



McGovern Aughavas

Leitrim GAA

Centre of Excellence

Ionad Barr Feabhais Mhic Shamhrain



With support from the
Central Council of the GAA

Le tacaíocht ó Ard Chomhairle
Chumann Lúthchleas Gael

OSCAILT OIFIGIÚIL

LE UACHTARÁN CUMANN LÚTHCHLEAS GAEL SEÁN Ó HÓRÁIN
7Ú MEÁN FÓMHAIR 2019

Attraicta Ní Raghailligh - Ránaí

FOCAL ÓN GCATHAOIRLEACH COISTE CHONTAE LIATROMA

On behalf of Coiste Chontae Liatroma it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here to the opening of our Centre of Excellence. This is a momentous day for Leitrim G.A.A. and marks the end of a long journey for this project as we had many challenges along the way but we now have a facility to be proud of. Leitrim GAA was committed to completing the project without a massive debt on the county and this has been achieved even if it took longer than expected. A special word of welcome is extended to Uachtarán Cumann Luthchleas Gael John Horan who is here today to officially open the centre.



I want to acknowledge the support we have received from Croke Park and Connacht Council GAA for without their support it would never have been possible especially Tom Ryan and Kathy Slattery, with funding in excess of two million received this has to be acknowledged. A huge welcome to all our supporters and sponsors and to all who supported our brick campaign which was a huge success and I want to express my gratitude to all and especially the committee who made it such a success under the guidance of Eamon Duignan. Eamon is no stranger to fundraising for Leitrim GAA he was involved in the stand in Avantcard Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada and was Chairman of the Dublin Branch of the Supporters Club for a long number of years and indeed is still playing a major role in that committee. The amount of work he and the committees in Dublin, New York and Leitrim have put into the project is testament to the finish we were able to put on the centre. A special word of welcome and gratitude must go to our naming sponsor Tony and Bernadette McGovern, Aughavas and London who yet again has come to the aid of Leitrim GAA. The McGovern family have been long standing supporters of Leitrim GAA having the stand in Avantcard Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada named after them and was our County sponsor for a long number of years and your continued support is very much appreciated.

It gives me great pleasure to be in a position to see this facility finished on my watch but huge credit must go to all who helped with the project along the way and to those who had the vision to commence it in the first place. I got involved with the project five years ago when I became Chairman and at that stage there remained a lot of work to complete.

Over this five year period we have seen the project come to its ultimate fruition and I thank Prunty Pitches for their help and expertise in bringing the playing surfaces to exceptional standard to allow us commence training here three years ago. We then fitted out the gym but a lot of work still remained to complete. Thankfully Croke Park came on board with further funding and our Wall Project enabled us to finally complete the centre to a very high standard. Thanks to all our contractors who stuck with us along the way especially our main contractor Pádraig Bohan and also Brackley Landscaping for putting the final finish to the project.

The centre is now complete and thankfully is being used to the optimum and hopefully will benefit our teams going forward, it would be a remiss of me not to mention the huge amount of work our administrator Brian puts into the management of the centre, he spends more time in it than he does at home, mile buíochas to him. Our aim is to provide facilities for all our players to be the best they can be and now it is up to our coaches and players to build on the fantastic year we had this year and keep pushing forward and I want to wish all players that use these facilities the very best for the future.

Once again thanks to everyone who has made this possible and onwards and upwards.

Traolach Ó Baoil
Cathaoirleach Coiste Chontae Liatroma



A chairde,

Is cúis mhór áthais dom a bheith anseo inniu le muintir CLG Co. Liatroma ar lá agus ócáid stairiúl agus muid ag ceiliúradh na háiseanna nua den chéad scoth.

It gives me great pleasure to be here amongst you today to mark what is a truly momentous day for the GAA in Leitrim and by extension an important day for the GAA as a whole.

One of the success stories of the last two decades has been the ongoing improvement in the facilities we are able to offer our players, at every level.

