

CUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEIL BHÚLF TÓN - AN CAISLEÁN GLAS  
WOLFE TONES GAELIC ATHLETIC CLUB - GREENCASTLE

# DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-24 PLEAN FORBARTHA





There were students and peasants, the wise and the brave,  
And an old man who knew him from cradle to grave,  
And children who thought me hard-hearted, for they  
On that sanctified sod were forbidden to play.

But the old man, who saw I was mourning there, said:  
"We come, sir, to weep where young Wolfe Tone is laid,  
And we're going to raise him a monument, too  
A plain one, yet fit for the simple and true."

Thomas Davis

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# Introduction

In February 2021, Wolfe Tones GAC mandated a steering group to begin the process, in conjunction with a Croke Park facilitator, of putting together a strategic club development plan that would create the necessary space for Gaelic games to become part of the social fabric once again in Greencastle.

After consultation with the membership of the club and the wider community, the steering group identified a number of key areas and actions that would create the space for our club to become vibrant, sustainable and successful. Underpinning these key areas was the desire to build the club around children and young people in order to create a sustainable unit that has longevity both on and off the field.

Another area that features strongly throughout the key areas is the inclusion of women and girls to create the space for that demographic to get involved in Gaelic games against the backdrop of low participation rates in north Belfast and Newtownabbey. A number of key considerations were taken on board from Sport NI's Active, Fit & Sporty Participation Survey 2019 Insight Report that made recommendations around reflecting women in club leadership, reflecting women in media output and creating role models for women's sport.

Although this plan is limited to three years, it is about creating the building blocks that can create a further platform for development post-2024 and deliver a GAC that Greencastle and its surrounds deserves. Wolfe Tones GAC believes it has struck the right balance between short-term operational considerations and long-term strategic development. We welcome all those who read the following club development plan to deliver feedback and more importantly – get involved! For the first time in decades, it is an exciting time to be a Tone.

This strategic plan, carefully put together with the wishes of the club, is about embedding Gaelic culture and games into Greencastle and its surrounding area. We hope the actions and outcomes planned create the space for every child, regardless of their background, to get involved with Wolfe Tones and Gaelic games in our area.



# Club Chairperson's Address

The purpose of this plan is to build on the work conducted over the last two years, give strategic direction to a burgeoning club and to begin the process of mapping the long-term future of Wolfe Tones GAC. It is the road map for a journey which will elevate our club into a successful and sustainable GAC.

The club re-started that journey two years ago with a handful of people committed to re-establishing Gaelic games in Greencastle. In that short time we have built the skeleton structures but, most importantly, we have recruited the talent who will put flesh on the bones. Our core strategy is clear: investment in our children and our young people. They are the future of Wolfe Tones GAC and it is they who will create its most successful days.

This plan lays the foundations for those young people to develop the commitment, drive and skills to deliver its future. We are merely custodians aiming to deliver our reinvigorated club to the future generations who will claim its long-term success.

The initial group of people who sat down to reconstitute Wolfe Tones GAC after a 50-year hiatus had a sense of the elements required to deliver a sustainable and successful organisation: this is the strategy through which that vision can begin to be realised. However, it is the result of a membership-wide consultation and belongs to us all. Each of us has a responsibility to make it work and collective leadership will be key in its delivery.

As a club, we have a renewed sense of direction, a strategy to fulfil and targets to reach. Previous generations of Wolfe Tones stalwarts would love to have had the opportunities we have today: let's ensure we seize those opportunities.

It is important that I thank all members and non-members who participated in the consultation process for bringing their ideas and opinions to the table. They were invaluable to this work.

I would like to extend special thanks to Martin McCourt who coordinated the development of this plan. His experience and insights were invaluable during the entire process. I would also like to pay special thanks to Angela McIvor, Maria McCourt and Tiarnan Millar who, as part of the steering group, exerted significant effort in bringing this plan together and ensuring we reached this point.

