



STRAITÉIS RÉITEORA

REFEREE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2018-2021







CONTENTS

Teachtaireacht ón Uachtarán	5
Teachtaireach ón gCathaoirleach	6
Our Mission, Vision and Values	7
Referee Vision	8
Planning Process Overview	9
Strategic Focus Areas and Goals	10
Implementation Framework	22

TEACHTAIREACHT ÓN UACHTARÁN



Seán Ó hÓráin

Seán Ó hÓráin
Uachtarán
Cumann Lúthchleas Gael



Is pribhléid agus ónoir mór dom an teachtaireacht seo a scríobh don Straitéis Réiteora iontach seo.

I'm delighted to lend my support to this report and acknowledge the enormous credit due to our referees and their administrators towards the development and growth of our Games.

As someone who has a background in coaching and games development and in mentoring underage club and school teams, I have seen at first hand the hard work and dedication which is invested into the promotion of our Games.

The result is that Gaelic Games have never seen participation rates as high or enjoyed such levels of exposure and enjoyment.

Throughout all of this the role of the referee and match officials and their ability to meet this pace and development and continue to facilitate the growth of our Games is every bit as important as the progress made by players and coaches.

We need a plan to ensure that we have match officials now and into the future and that they are the best that they can be.

More games at inter-county level means more referees and also requires referees of a standard capable of performing at the highest level.

Away from the top flight having a programme of referee education and development that supports the games programme at club level is equally as important.

Willie Barrett, Donal Smyth and Patrick Doherty and their committees and team at Croke Park provide strong leadership and direction. We have people of the highest calibre in the Association who are passionate about refereeing and we are fortunate to have them.

This publication is about a roadmap for progress and about setting standards for match officials which will benefit all of those with an interest in our games.

The recruitment of referees is a challenge for every county but one that cannot be ignored.

There is a place for everyone within our Association and it is vital that those with an interest in refereeing are given every encouragement to maximise their potential.

The plan is not just about recruitment and retention, but it is about the advancement of skills and capabilities and mentoring at every level.

This document will hopefully frame our approach to ensuring that refereeing and the role and importance of match officials commands a prominent place in games development.

In congratulating and thanking all of those involved in its publication, I wish all involved every success in breathing life and action into this document.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

TEACHTAIREACHT ÓN gCATHAOIRLEACH



Willie Barrett
Cathaoirleach
Coiste Forbartha na Réiteoirí



Tá fíor-áthas orm an plean seo, “Straitéis Réiteora” a chur ar aghaidh le ballraíocht Chumann Lúthchleas Gael. Tá súil agam, le cabhair ón bplean, go mbeidh réiteoireacht in áit níos láidre i 2021.

It is my pleasure to present to you the GAA Referee Development Plan 2018–2021 – “Straitéis Réiteora”. The plan sets out, what we consider to be, ambitious, but achievable goals and objectives with the overall refereeing vision: “To recruit, develop and inspire referees to reach their full potential and officiate at the highest level, and control our games, uniformly and consistently, in according with the playing rules”.

A Steering Group was formed to assist the National Referee Development Committee develop a Strategic Plan for refereeing and this group undertook a number of initiatives to help form the basis for the plan.

These initiatives included an online survey with referees at all levels which attracted more than 1,000 responses, an online survey with County and Provincial Referee Administrators which received a 100% response rate, various interviews, consultations, peer reviews and analysis of other plans and GAA reports. The final initiative in the planning process was a Visioning Workshop, held in June, when 30 members met and discussed in detail the various Focus Areas.

Following the planning process, the Steering Group identified the following five strategic goals, with a “Headline” objective for each:

1. **Goal:** Maximise recruitment and retention of referees.
Objective: Increase the number of new referees recruited at Club level and transitioning to officiate at the highest level.
2. **Goal:** Advance the skills and abilities of referees.
Objective: Enhance referee education especially at club and county levels.

3. **Goal:** Optimise advising and mentoring of referees.
Objective: Develop a referee mentoring system and renew the current advisor system.
4. **Goal:** Strengthen supports for referee fitness and general welfare.
Objective: Extend facets of the national referee fitness and training regime to referees at all levels.
5. **Goal:** Streamline governance structures and referee administration.
Objective: Engage referee administrators to implement organisation-wide priorities in addition to local needs.

More detail, particularly other stated objectives, specific actions and progress indicators are set out in the Referee Development Plan. The plan runs concurrently with the recently launched GAA Strategic Plan.