If the Association Centenary back in 1984 was the stimulus for so many of our clubs to acquire facilities and pitches they could call their own, the funds generated from the use of Croke Park by other sporting codes boosted facilities at county and provincial level.

This fine new facility is one such example providing the promising players of Leitrim, young and old, with a place to call home when it comes to training and preparation.

What is no less impressive is the feat in bringing this project to fruition debt free after a carefully planned and managed project that spanned more than two decades.

While these new facilities, built to compare with any, will benefit the current and future players, it is also a massive compliment to those who have donned the jersey before them.

The legacy they helped create generated a reservoir of good will that was harnessed both across Ireland and indeed further afield to help raise the funds to make this possible.

I acknowledge and laud everyone who helped make this happen, not least the county board officials over that period of time and the clubs for supporting them in their endeavors.

Leitrim has always been a county that punches above its weight. The imprint of the county far beyond its county boundaries is impossible to ignore, whether it be in the capital - and indeed on the Croke Park staff team -, in England or in the USA.

I sincerely hope that this facility will not only benefit future players and teams in their development but I believe it will also shine as a beacon for Leitrim Gaels everywhere reminding of us what can be achievement when the goal we aspire to achieve is one that is shared by people of a common outlook.

Go n-éirí go geal libh.

Is mise, le meas,

Sean Ó hÓrain
Uachtarán
Cumann Luthchleas Gael

FOCAL ÓN GCATHAOIRLEACH COMHAIRLE CONNACHT CLG

Mar Uachtarán Comhairle Chonnacht, Is mór an onóir domsa a bheith i láthair anseo inniu don ócáid iontach seo do Chumann Luthchleas Gael Coiste Chontae Liatroma. Tréaslaim le Bórd Coiste Chontae Liatroma as an ionad áis iontach seo a fhorbairt.

As President of Connacht Council, it is a great honour and privilege for me to write this piece for the official opening of the Leitrim GAA Centre of Excellence at Annaduff. I want to compliment everybody associated with progressing this development over the years from the very beginning back in 2004. I salute the foresight and initiative of the officers of the County Board at that time, in realising that, to progress the fortunes of Leitrim GAA, a Centre of Excellence was a real necessity. Many people have worked tirelessly over the years to bring this project to a conclusion and the fruit of their efforts is this magnificent facility which is being officially opened here today.

I sincerely congratulate all the people who have worked so hard to ensure that this facility would be opened debt free, as too often developments of this nature can put a financial burden on County Boards that they find difficult to cope with. This has not been easy, and has taken some time, but it is a credit to many people involved that this Centre of Excellence is now being opened debt free. Connacht Council GAA is delighted to have been associated with this development and look forward to it being a contributing factor to many successful days for Leitrim GAA into the future.

We must also recognise the major contribution made by Croke Park through its National Financial Management Committee, and were it not for this assistance Leitrim GAA would find it very difficult to provide a facility of this nature. This is a shining example of how the GAA invest their money and is replicated all over the Country at Club and County level and without which, facilities of this nature could not be provided.

The Centre, while not fully completed, has been in use for the last two years and it is no coincidence that the fortunes of Leitrim have progressed accordingly, with the senior footballers gaining promotion from Allianz Division Four to Division 3 in 2019, and the

Leitrim Senior Hurlers winning the 2019 Lory Meagher Cup.



I'm well aware of all the use being made of this facility, and it really compliments the various programmes that Connacht Council has developed and is providing to the Counties in the province. It is by making use of all the various training programmes that are available from Connacht Council Coaching and Games Development unit, that the standard of the games in the Counties will improve, and no doubt with a facility of this nature here in the County, Leitrim GAA is in a great position to provide the best training and coaching programmes for the future generation of Leitrim players.

As President of Connacht Council GAA I have to pay tribute to the various officers of Leitrim GAA who over the years have worked very hard to provide Leitrim GAA the best facilities for players and supporters alike. It's only a few short years since the official opening of the new stand Ardán Mhic Samhráin, the McGovern Stand, in Avantcard Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada. With the development of the new stand, and the development of this magnificent Centre of Excellence Leitrim GAA supporters can be justifiably proud of their achievements, as Leitrim GAA is well and truly ahead of many counties in Ireland who boast of bigger populations and a lot more resources.