Finally, I would also like to say a massive thank you to Gerry McClory, our Croke Park facilitator, who continually put us on the right path, organised crucial elements of the plan and brought buckets of experience to the process which was a major help.

Stiofán Mac Cuarta  
Cathaoirleach

Samhain 2021



# Antrim GAA Chairperson's Address

The re-establishment of CLG Bhulf Tón was a positive step not only for local Gaels but for the county. This structured and planned development has insured that Wolfe Tones has re-established itself at the heart of the local community; the community spirit will ensure not only the sustainability of the club but also the growth of the club in the coming years and, on behalf of Antrim GAA, we are delighted with, and proud of all the hard work being carried out by Wolfe Tones.

Léan ar aghaidh Bhulf Tón

Ciarán McCavana  
Chairperson - Antrim GAA



# Antrim LGFA Chairperson's Address

This is an aspirational, yet sustainable and well-thought out vision where Ladies' football and roles for women within the club are not just an addendum but a core strand of Wolfe Tones' plans for the future.

The importance of providing good role models for young girls and ladies cannot be understated and I commend Wolfe Tones for their visionary attitude to the inclusion and promotion of Ladies' football.

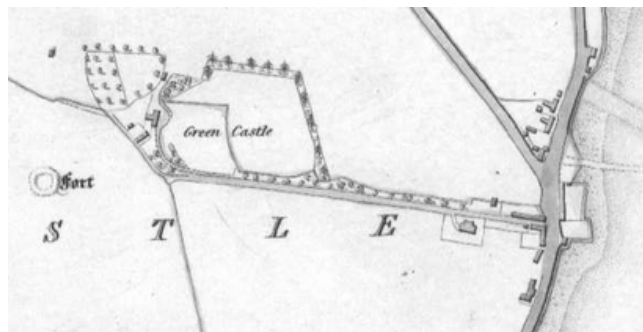
As dhúshlán go bua

Sauna Adams  
Chairperson - Antrim LGFA



# Club History

Greencastle is a townland which straddles the borders of North Belfast and Newtownabbey. It derives its name from a small fortification which was roughly sited where Gray's Lane meets the Shore Road, known as Cloch Mhic Coisteala. There is now no trace of the castle of Greencastle but it is referred to in 1574 as 'a little pyle belonging to Mr Barkley, an adventurer who came to Ireland with the Earl of Essex.



The townland extends from the summit of Cave Hill on the west to the shore of Belfast Lough on the east and is bounded by Lowwood to the south and Ballygolan to the north. It was atop McArt's Fort, on Cave Hill at the western extremity of the district that Theobald Wolfe Tone, Henry Joy McCracken and Samuel Nielson, founders of the Society of United Irishmen made the Cave Hill Compact, and set in motion a chain of events which would culminate in the 1798 Rebellion.



Greencastle then became the last place of refuge for Henry Joy McCracken in the aftermath of the Battle of Antrim as he visited a family called the Lawsons on the eve of his capture. He spent the night with that family before setting off on the journey to Carrickfergus where he was captured.

Until the mid-19th Century, Greencastle comprised of a series of rural dwellings and country estates, however the rapid expansion of the City of Belfast as a growing industrial powerhouse in the late 19th Century saw the urbanisation of Greencastle and the development of thousands of new homes over the next 150 years.



# Early Gaelic Games

In the early 20th Century a branch of Conradh na Gaeilge was established in the area which increased the appetite for Gaelic culture and games. In 1907, Irish News GAA Columnist 'Brian Og' called for ground to be broke in Greencastle regarding Gaelic games and by 1910 a Gaelic pitch in Greencastle was a hub for Antrim Gaelic games. In 1911 a club founded on York Road called Charles Kickhams GAC used Greencastle as its home pitch.

# The Original Wolfe Tone GA&CC

Wolfe Tone GA&CC was established in the early 1930s, and played in the Antrim leagues for almost 40 years, fielding teams in Football, Hurling and Camogie.