The steps to be taken, timelines and targets will be defined by the Referee Development Committee over the next few months. While there will be a focus on achieving the Goals set out in this Development Plan over the next three years all other work currently being undertaken in the referee area will continue as heretofore.

I thank all who contributed to the development of this plan, particularly the members who participated in our Visioning Workshop in June and the referees and Referee Administrators who responded to the online surveys. Their views assisted greatly in framing our **Straitéis Réiteora**. Stuart Cummings, with whom we consulted in the early part of our research, also facilitated our workshop and his expertise and assistance is greatly appreciated.

I look forward with confidence to the next three years as we aim to push refereeing to a stronger position by 2021.

OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Our Mission

The GAA is a community-based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic games, Gaelic culture and lifelong participation.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our games and values enrich the lives of our members, families and the communities we serve.

We are committed to active lifelong participation for all and to providing the best facilities.

We actively seek to engage with and include all members of our society.

We promote individual development and well-being and strive to enable all our members to achieve their full potential in their chosen roles.

Our Vision

Our vision is that everybody be welcomed to participate fully in our games and culture, that they thrive and develop their potential, and be inspired to keep a lifelong engagement with our Association.

Our Values

Community Identity

- Community is at the heart of our Association.
- Everything we do helps to enrich the communities we serve.
- We foster a clear sense of identity and place.
- We support our members in contributing to the well-being of their respective communities.

Amateur Status

- We are a volunteer led organisation.
- All our players and members participate in our games as amateurs.
- We provide a games programme at all levels to meet the needs of all our players.

Inclusiveness

- We welcome everybody to be part of our Association.
- We support the needs of all our members.

Respect

- We respect each other on and off the playing fields.
- We operate with integrity at all levels.
- We listen and respect the views of all.

Player Welfare

- We provide the best playing experience for all our players.
- We structure our games to allow players of all abilities reach their potential.

Teamwork and Volunteerism

- We flourish through the voluntary efforts of our membership.
- Our voluntary ethos inspires the engagement of members in the broader community.
- The cornerstone of our Association is effective teamwork on and off the field.
- We value the contribution of our professional staff. Ní neart go chur le chéile (There is no strength without working together).

REFEREE VISION



Vision for Refereeing

To recruit, develop and inspire referees to reach their full potential and officiate at the highest level, and control our games, uniformly and consistently, in accordance with the playing rules.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

In November 2017, the GAA's Player, Club and Games Administration Department held a workshop on improving its operations for the following year. Arising from this, the value in forming a more strategic approach to referee development was identified. A Steering Group was subsequently established by Willie Barrett (Cathaoirleach) and Patrick Doherty (National Match Officials Manager) to assist the National Referee Development Committee to develop a Strategic Plan for refereeing to cover the period 2018 to 2021.

Research methods which have been undertaken since then included:

- Desk research to form a project plan
- Online survey with referees at all levels which attracted over 1,000 responses
- Online survey with referee administrators at County and Provincial levels which received a 100% response rate
- Interviews with Tom Ryan (Director-General, GAA) and Feargal McGill (Director, Player, Club and Games Administration)
- Consulting with Stuart Cummings, former International Rugby Referee
- A literature review of official GAA reports and media articles, including previous Referee Development Plans
- Peer review of refereeing in comparable sports

These research methods were undertaken between November 2017 and May 2018. The preliminary findings were analysed, and a Consultation Paper was produced for a Visioning Workshop with a wide range of stakeholders. This workshop took place on 2 June in Croke Park. The focus groups and members were as follows:

1. Recruitment and retention

Dickie Murphy, Alan Coyne, Michelle Bennett, Noel O'Donoghue, Owen Elliott

2. Development

Donal Smyth, Michael Wadding, Stephen Cahalan, Conor Dourneen, Jimmy O'Dwyer, Mairéad Delaney, Liam McCabe

3. Mentoring and advising

Thomas Quigley, Joe O'Brien, Shane Quinn, Lizzie Flynn, Rory Hickey, Vincent Neary

4. Fitness, Training and General Welfare

Niall Moyna, Padraig O'Sullivan, Aidan Brady, Lauren Guilfoyle, Philip Howlin, Jim O'Rourke

5. Governance

Marty Duffy, Jim O'Shea, Matt Shaw, Ger Ryan, David Coldrick, Clare Dowdall

This workshop was facilitated by Stuart Cummings. It resulted in a body of ambitious ideas for further consideration by the Steering Group. The Steering Group produced a draft version of the Strategic Plan which was then considered by Central Committees, before refinement and approval by the Management Committee.