I congratulate the present county board and the many people who have worked very hard to ensure that this centre would open in 2019. The final fundraising venture, The Leitrim Wall Fundraising drive was a huge success and once again proof of the loyalty and the pride Leitrim GAA supporters have in the development of Gaelic games in the County. No doubt with this centre in ultimate use for all teams from the youngest up to the Senior squads, their dreams of further success for Leitrim GAA will become to a reality.

Once again congratulations to Leitrim GAA and to everybody who have contributed in any way to the provision of this magnificent facility.

***Go raibh míle maith agaibh.
Gearóid Mac Samhráin
Uachtarán Comhairle Chonnacht.***

LEITRIM WALL COMMITTEE

- A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



In October 2017 Terence Boyle Chairman of Leitrim Co Board asked the Dublin based Leitrim Supporters Club for Financial Assistance in completing the Leitrim GAA Centre of Excellence. The timing was good as Leitrim were heading to New York the following May to play New York

in Gaelic Park in the Connacht Championship. This opportunity arrives once every five years and an awful lot can happen over this period. The first meeting took place in the Croke Park Hotel and in attendance were Mike Feeney, Padraic White, Sean McGirl, Fergal McGill, and Colin Regan all great and passionate Leitrim men. The meeting decided to organise a novel fundraising venture called 'The Leitrim Wall'. The objective was set to raise €300,000 to complete the centre to a standard of excellence on a par with any other facility in the country and provide facilities for all future generations of Leitrim footballers. To achieve the objective we would sell bricks in the LEITRIMWALL and the proceeds would fund the completion of the centre. To add to the importance of the venture, the brick were personal, your name would be on it and you could also put your own 'special message' on the wall. The idea was that people looking at the wall would immediately identify the person, the townland and the stock you were reared from. You could remember a friend or relative or declare your love for your club or county. One of the purchasers of a brick summed it up well when she told me that 'behind every message there is a story' which is so true.

There are so many people I wish to thank for the courtesy they extended to me and the committee in making this campaign such a successful one including Bricommonics, the company who manufacture the bricks and brought expertise and experience to the project via their on line website which made all our lives so straightforward, the Leitrim

Peoples Association in New York, the Leitrim Club in New York, Gerard Gallagher, California USA, The Leitrim Peoples Association in London, the committee's members in New York and Ireland, the Leitrim GAA County Board, Gerry McGovern the coordinator in Leitrim and of course the brick sellers in the various parts of the county and country. We must acknowledge the help of the Irish American Partnership and its Chief Executive Mary Sugrue in 'Tax Designating' the Project in the USA and allowing buyers to buy a brick via the Irish American Partnership Website. We must also thank the Tony and Bernadette McGovern and family Aughavas and London who have supported all things Leitrim for a long time and they continue to do so. The committee must also acknowledge the huge contribution of Brian Blake who is the main administrator of the project and who takes such pride in the centre .

Finally, a big thank you to all the people who bought bricks in the Leitrim Wall. Leitrim has a Centre of Excellence you can all be proud of.

Eamonn Duignan
Chairman
Leitrim Wall Committee



Entrance View of Walls



Leitrim GAA Walls

BRICKS IN THE WALL



IT'S ABOUT THE HEART FOR TONY AND BERNADETTE MCGOVERN

Winston Churchill never sat at a school desk in Corduff School, never stood at a match in Legonamer or Corrīga, never danced in Maguire's Hall in Corroneary or was never at mass in the parish church in Aughavas, but he did have a favourite quotation that sums up Tony and Bernadette McGovern, of Bundarra and London. We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.