In the late 1960s the club struggled as it lost its ground, had no juvenile structure and was impacted by the onset of the conflict. It soon buckled under this pressure and Wolfe Tones GAC wrapped up in the early 70s. The social club in Catherine Row continued to operate for a number of years after. Some remaining Tones joined St. Columba's, another Greencastle based Gaelic club, but this club also went defunct.



## Clash of the ash in Greencastle



Wolfe Tones Greencastle J.H. Champions 1950.

B.R. Frank McKenna, Franie Beattie, Joe Bonnar, Austin Donnelly, Paddy O'Neill, John Gillen, Davy Nocer, Thomas O'Hagan, Joe Rafferty, Jack Cash.

F.R. Richard Mitchell, Christie McLroy, Stevie Cash, Hugh Gillen, Harry McGill, Danny Mc Larnon



# Rebirth

A number of decades have passed without any provision for Gaelic games within the Greencastle area. Young Gaels travelled far and wide to kick a ball or have a puck about and local residents long bemoaned having no local club to get behind.

At the end of October 2019, a small number of people from the wider Greencastle area got together in the upstairs room of the Fountain Bar and discussed the feasibility of re-forming the Wolfe Tones. The discussion, which went on for a number of hours, revolved around the practicalities involved, enlisting local support and canvassing the views of the entire community. After a number of weeks discussing the prospect with local people and receiving a very positive response, a steering committee was formed tasked with the club's revival.



Immediately the steering committee implemented a strong and robust off-field structure to underpin the new venture. It adopted the mantra of sustainability and planned for the long-term future of the GAA in Greencastle before a ball was kicked.

Individuals with a wide range of skills were recruited to build the wider club and put down the foundations of the house, so to speak.

After this an advert was put out for players for a senior men's football team and over 40 were recruited in the following months.

The committee made their intentions about affiliation known to the Antrim Board and put forward a proposal to the South Antrim Board to enter the South Antrim League for the 2020 season. Both proposals were accepted and the Greencastle Wolfe Tones, once again, became an official club affiliated to the Antrim County Board and the GAA.

In the meantime, the committee have been working on an action plan that will ensure that the club is sustainable, viable and in a position to carry local Gaelic games into the distant future. Financial plans have been put in place and the club have begun to work with the Ulster GAA Council to draw up a club development plan to govern the next three years. The club have also collaborated and worked alongside Gaelfast to put juvenile team plans into place.



# Area Profile

Wolfe Tones GAC's catchment area is based between two electoral wards. The first is the Valley Ward, which incorporates Bawnmore, Longlands, Arthur and Merville. The second is the Bellevue Ward, which incorporates parts of the Antrim Road, Whitewell and Greencastle.

- Valley Ward: there are 3,424 living in 1,578 households. 20.03% were aged under 16 years and 16.89% were aged 65 and over; 46.51% of the usually resident population were male and 53.49% were female; and 36 years was the average (median) age of the population.
- Bellevue Ward: there are 4,910 people living in 2,151 households. 21.18% were aged under 16 years and 14.68% were aged 65 and over; 49.00% of the usually resident population were male and 51.00% were female; and 35 years was the average (median) age of the population.

There are two neighbouring wards which do not have Gaelic game structures and may be areas where Wolfe Tones can promote and foster Gaelic games and culture. The first one is the Fortwilliam Ward, which includes parts of the Antrim Road, Lansdowne and Fortwilliam. The second is the Rostulla Ward, which includes Whiteabbey and parts of Jordanstown.

- Fortwilliam Ward: there are 4,364 people living in 1,945 households. 17.65% were aged under 16 years and 20.65% were aged 65 and over; 45.71% of the usually resident population were male and 54.29% were female; and 42 years was the average (median) age of the population.
- Rostulla Ward: there were 3,440 people (70.29% of the usually resident population) living in 1,455 households. 13.55% were aged under 16 years and 14.10% were aged 65 and over; 49.10% of the usually resident population were male and 50.90% were female; and 28 years was the average (median) age of the population.



