike

Red Dress Fun Run 

Heartfelt 

Morning Break

Skydive 

Almost **90%** of our income comes from public donations.

For more information or to sign up:

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## Larne FC dominates February

### Tiernan Lynch and Cian Bolger scoop top awards

**Larne Football Club** boss, Tiernan Lynch, is the NIFWA Manager of the Month for February.

The Invermen enjoyed a superb February, with a 100% record in Sports Direct Premiership beating Loughgall, Ballymena United and Glentoran. Larne also knocked Glenavon out of the Irish Cup with a resounding 5-0 win.

It's back-to-back monthly awards for Lynch, who also claimed the January prize.

Lynch said, "It's lovely to win awards like these. As far as I'm concerned I'm picking them up on behalf of the staff and the players. Of course, there's more important trophies out there to be won. We're delighted to be top of the league and into the Irish Cup semi-final, but the reality is we have won nothing yet.

"There's still a lot of hard work to be done."

**Larne Football Club** defender Cian Bolger has won the Dream Spanish Homes Player of the Month prize for February.

Bolger excelled defensively, helping the Invermen keep clean sheets against Glenavon, Glentoran, Ballymena United and Loughgall.

Bolger said, "I would like to thank sponsor Dream Spanish Homes and the Football Writers' Association for this award. I think our success is down to hard work on the pitch. We take great pride in keeping clean sheets. Clean sheets give you the platform to win games and that's what we need to do to win the league."

Glentoran's David Fisher was runner-up with Larne's Lee Bonis third.

**Bangor Football Club** attacker Scott McArthur is the Northern Ireland Football Writers' Association's Championship Player of the Month for February.

The winger helped the Seaside to an impressive month with wins over derby rivals Ards, Harland & Wolff Welders and Ballyclare Comrades. The Bangor native nabbed two goals in the 4-0 win over Ballyclare.

McArthur said, "I'm absolutely delighted. It's recognition for me, but it's also recognition to the entire Bangor team. Honestly, three or four of the lads could have won this trophy. You could say that most months.

"We've had an incredible season and I think there's much more to come."



Top: NIFWA Chairman Michael Clarke presents Larne boss, Tiernan Lynch, with his February Manager of the Month prize.

Middle: Dream Spanish Homes Player of the Month for February is Larne's Cian Bolger.

Bottom: Bangor's Scott McArthur is the February Championship Player of the Month

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