

## Cork GAA Championship Proposals 2020

*“You can spend your whole life traveling around the world searching for the Garden of Eden, or you can create it in your backyard.”*

With the current championship format / calendar entering its fourth and final year in 2019, the ‘Games’ workgroup of the Cork GAA Strategic subcommittee were tasked with reviewing existing fixture programmes and proposing alternatives for 2020 and beyond. In order to consult as widely as possible, a review process was set up as follows.

- Ag Éisteacht 1 - Submissions were emailed to [administrator.cork@gaa.ie](mailto:administrator.cork@gaa.ie) before Friday, March 1st. When compiling submissions, members were asked to reference both Football/Hurling and both Divisional/ County Competitions and include the following: (i) Calendar of Dates for Leagues & Championship; (ii) Formats for Leagues & Championship; (iii) Number of Teams in each Grade/Competition; (iv) Any other recommendations. Over fifty submissions were received and when combined with submissions received previously by the football review workgroup, a total of almost one hundred submissions were accepted.
- Ag Éisteacht 2 - At the board meeting of Tuesday, February 26th, the issue was discussed by club and divisional delegates as the meeting's discussion topic. Delegates from over twenty different clubs made oral contributions from the floor.
- Ag Éisteacht 3 - On Saturday, March 9th, an open Club Forum took place for all clubs in Páirc Uí Chaoimh from 10.00am - 1.00pm. Clubs were asked to send two representatives per affiliation (i.e. two for Football and two for Hurling), one of whom was to be a current player and the other an officer/mentor. A total of almost two hundred representatives were in attendance, with individual and collective submissions emerging from the twenty or so discussion tables on the day.

Across all consultation forums there was a clear dissatisfaction with club championship programmes. (Incidentally, this was in contrast to the relative success of the current league programme, where tighter regulation in 2019 was showing a positive early dividend.) There was also a desire for more championship games (current number 180 approx.) and greater certainty with regard to dates.

Recognising the frustration of members with regard to the dominance of the inter-county scene on club fixture programmes, it was widely accepted that this is unlike to change greatly in the short term. Therefore, the requirement to reform our own championship structures was clear. Integral to any positive outcome in this regard would be a definite calendar for club games.

In order to address the deficiencies of current championship formats there was a clear consensus with regard to the need for more regular, meaningful and competitive games and an almost universal consensus on the methods by which this could be achieved:

1. Definite Club Calendar
2. Reduction in the Number of Teams at each level
3. Group Formats
4. ‘Straight’ Relegation in all Championships

Meanwhile, throughout the process there was a lack of consensus in the following areas, with opinions varying greatly:

- a. Championship Start Dates – April / August start or Play Through the Summer
- b. Availability of County players
- c. Grading of Teams into new Championship Grades
- d. ‘Transitioning’ of Intermediate Teams to Junior level

Therefore, having consulted so broadly, the workgroup decided that any proposals which would go to the clubs for consideration would have to incorporate the areas of consensus (1 – 4). However, in regard to areas where consensus was not achieved (a - c) options would have to be presented to clubs for consideration.

In relation to d. (the transitioning of teams from Intermediate to Junior) above, what was considered a fair and equitable approach across the next three seasons (2019-2021) was developed and is included.

A similar approach is taken for hurling and football, the only difference being in the methods of transition from the current number of teams in hurling (61) and football (53) over the next three seasons to the 48 teams which will begin the 2022 championships.

In terms of approval / ratification, it was agreed that once proposals were approved by the Strategic Review Steering Committee, the Executive and the County CCC they would then be presented to club delegates on Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> and circulated to clubs by email on the same night.

Then, with clubs having one week for local discussions, delegate would return on Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> to vote (using proportional representation) to ultimately select the championship format for 2020 and 2021.

A further review will follow before end 2021 to consider future programmes.

It is hoped that all Cork GAA members continue to engage with the process for the next week and that all delegates are fully mandated by their Clubs to vote for their chosen option at next Tuesday night's meeting.

An information campaign will follow for the next 7 days across all platforms to ensure that members are fully briefed.