Churchill was on the ball on that one. Tony and Bernadette, indeed all the McGovern family, have certainly made life better for so many individuals, families, committees, GAA clubs, County Boards, churches and parishes, charity causes and organisations, the homeless, hospices in England and Ireland, people with special needs the list is endless by their magnanimous generosity of heart. American teacher, author and pastor Chip Ingram put it all in a nutshell when he wrote Generosity isn't an act. It's a way of life.

As far back as 1890, it was Tony's grand-uncle, James McGovern of Bundarra, who was chosen as spokesman for the Aughavas Home Rulers, to bid goodbye to the team captain James Carty, who was emigrating to the USA. He told the hundreds of well-wishers that had gathered at the Carty residence that he thanked James Carty for his able and esteemed services as Team Captain and wished God speed to this chivalrous and patriotic Irishman, who was going into exile with his neighbour and friend, John Kilkenny. All present joined in singing God Save Ireland. As the saying goes, there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

That is all of 129 years ago, but ever since, the townland of Bundarra is intertwined with the ups and downs of the Aughavas Club, and particularly so through the generations of the McGovern family. The golden age of the club, in senior championship terms, was the 1940's and 50's and Fr Andy McGovern and his brother Paddy Joe were two of the stalwarts of the green and white. Beating



their close neighbours Cloone, who were also on a high at the time, was always a priority, even in a tournament. When Aughavas came out on top in a Ballinamore tournament in 1951, Cloone maintained they would have won, but for the fact that two of their players had just arrived back from the pilgrimage to Lough Derg on the morning of the game. The Sunday Game pundits scarcely came across that one. Jim Gavin would want his players in the zone, rather than doing the stations in St Patrick's Purgatory.

When the Aughavas club opened its new pitch in 1978, among the many congrats and good wishes in the booklet's advertising pages were messages from James and Peggy McGovern of the Goblet Bar on the Malahide Road, Dublin; Peter McGovern Lounge Bars, Drumcondra and from Tony and Bernadette McGovern of McGovern's Haulage, Dudden Hill Lane, London. Thirty years on, in July 2008, Aughavas proudly opened the new club facilities featuring top of the range dressing rooms and gym, financed by the McGoverns and dedicated to the memory of their late brother, Paddy Joe. At that stage the McGoverns were for many years the club's main sponsors and they were immensely proud in Millennium Year, when the green and white had the logo on their jerseys, when winning the Leitrim Senior Championship after a gap of 34 years. Their

annual sponsorship continues right to the present day. Their generosity is certainly a way of life.

Twenty five years ago, in 1994, McGovern Brothers Aughavas was the logo on the Leitrim jerseys going into the Connacht Championship, following on from the previous sponsor and benefactor, Jimmy O'Connor of Jimmy's of Dromod. An approach to James had received a delighted yes; over the phone Peter did likewise, as did Tony, who may never have had his name on a team sheet at any level, but was fully behind his club and county. Then came the fairy-tale of Leitrim becoming Connacht Champions, with Tom Gannon of 1927 helping Declan Darcy hold the JJ Nestor Cup aloft; a whirlwind of tours with the cup; receptions and celebrations; the invasion of Croke Park; trips to London and the USA; All Star nominations, with Seamus Quinn taking the full back spot; the team being honoured by Leitrim County Council and named as The Leitrim Guardian Personalities of the year. Through it all, the McGoverns ensured that the County Board and the team wanted for nothing.

On to 2008/9, when the re-development of Páirc Seán Mac Diarmada was underway, with the magnificent new stand, dressing rooms, tunnels, offices, catering areas, press, radio and TV facilities, media room, conference room, electronic scoreboard, terracing and all the mod cons, Leitrim supporters rallied to the call of "Get on the Team", by making financial contributions towards the work. A further call went out in the hope that some generous benefactor might make a major offer for the naming rights of the stand. Up stepped Tony and James McGovern again and, without fuss, we had The McGovern Stand, Ardán Mhic Shamhráin. Tony and James were happy to give and the County Board were very happy to receive.