# Mission Statement

Wolfe Tones GAC is a volunteer organisation, which:

- i. Develops and promotes Gaelic Games at the core of Irish identity and culture.
- ii. Is dedicated to ensuring that games and the values we live enrich the lives of our members' families and the communities we serve.
- iii. Is committed to active lifelong participation for all.
- iv. Is committed to providing the best environment for all those who participate in the club.
- v. Reaches out to and includes all members of our society.
- vi. Promotes individual development and well-being.
- vii. Strives to enable all our members achieve their full potential in their chosen roles.

# Vision

From juvenile to adult we provide sustainable, growing teams and to be a club where everybody is welcomed to take part in our games and culture, to participate fully, to grow and develop and to be inspired to keep a lifelong engagement with our club, community and association.

# Values

## Community Identity

- Everything we do will help to enrich the community we serve

## Amateur Status

- We are a volunteer-led organisation.
- All our members play and engage 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 Club. We are anti-sectarian and we are anti-racist.

## Respect

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

## Player Welfare

- We provide the best playing experience for all our players.

## Teamwork

- Effective teamwork on and off the field is the cornerstone of our club.





# Focus Areas Overview

Six areas of focus were identified in the initial planning stages, these were:



# Focus Area 1

## Club Structures

**Key aim:** Our Club excels in its administration. We have sound structures in place that are appropriate to the Club's needs. Our Club Committee and its various subcommittees are professional and vibrant. Our volunteer base know their roles and have direction in performing them. Club structures are inclusive and reflective of our membership and wider community.

Action	Outcome Sought	Target Date	Responsibility
To fully document club structure and governance framework including comprehensive role descriptions and codes of conduct	<p>Diagram of full club structure with roles and Committee responsibilities clearly shown.</p> <p>Officers clearly shown what is expected for each position they are in and how it contributes to overall running of the club</p> <p>All club members are aware of their responsibilities and how to conduct themselves as Wolfe Tones members.</p>	February 2022	Executive Committee
Identify and collate calendar of all relevant training provided at county and provincial level and communicate to club officials	All club officers fully aware of relevant and necessary training and appropriately trained to meet the demands of their position	January 2022	Executive Committee
Review and improve membership payment structure and consider payment facility options.	Full list of memberships that are attractive and meet the club's sustainability desire.	December 2021	Executive Committee
Create an induction process for new volunteers.	Volunteers are welcomed to the club and given the appropriate tools to do their role.	February 2022	Executive Committee
Quarterly meetings of Committee and subcommittee Chairpersons.	Strong communication and cohesion between club committees.	March 2022	Executive Committee
Appoint a 'Vice' for every officer board position.	<p>Succession when officers leave their roles.</p> <p>To develop the LGFA code in the club and adhere to the one club model.</p>	January 2022	Executive Committee
Create an LGFA committee.	To promote ladies Gaelic football inside and outside the club.	January 2023	Executive Committee
Create 2 x internal ladies Gaelic football ambassadors.	To increase awareness of women in sport within the local community. Club structures are inclusive, reflect the membership and wider community.	January 2022	Executive Committee
Ensure 50% female representation on Executive Committee.	Encouragement and development of female leadership within the club.	December 2021	Executive Committee





# Focus Area 2

## Coaching & Games

**Key Aim:** We have the best possible coaching structures in place to ensure that all underage teams develop to the best of their ability. We continue to maintain and improve our structures and learning, so all our players achieve their potential in a safe and enjoyable environment. Our Club provides a consistently high level of coaching and ensures that each player has the opportunity to participate fully.