The contribution of the 'Games' workgroup is hereby recognised. Members were as follows: Jim Woulfe, Conor Counihan, Pat Ryan, Marc Sheehan, Ronan Dwane and Kevin O'Donovan.

## Core Elements

As can be seen in Table 1 below, there are ‘Core Elements’ which are consistent to all proposals.

These core elements reflect the consensus found with regard to the four areas listed previously (1 -4)

- a total of 48 teams in the County Senior and Intermediate championships\*
- four grades with 12 teams in each
  - Premier Senior
  - Senior A
  - Premier Intermediate
  - Intermediate A
- Group formats
- ‘Straight’ relegation – ‘one up one down’ annually
- one team from the Divisions / Colleges to enter at a preliminary quarter-final stage of the Premier Senior Championship.

\*For a period of two years a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade (Lower Intermediate) would be introduced in hurling to cater for a further 12 teams, while the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in football (Intermediate A) would be extended to 16 for the same two year period. Transition from these numbers to the required 48 is described on page 10.

Players from the 24 Senior teams (Premier Senior and Senior A ) would not be eligible to play with divisions / colleges as per bye-law. Cork would be represented in Munster club championships by the Premier Senior, Premier Intermediate and Junior A champions, as before.

**Table 1 Core Elements**

<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;"><b>Core</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>GOALS</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>‘Regular Meaningful Games’</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>‘Definite Calendar’</b></p>	<p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>‘Core Elements’</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;"><b>2020 &amp; 2021</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">60 hurling / 52 football teams</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">4 / 5 Grades of 12*</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">Group Formats</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">‘Straight’ Relegation</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">Grading for selection of 12s at end 2019</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;"><b>Transition</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">2022 Target = 48 Teams</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">reduction from 60 (H) &amp; 52 (F) at end 2021</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">5<sup>th</sup> hurling grade for 2 years</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">4<sup>th</sup> football grade extended to 16 for 2 years</p>
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**Decision Making Process for Clubs (Tables 2 & 3)**

Clubs are asked to vote for their preferred Option (A-C) across different calendars / formats (Table 2).

**Table 2 Options A-C**

<b>Decision (i) A, B, or C (proportional representation)</b>	<b>Option A 'April &amp; August' 270 games</b> 4 Grades of 12 3 Groups of 4 teams 3 games 1 game in April, 2 in August	<b>Option B 'August Start' 220 games</b> 4 Grades of 12 4 Groups of 3 teams 2 games 2 games in August No game in April	<b>Option C 'Summer Games' 360 games</b> 4 Grades of 12 2 groups of 6 teams 5 games 1 game in April, 2 in August 1-2 games in May June July without County players for half points
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**Decision (i) Options A - C**

In order to allow a democratic selection of Calendars / Formats across three ranges, the following options are presented: (A) Play one group game in April and two in August; (B) Play two games in August only; (C) Play five group games across the summer from April to August with inter-county players missing one or two games which would yield a lesser number of points. These option are outlined in more detail on pages 5-7.

Secondly, clubs are asked to choose how the teams are graded into the new Championships by voting for Grading 1 or 2 (Table 3).

**Decision (ii) Grading 1 or 2**

Clubs are presented with two options in relation to the grading of teams into the new championship grades: Grading 1, where teams are graded based on 2019 championship performance; or Grading 2 where championship performances over the past three years are also taken into account. Grading is described in more detail on pages 8/9.

**Table 3 Grading 1 or 2**

<b>Decision (ii) 1 or 2</b>	<b>Grading 1</b> On the field on 2019	<b>Grading 2</b> On the field on 2019 AND Past Performance (Cship 2016-18)
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## Option A 'April & August'

### **Format**

- Four grades (two Senior & two Intermediate) with 12 teams in each
- Three groups in each grade with four teams in each
- Three games
- One group game in April with two group games in August

### **Quarter-Finals**

#### Premier Senior

- Top three from each group with one divisional /colleges winner proceed to play-offs (total 10 teams)
- Top two from each group advance to quarter-finals
- Best and second best third placed teams play off for a quarterfinal place
- Third best third placed team play divisional / colleges winner for the final quarter-final place