In the past few years London County Board GAA was busy with the redevelopment of the playing pitch and facilities at their grounds at Ruislip. This work was needed to cater for the ever increasing attendances at the Connacht Championship and Allianz National League home games. The London officials made a call to Tony for financial support, a call that led to the Ruislip ground being

named McGovern Park.

And now, in 2019, the final piece of the Leitrim GAA facilities development plan is in place, with the official opening of The Centre of Excellence and The Leitrim Wall at Annaduff. No doubt Uachtarán CLG Sean O Horáin will be impressed by the manner in which Leitrim Gaels have again shown their faith in the county's future by helping to build The Leitrim Wall, their financial contributions being the cement that binds the bricks together. He will also note, as we all will, that the official name is

McGovern Aughavas
Leitrim GAA Centre of Excellence
Ionad Barr Feabhais Mhic Shamhráin
Tony and Bernadette McGovern have been dipping into their pockets again to support Leitrim and to pay handsomely for the naming rights. As ever, there was no haggling, no input from professional PR companies, no intermediaries, just straight talking and friendly banter as the deal was finalised. This time an Anonymous quotation is very apt Generosity isn't about money, it's about the heart.

Tommy Moran



LEITRIM GAA CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE 2004 TO 2019

- A BRIEF HISTORY.

As the Leitrim Centre of Excellence is officially opened today by the President of the GAA Mr John Horan it brings to a conclusion a long and protracted voyage in the history of Leitrim GAA.

The officers of Leitrim GAA in the early years of the new millennium realised that it was apparent that the county needed a training Centre for use by all inter County teams from the very young, right up to senior. The regular question was where is training tonight and the instant answer was, where ever we can source a pitch? The grounds of Cloone GAA Club served the county very well and were the regular nightly venue, but on occasions with persistent rain it would become unavailable. Then the search started, the Longford Rugby grounds, Kenagh GAA grounds, and various grounds in Counties Meath or Westmeath were on red alert until a venue somewhere was found. This had a very destabilising effect on the various County panels and Leitrim GAA realised that it now more than ever needed to provide a training ground of its own.

Various sites were investigated discussions took place with various auctioneers, to source land, but to no avail. Discussions took place with clubs but nothing positive was forthcoming. With frustration growing Leitrim GAA was thrown a life line when a farm of land in the parish of Annaduff adjacent to the N4 roadway became available to purchase. Leitrim GAA gave great consideration to this option before making a decision, and finally made the purchase. Arguments for a more central venue in the County were debated but the influencing factor was that this training Centre would be used for the training of all County teams, and generally County panels have a number of Players either living or working on the east coast, or students studying in Dublin, Maynooth, Athlone, Limerick, so the venue was at the right end of the County.

The Purchase contract was signed in January 7th 2005, and now with the signing done the Leitrim GAA Management Committee was anxious to make progress and get the project started. However an even greater emergency arose as another facility, the property of

Leitrim GAA was in dire need of attention. The dressing rooms at the Leitrim County Grounds at Páirc Seán MacDiarmada were in poor condition and Leitrim GAA were obliged to take action as it was pointed out to them that if the facilities in Páirc Seán were not upgraded, Leitrim GAA would not be allowed to host any further inter county games.

The decision was clear cut and the board decided to prioritise the provision a new stand and associated facilities at the county grounds. With a project of this magnitude to be provided, the advice from management in Croke Park was that the training Ground development would have to be put on hold until the stand project would be complete or at least be financially manageable.

With the stand project up and running the officers of the County Board decided to investigate to site, and to start the planning process for the Centre of Excellence. Of course things don't always turn out straight forward and while the training and coaching needs of Leitrim GAA required at least two pitches, it emerged that the site as it was purchased would only accommodate one full size pitch (84 X 145) and a smaller pitch (60 X 126) running parallel to the road. It was clear that playing grounds of this size would not be sufficient to accommodate the requirements of Leitrim GAA.

