

GROUNDS COMMITTEE END OF YEAR REPORT

December 2020.

The 2020 end of year Grounds Committee meeting for Naas GAA was held on the 5th December, chaired by Andy Doyle. The Treasurer's report was presented by Martin Hoban and the Secretary's report was read by Jerry Ryan.

Unlike most other normal club activities, which were hugely disrupted by the different COVID-19 lockdowns during 2020, the Grounds Committee had a very full and active year. Indeed, there were only two weekends when work was not carried out around the club. The volunteers continued their work, conscious of the need for social distancing, hand sanitising, glove wearing etc.

The various committee volunteers put in over 1,600 hours or 216 working days doing a range of work on the grounds, work that equates to a minimum of €21,500 of savings annually to help the club operate at minimum cost to members.

Development

Most members will be aware of the development work taking place in the canal to produce a new full-sized pitch. Work began there in July, later than had been hoped because of the same lockdown restrictions during the good weather. Frequent rain in the second half of the year slowed progress considerably. While most of the work was completed, the new pitch was not sown because it got too late in the year. This work will now take place in springtime and that significantly delays our access to the new pitch until well into 2022. Access in springtime will be delayed further by the trespass onto that ground by players and others accessing the canal.

The downsizing of the viewing bank at the clubhouse was part of that project, as the soil was needed to help level the area for the new pitch. The lowering of the viewing bank was also deemed necessary to comply with insurance requirements. The removal of a chunk of the viewing bank also doubled car parking capacity in that area, providing it is used as designed. That project included a roadway in the bank to provide truck access to the area in front of the dressing rooms.

As was the case with the new pitch, the re-modelled bank was not sown with grass by the contractors. Faced with the consequence of not having it available for all of next season, the grounds crew put in a lot of physical work to plant grass seeds very late in the hope that they would establish. If that work is fruitful we hope to have access to the bank sometime in the early summer when matches are ongoing. Again, trespass directly onto the bank has already caused damage to part of the reseed.

One other development that took place during the lockdown was that all pitches were resown to help improve the playing surface. This work is normally not possible because establishing seeds would be killed by our heavy training traffic. However, the very dry weather

from mid-May caused the grass to die back (old and new) and several weeks were spent trying to get water onto the pitches to revive them, with only moderate success.

Normal grounds activities

Grounds work has been ongoing since January. Last December there was a significant amount of re-sodding done on all pitches and this was all completed on a single Saturday. We want to say a special thanks to all the players from adult football, plus other mentors, who volunteered their time to help us get this done.

Early season work involved the completion of the new shed down in the canal area and a tidy up of that yard area. We had begun works to renovate the small house down in that yard but it was interrupted by COVID. Some of the work that had been done was subsequently vandalised.

Springtime brings the need for regular fertilisation and with that comes regular grass cutting of the pitches and all the banks. These jobs, plus weekly pitch lining, take up virtually all available time once we get into the active growth season. Grass cutting also extends into Scoil Bhríd.

Maintenance and cutting of the ground in Millennium was done by Johnny Langan so a big thanks to him for doing that and getting it into good condition. Thanks also to Eugene McCarthy for the materials he drops to the club to help with basic maintenance.

The juvenile goal posts had to be taken off the pitches on two occasions during the year because they are still being left in places that show no respect for those who cut the grass etc.

The lockdown was also used to repaint all the lines in the main car park. Elsewhere there is the regular job of repairing potholes. And all our ball-stop nets had to be serviced and repaired.

Some will have noticed that the containers at the entrance to the canal area have been moved. This will free up more parking space in that area. Unfortunately, there was some damage done to the old gates and piers during the move, but these have subsequently been repaired and the gates have been painted and reinstated.

That area has also seen a lot of restructuring with gates being relocated to suit with the new facilities in the canal.

Many of the volunteers on the grounds also help out in many other ways around the club with heavy involvement in car parking at discos and also outside the club at Darkness into Light.

Repair of machinery is a basic and ongoing requirement to help keep our equipment working and safe and this too takes a lot of man hours. While we did purchase a trailed mower last year, there is a growing need to replace some of our other grass cutting equipment.

Respect for facilities

Rubbish continues to be a problem in the club, which is an even greater concern because of COVID transmission. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that rubbish, and plastic bottles in particular, are not left around the club grounds to pose a risk to others. Bins are provided and regularly emptied but people should really take home their rubbish. The volume of bottles has

noticeably increased since the lockdown and many have water left inside. This generates unnecessary weight that others must handle. Drink it or empty it and put it in a bin.

Antisocial behaviour continues to be an issue, particularly in the canal area. Fences continue to be broken alongside neighbouring properties. This behaviour is a risk to everyone, as broken glass bottles pose a huge risk to players. This problem is being increased when the gates of the club are being left open and unlocked when not in use. This is your club and your responsibility.

We appeal to all mentors and players to respect club facilities and to use them in accordance with pitch guidelines. Using pitches in the wet will always result in damage that will force them to be closed more often. That said, we must also thank all sections, mentors, coaches, and volunteers for helping in this regard and for your patience and consideration in relation to the maintenance of pitches and facilities.

Many thanks

There are also many people that must be thanked. A special thanks to the club Executive who provide the finance to enable the maintenance work in the club. The Grounds Committee only sees one club and we can all achieve more by working together.

It is also important to thank all my fellow volunteers who do their work week in week out and also other club members who give their time and skills to the maintenance and upkeep of the club facilities when requested. Most Ground Committee members do not have direct family involved in the club so their dedication and commitment must be commended given the risks involved this year.

A special thanks to our pitch coordinator, Owen L'Estrange, for all the work he does for the club and for his caring attitude to our pitches and facilities.

Finally, a big thanks to all those in the club who strive to bring success to our club to make our work worthwhile. Congrats to all those who achieved success, and thanks to all those other mentors who provide fun and enjoyment for so many girls and boys from Naas.

Jerry Ryan.

Grounds Committee Secretary.

Grounds volunteers:

Tommy Loughran, Peter Jones, Finbar Finnerty, Des Bergin, John Hughes, Steve McEntegart, Ted Ryan, Martin Hoban (treasurer), Jerry Ryan (secretary) and Andy Doyle (chair).