Action	Outcome Sought	Target Date	Responsibility
Appoint Coaching and Games committee.	Embed all aspects of Coaching and Games development and best practice in the club.	December 2021	Coaching and Games Officer + Club Executive.
Appoint appropriate coaches to all age groups.	All coaching requirements are identified and delivered. All age groups are coached by appropriately qualified coaches.	January 2022	C & G Officer and C & G subcommittee.
Ensure all coaches working with underage / vulnerable groups are vetted by Access NI.	Appropriate safeguarding for children is in place and all coaches are appropriate to coach children and vulnerable adults	January 2022	Children's Officer and DLP. C & G Officer and C & G subcommittee.
Deliver two internal coaching education programmes for per year.	Improve the knowledge and practice of all club coaches.	April/ October 2022	C & G Officer and C & G subcommittee.
Ensure appropriate level of coaching for underage teams.	All coaches coaching U-11 to U-16 to have Level 1 Award. All coaches coaching up to u10 to have Foundation Level Award.	November 2024	C & G Officer and C & G subcommittee.
Ensure appropriate amount of games for all underage players. i.e every age group entered in leagues, blitzes/Go Games tournaments.	All underage players are given the opportunity to develop at the same rate.	July 2022	C & G Officer and C & G subcommittee.
Establish all female led coaching panels for LGFA teams.	Encourage and secure participation of more women and girls in Ladies Gaelic football and coaching.	November 2024	C & G Officer.
Recruit 5 parents per year to assist with underage coaching.	Yearly increase of coaching pool.	September 2024	C & G Officer and Juvenile Subcommittee
Annual provision of Gaelic football in local primary schools.	Develop the Gaelic football skills of local schoolchildren and encourage them to join Wolfe Tones.	September 2022	C & G Officer and Juvenile Subcommittee
Develop a club nursery programme that includes u4s, u5s and u6s.	To provide Gaelic football to children at the earliest possible stage in a fun and enjoyable environment.	September 2022	Juvenile Subcommittee

# Focus Area 3

## Finance & Fundraising

**Key Aim:** Our Club undertakes excellent financial practices. We have consistent and accurate financial reporting systems to assist the Club Committee in making sound financial decisions for the short, medium and long term benefit of our Club. Our fundraising efforts are structured to ensure there is a continuous income flow to accommodate normal monthly cash expenditure

Action	Outcome Sought	Target Date	Responsibility
Appoint a Finance and Fundraising Subcommittee	To organise and oversee all fundraising, including fundraising events in the club.  Documented financial processes and procedures that meet the needs of the club and its members.	December 2022	Treasurer + Club Executive
Launch Cairde Wolfe Tone	To have a fundraising unit for future capital projects	November 2024	Club Executive
Produce an annual Finance Calendar of fundraising events for the year ahead	To assist the club in preparing for the year ahead by bringing sufficient income to the club.	January 2022	Fundraising subcommittee
Club accounts are independently audited annually.	Best practice is sought and club can apply for further public funding.	October 2022	Treasurer and Fundraising subcommittee
Club budget is prepared at the start of each year.	Fully documented Income and expenditure is tracked in line with club objectives and to comply with good financial procedure.	January 2022	Treasurer and Fundraising subcommittee
Develop, document and publicise range of agreed sponsorship opportunities and other income streams	Each team has their own kit sponsor renewed every two years so team kits are self-sustaining.  Consider introduction of sponsorship for training kits and team tracksuits.	January 2022	PRO and Fundraising subcommittee
Consolidate lotto sales and aim to increase sales by 50%.	The lotto covers a minimum of 50% of the club's running costs every year.	December 2022.	Fundraising subcommittee
Create club reserves to cover two years running costs.	Ensure the club's financial sustainability.	November 2024	Treasurer + Fundraising subcommittee



# Focus Area 4

## Facilities Development

**Key aim:** We provide an environment in which all our members, local community and visitors feel safe and secure to enjoy our facilities and participate in the wide range of programmes and activities that we offer. To begin the process of exploring the procurement of a permanent home for Wolfe Tones GAC.