On investigation it was established that the land consisted of a hill of rock and the best advice available to Leitrim GAA officials at that time was that in order to provide two full size playing pitches on the site, the hill of rock would have to be excavated. This provided a nightmare scenario for the board as the estimated cost of the excavation would be in the region of one million euro. Recognising that rock could be a valuable commodity the board set about having the rock analysed, to establish its commercial value. Fortunes did not improve and the rock analysis concluded that it was of no commercial value and to excavate it for commercial purposes would prove fruitless, costly, and the material would be difficult to get rid of. Unfortunately this type of rock could only be used for back fill and under- ground work. As the board's finances were already over stretched with the stand development, it could not afford the excavation costs. Lucky for Leitrim GAA the Dromod/Rooskey bye pass construction project was in progress and it was seen as maybe a potential outlet for disposing of the rock. To oversee the development of the training grounds, Leitrim

GAA had employed the services of Adept Consultancy, a company that had already made a name for itself with their brilliant work on the McGovern Stand in Avancard Páirc Seán MacDiarmada. Negotiations to do a deal, took place between Adept Consultancy acting on behalf of Leitrim GAA, and the Engineering team of Jons Construction. Jons had from the very early stages stated that they would have to receive a financial contribution towards to the cost of the excavation and transportation of the rock as they would, in all probably have to engage very costly rock breaking machinery. They also stated that it would be more economical for them to buy material locally. Following a protracted negotiation process, between Adept Consultancy and Jons construction, a contribution of €250,000 plus VAT from Leitrim GAA towards the cost of the project was agreed. The contract was for the excavation of the rock and to leave the site ready for two full size playing pitches and a dressing room and club house facility. Work began on rock excavation in November 2006 and was completed by May 2007. Leitrim GAA Management Committee was very fortunate that the By Pass was under construction and provided an opportunity to facilitate the removal of the hill of rock. The cost of the excavation to Jons Construction was €1,249,000 so it is abundantly clear that for a cost of €250,000 plus VAT, Leitrim GAA had got the very best out of the deal and the provision of two full size playing pitches and clubhouse was now possible.

Now with the site ready the project could progress to the next stage, which was to provide dressing rooms gym and all associated facilities. The officers of the County Board changed as a result of the GAA 5 year rule, and now a new management team to steer the project was in place. With the stand project completed and having run slightly over budget, funds to complete the training facility were not in the coffers of Leitrim GAA. The Management Committee at the time made a conscious decision not to incur any further debt, and that they would only progress the project when funds became available. This was a very prudent decision as the resources available to Leitrim GAA could not sustain any further borrowings.

Various discussions took place with the National Financial Management Committee in Croke Park in relation to providing further funding to progress the project. The response from the National Finance Committee was very

positive and further funding became available. The funding that was available was sufficient to commence pitch development and also to construct phase one of the dressing rooms and some associated facilities and with no further funding available the construction of the facility came to a halt. Over time various sections of the construction were progressed as funds became available. In more recent years as funding was freed up, under the guidance of the present County Management Committee a concerted effort was made to complete the construction, have it at least functional and ultimately take us to where we are today. The county senior players got to first train on the playing surfaces in January 2016 but there still remained work to complete to bring it to today's standard.

Enter the fundraising activities of the Leitrim GAA Wall Committee, launched in May 2018. What has happened in the intervening period has been sufficiently outlined elsewhere in this publication but suffice it to say that we are indebted to Leitrim people far and wide for responding so positively to allow complete the project to a top class modern standard. There were very good reasons why this project, conceived in the early years of the Millennium, has taken such a long time to reach the completion stage, but nevertheless Leitrim GAA takes great pride in the fact that it is now completed finished to a high standard, and ready for the official opening with minimal debt to the Leitrim GAA.

Leitrim GAA recognises the massive contribution and support received from Croke Park for this project, in particular the National Financial Management Committee, and Leitrim GAA will be eternal grateful to the various personnel involved in providing the much needed funding over the years to complete this project. Likewise Leitrim GAA is for ever indebted to the Connacht Council of the GAA, to the many officers, delegates, and representatives of the Council, but in particular to provincial Secretary John Prenty for his continued support for this project. No doubt the many people who have worked tirelessly over the years to ensure the completion of this very worthwhile project will be very proud of the finished product, which will enhance the prospects of Leitrim GAA for many years to come.