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS

FOCUS AREA

1. Recruitment and retention
2. Development
3. Mentoring and advising
4. Fitness and welfare
5. Governance and administration

GOAL

- Maximise recruitment and retention of referees.
- Advance the skills and abilities of referees.
- Optimise advising and mentoring for referees.
- Strengthen supports for referee fitness and general welfare.
- Streamline governance structures and referee administration.





GOAL 1: MAXIMISE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF REFEREES.

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
1.1 Increase the numbers of new referees recruited at club level	1.1.1 Create and implement a revised recruitment programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a new organisation-wide recruitment programme • Increased number of new referees year-on-year • The percentage of newly recruited referees retained for more than one year • Increased number of referees under the age of 30 • Increased number of female referees • Increased number of former players refereeing • Increased number of hurling referees
	1.1.2 Develop a programme to assist in identifying potential referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out of an initiative to identify high-potential referees • Number of high-potential referees recruited • Number of high-potential referees retained
	1.1.3 Target the recruitment of young referees from the GAA's Future Leaders Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of an action plan to recruit referees through Future Leaders • Number of referees recruited from Future Leaders

OBJECTIVES**1.2 Improve the referee retention rate****SPECIFIC ACTIONS**

1.2.1 Develop and roll-out an early-development programme

PROGRESS INDICATORS

- Development and implementation of an early-development programme
- Improved referee retention rate

1.2.2 Enhance the participation experience of new referees

- Increased profile of refereeing
- More frequent communication with administrators and mentors
- Improved quality of support from administrators and mentors
- Higher levels of respect

1.2.3 Review referee administrator roles and responsibilities to ensure sufficient focus on retention

- Refreshed roles and responsibilities
- Increased focus on referee retention in role profiles
- Number of initiatives delivered in each province and county to encourage retention

GOAL 2: ADVANCE THE SKILLS AND ABILITIES OF REFEREES.

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
2.1 Enhance referee education especially at club and county levels	2.1.1 Undertake a training needs analysis of club referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a training needs analysis • Availability of up-to-date data on training needs
	2.1.2 Revise the content and delivery style of referee training courses for serving and new referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of revision of content based on needs identified • Development of new content • Adoption of a learner-led approach to training • 100% attendance at training courses by serving referees
	2.1.3 Apply a uniform model of referee education across all four provinces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the same educational content in all four Provinces • Higher participant satisfaction with training
2.2 Strengthen training for Referee Instructors	2.2.1 Examine the role requirements of a current-day Referees Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of data on role requirements • Publication of revised role profile for Referee Instructors
	2.2.2 Upskill Referee Instructors through improved training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of instructors completing additional training • Improved facilitation and presentation skills amongst Referee Instructors • Feedback on instructors from course attendees

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
2.3 Introduce an online instruction and support platform	2.3.1 Revamp the referee intranet and expand to club referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of an improved intranet • Number of club referees using the referee intranet • Improved feedback from referees on the user experience
	2.3.2 Build a digital learning hub for referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a digital learning hub for referees • Satisfaction with quality of video content on the portal • Frequency of publication of content • Number and quality of digital resources published • 50% of referees using digital portal
	2.3.3 Revise online rules tests for referees and ensure obligatory completion by all referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of a revised rules test • 32 counties and 4 provinces using the online rules test • 100% completion of test amongst referees • Consistent application of agreed pass mark
2.4 Revamp the Referee Pathway	2.4.1 Examine and update the Referee Pathway from club to National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a review of the Referee Pathway • Redefined referee development levels • Increased number of referees progressing through each level of the pathway • Implementation of a more strategic approach to referee appointments by appointment committees • Facilitation of progression for high-potential referees

GOAL 3: OPTIMISE ADVISING AND MENTORING FOR REFEREES.

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
3.1 Develop a referee mentoring programme	3.1.1 Develop an organisation-wide referee mentor system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a referee mentor system Number of referee mentors recruited Number of training days completed by each Mentor Completion of referee mentor training
	3.1.2 Implement a tailored version of the system specifically for new club referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of referees assigned a Mentor Frequency of calls and meetings between each Mentor and Referee Referee satisfaction with mentoring
3.2 Recruit and train referee mentors	3.2.1 Devise and deliver a referee mentor recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a recruitment process Number of Mentors recruited Number of Mentors recruited from outside the traditional referee pool
	3.2.2 Design and implement an education programme for referee mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of a training programme to 100% of mentors Number of participants at each educational course Mentor satisfaction with training content

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
3.3 Renew the referee advisor system	3.3.1 Evaluate the current referee advisor system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of evaluation report on current system • Publication of position paper on referee advising • Availability of a renewed role profile
	3.3.2 Enhance the current system and roll-out across the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of an improved reporting system at all levels • Improved usage of referee advisor system
3.4 Increase the number of trained referee advisors	3.4.1 Formulate a recruitment strategy for referee advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a recruitment strategy • Number of advisors recruited • Number of advisors retained
	3.4.2 Design and deliver a training programme for referee advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and delivery of a training programme • Number of referee advisors trained • Referee advisors satisfied with quality of training programme

GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN SUPPORTS FOR REFEREE FITNESS AND GENERAL WELFARE.