#### Intermediate football (4 groups of 4)

- Top two teams from each group advance to the quarter-finals (total 8 teams)

#### All other grades

- Top two from each group proceed to play-offs (total 6 teams)

**Relegation** Bottom team in all groups proceeds to relegation play-off, as required

### **Positives**

- Extra championship games
- Grading of players in Round 1
- Clubs active and mobilised in spring period
- Club before county ethos
- Players focussed and motivated for early season training
- Revenue – cash-flow positive
- A greater link between the April and August game with points being awarded

### **Negatives**

- Gap between Round 1 and Round 2
- Stop-start nature of championship
- Absence of summer championship games
- Disruption of leagues in April
- Condensed August

## Option B 'August only'

### **Format**

- Four grades (two Senior & two Intermediate) with 12 teams in each
- Four groups in each grade with three teams in each
- Two games
- No game in April with two group games in August
- Relegation – 'one up one down'

### **Quarter-Finals**

#### Premier Senior

- Top two from each group with one divisional / colleges winner proceed to play-offs (total 9 teams)
- Fourth best second placed team play divisional / colleges winner for the final quarter-final place

#### Intermediate football (4 groups of 4)

- Top two teams from each group advance to the quarter-finals (total 8 teams)

#### All other grades

- Top two from each group along proceed to play-offs (total 8 teams)

**Relegation** Bottom team in all groups proceeds to relegation play-off, as required

### **Positives**

- Condensed, compact competitions
- Clearer play-off roadmap
- Uninterrupted leagues

### **Negatives**

- Less games
- Overly condensed championship – effect on referees / pitches
- Unmotivated players – risk of J1 visas or apathy amongst players
- Apathy amongst clubs in spring
- Absence of summer games
- 15 named players for Grading
- Even less access to County players in April
- Impact on gates / revenues
- Reduced exposure for our games

## Option C 'Summer Games'

### Format

- Four grades (two Senior & two Intermediate) with 12 teams in each
- Two groups in each grade with six teams in each
- One group in April and two in August with County players for full points
- 1-2 games in May/June without them for half-points – deviation from rule
- Relegation – 'one up one down'

### Notes

'Inter-county player' defined as a player on the previous Senior inter-county matchday squad  
For example, if Club hurling championship was played on **May 26<sup>th</sup>** in 2019, the 26 players named for Munster SHC Cork v Limerick on May 19<sup>th</sup> would be excluded. For example, if Club football championship was played on **June 8<sup>th</sup>**, the 26 players named for Munster SFC Cork v Tipperary / Limerick on June 1<sup>st</sup> would be excluded. The second mid-summer hurling game (**June 23<sup>rd</sup>**) would be played after the Munster SHC group stage and the second mid-summer football game (**July 14<sup>th</sup>**) would be played after round 4 of the All Ireland SFC qualifiers. Therefore, inter-county players would miss a second match only if Cork qualified from Munster in hurling or qualified for the 'Super 8' in football.

If Option C is approved, then a complete reorganisation of County league groups will be required to facilitate the extra championship games throughout the summer.

### Quarter-Finals

#### Premier Senior

- Top four from each group with one divisional / colleges winner to play-offs (9 teams)
- Second best 4<sup>th</sup> placed team play divisional / colleges winner for the final quarter-final place

#### Intermediate football (4 groups of 4)

- Top two teams from each group advance to the quarter-finals (total 8 teams)

#### All other grades

- Top four from each group along proceed to quarter-finals (total 8 teams)

**Relegation** Bottom team in all groups proceeds to relegation play-off, as required

### Positives

- Regular meaningful games throughout the summer months
- More games for Club players
- More games with County players
- Greater revenue across the summer
- 'Generous qualification' Victory in 2 of 3/4 group games with County players (groups of 6)

### Negatives

- Championship games without inter-county players
- 'Grading up' of second team players
- Risk of 'dead rubbers'

# Grading

There are two options presented for the Grading of teams to form the Grades of 12 within the total numbers of 60 and 52.