Coiste Chontae Liatroma.



Early Site Exploration and Clearance



Jons Rock Extraction



Rock Cleared 2007



Pitch Laying May 2011



Construction Phase 2011



Front of Facility



Rear of Building 2011



Rear of Building



View from N4 in May 2011



Front of Building from N4 September 2019



Dressing Room in May 2011



Leitrim Senior Dressing Room



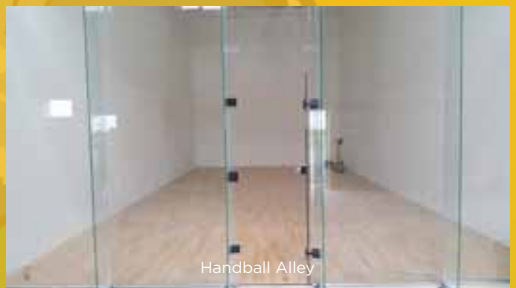
Gym in July 2011



Gym



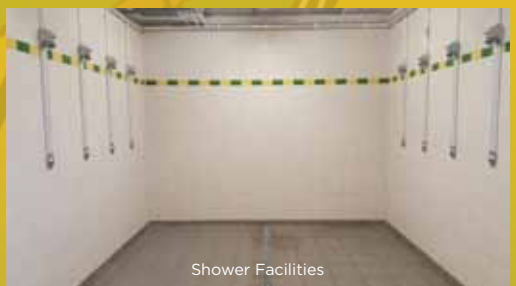
Handball Alley 2011



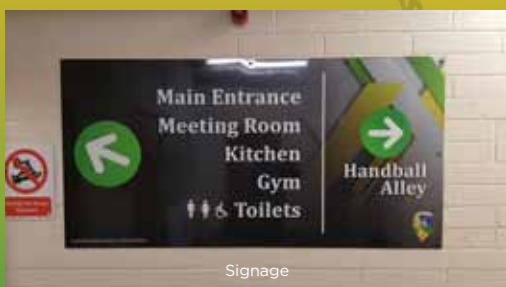
Handball Alley



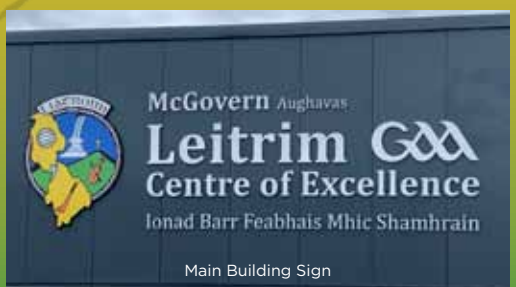
Entrance to Leitrim dressing Room



Shower Facilities



Signage



Main Building Sign

ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY

September 7th 2019 will bring the culmination of a longstanding Leitrim GAA project with the official opening by Uachtarán Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, John Horan, of the McGovern Aughavas Centre of Excellence, located in the parish of Annaduff. A project that has been ongoing for almost a decade and a half has now become the jewel in the crown of Leitrim GAA's physical development over that period of time. While it may seem that the rate of progress has been particularly slow and many county players have come and gone over this era, this project is one for the future that has been carefully planned, prudently managed from a financial point of view, and will open debt free which is the proverbial icing on the cake.

The journey to this point have had many twists and turns and involved dealing with national austerity measures which impacted on both funding available and fundraising possibilities to complete the project. It would never have been envisaged that when Leitrim GAA began to investigate the possibility of acquiring property for such a development in the early years of new Millennium, leading to the land purchase deal which was completed in the early days of 2005 we would have to wait until the dawn of the third decade for its official opening but we have arrived and the future home of Leitrim GAA has been completed to the highest standard and will serve us well for generations to come.