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
4.1 Extend facets of the national referee fitness and training regime to referees at all levels	4.1.1 Standardise the minimum fitness level for all referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of defined fitness levels for each stage of the Referee Pathway • Annual measurement of fitness levels in 100% of referees • Percentage of referees passing the fitness test
	4.1.2 Develop a training programme for club referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and delivery of a bespoke fitness training programme for club referees • Number of counties availing of the training programme • Number of referees availing of the training programme
	4.1.3 Introduce the GAA 15 Injury Prevention/Warm up programme to referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of the GAA 15 as a module in the referee in-service course • Number of GAA 15 modules organised and completed • Increased awareness of the GAA 15 in referees • Lower levels of injury
4.2 Explore the introduction of a general welfare programme for referees	4.2.1 Educate referees in relation to the Player's Injury Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the GAA Injury Benefit Fund
	4.2.2 Budget set aside at all levels to cover a general welfare programme for referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased budget allocated to general welfare initiatives for each county • Budget spend (annual)



GOAL 5: STREAMLINE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND REFEREE ADMINISTRATION.

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
5.1 Engage referee administrators to implement organisation-wide priorities in addition to local needs	5.1.1 Evaluate the role, appointment and training of County and Provincial Referee Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of modern role descriptions • Revised rules on appointment of Referee Administrators and Committees • Improved training frequency and quality for Administrators • 100% of Referee Administrators attending disciplinary training • Disciplinary training completed by 100% of Referee Administrators
	5.1.2 Examine the structure and role responsibility of Referee Committee at all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Terms of Reference for Referee Committees • Inclusion of members on Committees with subject matter expertise in specific areas • Number of committee members with increased role responsibility • Creation and implementation of county and provincial-specific operating plans for refereeing • Number of county and provincial operating plans created
	5.1.3 Consider the need for additional full-time personnel involved in refereeing at National and/or Provincial level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a business case and consideration by the Director-General • Number of new people involved in referee administration
	5.1.4 Undertake a technology review as it may assist refereeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision taken on the roll-out of Hawkeye in additional venues • Number of initiatives pursued to augment the use of technology in refereeing

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC ACTIONS	PROGRESS INDICATORS
5.2 Examine the effect of legislation on refereeing	5.2.1 Explore, using the expertise of other GAA Committees, the effect of GDPR legislation on refereeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with experts on relevant legislation Actions taken to respond to the effect of legislation on refereeing
	5.2.2 Examine, using the expertise of other GAA Committees, the effect of Children First legislation on refereeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with other committees, expert in Children First legislation Creation and roll-out of educational material to cover Children First legislation
5.3 Strengthen partnerships to augment refereeing	5.3.1 Enhance the relations that exist with other committees, administrators, coaches and players and create external partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased level of interaction with other stakeholders Number of formal partnerships formed Execution of agreed initiatives
	5.3.2 Identification of joint initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of joint-initiatives developed and implemented
	5.3.3 Create and implement a well-resourced respect initiative in conjunction with the relevant central committees and departments ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of initiatives for greater promotion and awareness of the respect initiative Measures taken to increase tolerance, understanding and acceptance in our games
5.4 Foster closer integration with the LGFA and Camogie Association	5.4.1 Implement the memorandum of understanding between the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association as it applies to refereeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of actions in the MOU relevant to refereeing Closer integration between the GAA, LGFA and Camogie in terms of referee development

1. GAA Strategic Plan 2018–2021 Goal 5.3 “Reinvigorate our focus on respect both on and off the field”.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The National Referee Development Committee will oversee implementation of this plan. It will meet monthly to review progress against the goals and indicators set out in the plan. Implementation will also involve reporting to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis and the production of a Mid-Point Review after 18-months for consideration.

This plan sets out the goals, objectives, specific actions and progress indicators to guide the refereeing strategy in the GAA over the course of the next three years. The specific steps to be taken, metrics, and targets will be defined by the Referee Development Committee in the coming months.





STRAITÉIS RÉITEORA

REFEREE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2018-2021