## Grading 1

### On the field of play in 2019 only

Teams would be graded based on their championship performance in 2019. A number of places would be allocated to quarter-finalists, semi-finalists and finalists, depending on the grade, with the remaining places allocated via play-offs. If this was applied to the Premier Senior Grade 8 places in the 2020 championship would be filled by the 8 quarter-finalists from 2019, with the remaining four places going to teams via play-offs.

## Grading 2

### On the field of play in 2019 and taking championship results of 2016-2019 into account

A number of places would be allocated to quarter-finalists, semi-finalists and finalists from 2019, depending on the grade, with the remaining places based on championship performances over the last four seasons (including 2019). For example, two points would be awarded for every championship win since 2017. If this was applied to the Premier Senior Grade, 8 places in the 2020 championship would be filled by the 8 quarter-finalists from 2019, with the remaining four places going to the 4 best performing teams across the last four years.

## Regrading Hurling

- Premier Senior** 8 quarter-finalists in the 2019 championship, with the remaining teams (not in relegation) playing off for the 4 remaining places (Option 1) or those 4 places going to teams ranked highest based on championship performances over the last four years (Option 2)
- Senior** the remaining 7 Senior teams from 2019, along with the 2019 Premier Intermediate finalists, with the remaining teams (not in relegation) playing off for the last 3 places (Option 1) or those 3 places going to teams ranked highest based on championship performances over the last four years (Option 2)
- Premier Intermediate** the remaining 11 Premier Intermediate teams from 2019 and the Intermediate winners from 2019
- Intermediate** the remaining 7 quarter-finalists from the 2019 Intermediate championship, with the remaining teams (not in relegation) playing off the last 5 places (Option 1) or those 5 places going to teams ranked highest based on championship performances over the last four years (Option 2)
- Lower Intermediate** the remaining 12 Intermediate teams subject to note 1 below

If the total number of teams exceeds 60 (including the 2019 Junior Championship winners), the relegation play-offs in 2019 will reduce the number of teams, as necessary. If teams are in the bottom two for two of the last three years 2017-2019, they will be automatically relegated. In there are less than 60 teams additional teams will be promoted from the Junior grade.

## **Regrading    Football**

**Premier Senior**            8 quarter-finalists in the 2019 championship, with the remaining teams (not in relegation) playing off for the 4 remaining places (Option 1) or those 4 places going to teams ranked highest based on championship performances over the last four years (Option 2)

**Senior**                        the remaining 7 Senior teams from 2019, along with the 2019 Premier Intermediate finalists, with the remaining teams (not in relegation) playing off for the last 3 places (Option 1) or those 3 places going to teams ranked highest based on championship performances over the last four years (Option 2)

**Premier Intermediate**        the remaining 10 Premier Intermediate teams from 2019 and the Intermediate Finalists from 2019

**Intermediate**                the remaining 16 teams from the 2019 Intermediate championship, subject to note below

If the total number of teams exceeds 60 (including the 2019 Junior Championship winners), the relegation play-offs in 2019 will reduce the number of teams, as necessary. If teams are in the bottom two for two of the last three years 2017-2019, they will be automatically relegated. If there are less than 60 teams additional teams will be promoted from the Junior grade.

## **Transition**

*In 2020 and 2021 an additional Intermediate grade in hurling will be in place to facilitate 12 more teams for a total of 60 teams (currently 61), while the second Intermediate grade in football will be extended to 16 for a total of 52 teams (currently 53).*

### **Transition to 48 teams**

In order to reach the required number of 48 teams, transition will be required from the current numbers. In order to achieve this, a Lower Intermediate grade will be put in place with for a 5<sup>th</sup> grade of 12 in hurling for a period of two years 2020 and 2021, while the Intermediate A grade (4<sup>th</sup> grade) of 12 will be extended to 16 in football, again for 2020 and 2021. This means that the Intermediate A grade in football will be played in 4 groups of 4 for this interim period.

At the end of 2021 these additional teams (12 in hurling and 4 in football) will be regraded to Junior A. This two year period will also allow a review of Junior championships to take place.

The following adaptations are also required to ensure that 48 teams are in place by the end of 2021.