Action	Outcome Sought	Target Date	Responsibility
Identify and provide the full range of training and playing facilities necessary to meet the needs of all Wolfe Tones' teams	Quality training and playing provision for Wolfe Tones players and members.  Range of alternative training identified for use where necessary.	November 2024	Club Executive + Coaching/Games Officer
Identify and provide potential venues and sites (including costs) to accommodate other events and all aspects of club provision.	Secure appropriate sites for a permanent base for Wolfe Tones GAC to promote all aspects of the GAA culture, i.e., Clubrooms.	November 2024	Club Executive
Investigate scope for future collaborative work on facilities and events with other sporting and community organisations.	To deliver sporting and cultural facilities for the Greencastle community and its surrounds.  Participative and collaborative community work.	November 2024	Club Executive
Explore sites in the local area to develop a Gaelic pitch and associated club and community facilities.	Create a home and base for Wolfe Tones GAC. Identification of potential capital funding routes.	November 2023	Club Executive
Secure grant funding to cover a % of pitch fees annually.	To keep costs down and facilities accessible for all Wolfe Tones members.	January 2022	Club Executive + Fundraising Subcommittee
Work with local schools to develop an appropriate training site for underage group and other community sporting provision.	To provide Gaelic game facilities for Wolfe Tones underage teams. Provide space for initiatives to improve physical and mental health of club members and wider community.	January 2023	Club Executive

# Focus Area 5

## PR & Communications

**Key Aim:** All our members, families, friends and wider community feel connected to Wolfe Tones GAC and are informed of all planned activities and events that are happening in all aspects of the club. All our members and supporters are connected through traditional and new media. The Wolfe Tones brand is embedded and instantly recognisable in the local community.

Action	Outcome Sought	Target Date	Responsibility
Create PR and Communications Subcommittee	Subcommittee to oversee all PR and communications within the club.	December 2023	PRO + Club Executive
Develop a targeted schools' communications strategy including notice boards and newsletters	To create awareness of club events within the local educational institutions. Fully documented and structured engagement with three schools To communicate and connect with local school children.	January 2022	PRO + SLO
Create a YouTube channel that is filled with consistent club/player/manager interviews and other appropriate videos	To create awareness of the club and its members.	January 2022	PRO
Develop a public engagement and communications strategy designed to promote and enhance club following on social media	To build and consolidate relationships across the club, providing members with the opportunity to get to know players, management, committee etc.  Reach a greater audience in Greencastle and its surrounds Increase social media following by 30%.	November 2022	PRO
Create a children specific brand to market the club to children	Increase the number of children who identify with the club brand.	January 2022	PRO + Juvenile Subcommittee
Highlight and promote LGFA related content once per week across social media pages	To encourage more young girls and women to get involved in Gaelic games.	December 2022	PRO



# Focus Area 6

## Culture & History

**Key aim:** Wolfe Tones GAC offers our members, supporters and the wider community the opportunity to continually promote their Irish identity and culture. We have successfully reintroduced regular Scór representation into the club at youth level and have extensively promoted the Irish language, traditional Irish music and song. Wolfe Tones GAC is identified as a key institution in the local community.

Action	Outcome Sought	Priority	Responsibility
Develop a Scór na nÓg section.	Increase participation in Irish culture among young people.	January 2023	Cultural Officer
Ensure the club is represented on local groups and liaise on other development in local community	Wolfe Tones is positioned as a key positive contributing community stakeholder within Greencastle.	December 2021	Club Executive
Develop a calendar of musical and cultural events within the local community	Promotion of our culture, increase awareness of our traditions and community engagement.	January 2022	Cultural Officer
Develop a range of Irish language provision to be delivered in the community	To promote the Irish language among new learners. Increase number of Irish language speakers in the area.	January 2022	Cultural Officer
Develop a Gaelic art project within the community.	To promote Gaelic art within the Greencastle community.	July 2022	Cultural Officer + PRO
Establish annual 'Big Day Out' at locations of cultural significance	To build community cohesion and promote cultural interest.	August 2022	Cultural Officer + Club Executive
Hold annual funday on Wolfe Tone's anniversary date	Promote the club to the local community and attract new children	June 2022	Children's Officer + Juvenile subcommittee
Hold two yearly women specific cultural events in the local community	Encourage more women to engage with Irish culture and our club	February/August 2022	Club Executive