Leitrim GAA, in its carefully planning over the course of County Management Committees, led at its acquisition stage by then Chairman Michael McGowan, follow on purchase signing and early development stage by then Chairman Gerry McGovern, pitch development and physical development stage under the leadership of then Chairman, the late Joe Flynn, to finally getting to actually use it and having it functional to its ultimate

completion to the standard it finds itself at today under Chairman Terence Boyle has been on a long journey but one nonetheless the various committees have left a legacy for the future and one of which we may be justifiably proud. I suppose it's fair to question how one of smallest units of the Association could have reached this point, given the level of resources that Leitrim GAA has to operate and function with. Our playing resources have been well chronicled. Suffice it to say there are clubs in the capital with more to choose from than our entire county. Servicing the ongoing needs of a county from such a small base obviously presents financial challenges year on year. The success of the Leitrim GAA Supporters Club which has been in operation since 1986 brings in the heavy end of €100,000 annually but this, our largest fundraiser, is required to ensure that our county teams are prepared to the best possible degree. Finding the capital to bring a Centre of Excellence to fruition would not have been remotely possible without assistance from Provincial and Central Council and in this regard we are indebted to John Prenty of Connacht Council and successive Infrastructural and Development Committees in Croke Park for providing successive and ongoing grants to help this development over the past 15 years. The clubs of the county are to be applauded for taking the decision to allocate the €250,000 share out of the proceeds of the opening of Croke Park to the FAI and the IRFU back in last decade to this project. That shouldn't be forgotten. When push came to shove and we needed to apply the finishing touches to ensure that it would be officially opened with a finish all can be proud of a fundraising committee was put in place in early 2018 and came up with the 'Brick in the Wall' fundraising venture. It was launched in Rory Dolan's Bar on McLean Avenue on the eve of our dramatic Connacht Championship Match with New York on May 5th 2018. What has happened since, and particularly in recent months has been nothing short of phenomenal. Leitrim Senior Footballers promotion run this spring brought back a feel good factor and with it came the rush to buy bricks. Add

in the naming rights, for the next 15 years will be known as the McGovern Centre of Excellence, thanks to the generosity of London based Tony and Bernadette McGovern, Aughavas, who have pledged €100,000 for these advertising rights over this period, and with €220,000 raised on the 'Wall' in a show of support and a demonstration of the pride that Leitrim people have in their origins. Bricks have been purchased by Leitrim people far and wide and we're quite sure that everybody will be most pleased and suitably proud of Leitrim GAA's new home.

To put it simply, this project has cost in excess of €2.8 million. We are indebted to Central Council and Provincial Council for providing in excess of €2million towards this ongoing venture. The remainder was sourced in fundraising previously outlined. We will be operational and practically debt free going forward and we acknowledge the magnificent assistance we have received on this long and sometimes arduous journey.

What will this all mean for the

development of Leitrim GAA into the future you may ask? Firstly Leitrim GAA is no longer homeless and this simply is a huge leap forward. Our young players of all codes will have a place that they can also call home from Academy level all the way through to Senior County Level. Will it guarantee us Provincial or National titles into the future? The answer to that is obviously no, however, if we can guarantee players that in their development going forward that they can be the best they can be then there is little more we can expect, irrespective of opposition. The Physical Infrastructure has been laid down carefully and in a planned manner. The challenges we face on the playing fields do not get any less with each passing year and the official opening of this facility will not guarantee success but we are confident that those challenges can be met also as our Coaching and Games Department will continue to make great use of this fine facility.

Déaglán Ó Buacháin
Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí Liatroma



Pictured (left to right) are Gerry Mahon, Árd Comhairle Delegate, Gerry McGovern, Chairman, Seamus Prior, Connacht Council Delegate, Nicky Brennan, Uachtarán CLG, Jim Meehan RIP, Treasurer, and John Gormley, Árd Comhairle on the visit of Uachtarán CLG to the site in June 2006.



Pitches September 2019