### **Hurling**

At end 2019, with the County Junior A champions being promoted, there will be 62 teams in hurling. Therefore, the bottom two teams in both Intermediate hurling in 2019 will be relegated to Junior A for 2020. This will bring the number to 60 which will allow the format presented above to begin.

At the end of 2020 one team will be relegated from the new Lower Intermediate grade (5<sup>th</sup> grade). However, the Junior A winners from 2020 will go straight to Intermediate A (4<sup>th</sup> grade) along with Lower Intermediate winner (5<sup>th</sup> grade), with two teams relegated from Intermediate A (4<sup>th</sup> grade) to Lower Intermediate (5<sup>th</sup> grade).

At the end of 2021 two teams will be relegated from the Intermediate A grade (4<sup>th</sup> grade) to Junior A, along with the remaining eleven teams in Lower Intermediate (5<sup>th</sup> grade). They will be replaced by the 2021 Lower Intermediate (5<sup>th</sup> grade) winners and by the 2021 Junior A winners.

This will facilitate 48 hurling teams across four grades from the start of 2022.

### **Football**

At end 2019, with the County Junior A champions being promoted, there will be 54 teams in football. Therefore, the bottom two teams in both Intermediate football in 2019 will be relegated to Junior A for 2020. This will bring the number to 52 which will allow the format presented above to begin.

At the end of 2020 one team will be relegated from intermediate A (4<sup>th</sup> grade) to Junior A and they will be replace by the 2020 Junior A winners.

At end 2021, the County Junior A champions will be promoted and 5 teams will be relegated from Intermediate A (4<sup>th</sup> grade).

These 5 teams will be selected as follows: the bottom team in each of the four groups along with a play-off involving the four 3<sup>rd</sup> placed teams to selected team to be relegated.

This will facilitate 48 hurling teams across four grades from the start of 2022.

**OPTION A 'April & August'**

<b>HURLING</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	<b>Lower Intermediate</b>
<b>No. of Teams (total 60)</b>	12	12	12	12	12
<b>Groups</b>	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 3 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 10	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off
<b>Calendar</b>	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August
<b>Football</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	
<b>No. of Teams (total 52)</b>	12	12	12	16	
<b>Groups</b>	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	3 groups of 4 3 games per team	4 groups of 4 3 games per team	
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 3 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 10	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6	Top 2 from each group enter the last 6	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	
<b>Calendar</b>	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	1 game in April 2 games in August	

**OPTION B 'August only'**

<b>HURLING</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	<b>Lower Intermediate</b>
<b>No. of Teams (total 60)</b>	12	12	12	12	12
<b>Groups</b>	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 2 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 9	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off
<b>Calendar</b>	2 games in August	2 games in August	2 games in August	2 games in August	2 games in August
<b>Football</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	
<b>No. of Teams (total 52)</b>	12	12	12	16	
<b>Groups</b>	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 3 2 games per team	4 groups of 4 3 games per team	
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 2 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 9	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	Bottom team in each group enter play-off	
<b>Calendar</b>	2 games in August	2 games in August	2 games in August	3 games in August	

**OPTION C ‘Summer Games’**

<b>HURLING</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	<b>Lower Intermediate</b>
<b>No. of Teams (total 60)</b>	12	12	12	12	12
<b>Groups</b>	2 groups of 6 5 games per team				
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 4 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 9	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off				
<b>Calendar</b>	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points
<b>Football</b>	<b>Premier Senior</b>	<b>Senior A</b>	<b>Premier Intermediate</b>	<b>Intermediate A</b>	
<b>No. of Teams (total 52)</b>	12	12	12	16	
<b>Groups</b>	2 groups of 6 5 games per team	2 groups of 6 5 games per team	2 groups of 6 5 games per team	4 groups of 4 3 games per team	
<b>Play-offs</b>	Top 4 from each group and winner from Divisions / Colleges enter the last 9	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8	Top 4 from each group enter the last 8	Top 2 from each group enter the last 8	
<b>Relegation</b>	Bottom team in each group enter play-off				
<b>Calendar</b>	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 2 in May, June, July 2 in August May June July games without county players for half points	1 game in April, 1 in May / June, 1 in July /August - June games without county players for half points	

