

BACKGROUND

Broad Policy on Use of GAA facilities

The Gaelic Athletic Association has a policy of ensuring that its grounds and facilities are used exclusively for promotion of our own games and activities. The GAA reviewed its policy position on the matter in 1993 as part of the Report of the F6-Choiste to prepare policy statements for the Association.

While this policy remains unchanged, several specific rule changes have subsequently refined and qualified this policy.

In 2005 Congress voted to allow use of Croke Park on a temporary basis by the Irish national Rugby team and the Republic of Ireland soccer team while Lansdowne Road was under redevelopment.

In 2010 Congress voted to allow Central Council to consider applications for use of Croke Park only, by other sports, on a case by case basis.

In 2012 Congress voted to allow Central Council to consider applications for use of Croke Park and other grounds for use in the Rugby World Cup in 2023 & 2027 if those tournament were to be staged in Ireland.

In 2018 Congress voted to allow Central Council to consider applications for use of GAA grounds outside Ireland by other sports on a case by case basis.

In 2019 Congress voted to allow Central Council to consider applications for use of county grounds, by other sports, on a case by case basis.

In the light of these significant changes it is appropriate to re-affirm and update the GAA's policy position on use of its property. Most of the observations of the 1993 F6-Choiste retain their relevance today and are retained as current policy on the following basis:

Our primary objective is the development and promotion of Gaelic Games and our grounds and facilities give an essential permanent presence and identity to the Association and to our National Games in their respective locations and communities, in keeping with the Association's purpose and standing.

Were our grounds to be made widely available for games promoted by other organisations in direct competition with our national games it would seriously dilute this

presence and the unity of purpose of the Association and would be an absolute contradiction of the Association's aims.

Among the reasons that the GAA does not make the use of its grounds widely available for rival field sports are the following:

- It conflicts with our fundamental aim of promoting Gaelic Games
- It would have a serious adverse effect on the promotion of Gaelic Games in the medium and long term
- The Association would lose the advantage that its facilities provide it with in competing with other – often professional and commercially driven – sports.
- Many GAA grounds are currently over-utilised
- A conflict of interest would lead to grounds not being available at all the times they would be required for the playing of Gaelic Games
- Our playing season would be dictated by the demands of other sports.

The Association's purpose and mandate is to manage its affairs in the best interests of Gaelic Games and in this regard its policy is not unique among sporting bodies.

RULE

5.1 Uses of Property

- (a) All property including Grounds, Club Houses, Halls, Dressing Rooms and Handball Alleys owned or controlled by units of the Association ("Association Property") shall be used only for the purpose of or in connection with the playing of the Games controlled by the Association, and for such other purposes, which accord with the Aims of the Association, that may be sanctioned from time to time by the Central Council.
- (b) Central Council has the power, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise the use of Association Property held by a County Committee, Provincial Council or Central Council for activities other than those controlled by the Association in accordance with policy adopted by Central Council.
- (c) Central Council has the power to authorise the use of Association Property which is located outside of Ireland for games other than those controlled by the Association."

POLICY

Operational Policy in respect of Ancillary Facilities

The rule covers grounds, club houses, halls, dressing rooms, handball alleys and any other property owned or controlled by a unit of the Association. In practice GAA premises can probably be interpreted as comprising main and ancillary facilities. Ancillary facilities typically comprise the likes of:

- Indoor halls
- Basketball courts
- Tennis Courts
- Astro turf facilities (other than full size)

The rule states that such facilities should be used only for the purpose of, or in connection with, the playing of our Games & for such other purposes which accord with our aims that may be sanctioned by the Central Council.

Central Council has previously considered:

- a. if the use of ancillary facilities for recreational purposes by groups of individuals conflicts with the aims and objects of the Association and
- b. If they should therefore sanction use of our grounds for such purposes?
- c. Whether non-field sports (e.g. gymnastics) were intended to be covered by the rule

Ard Chomhairle Policy on Ancillary Facilities

1. The GAA does not permit use of its grounds or ancillary facilities* by any other sporting associations (or units of same) promoting field sports.
2. The GAA does not permit use of its grounds or ancillary facilities for party political purposes or for other purposes that are clearly politically motivated or linked to a politically motivated group.
3. GAA clubs, at their discretion, and as part of their role as a community centred organisation may permit use of ancillary facilities to groups of individuals, additional needs groups for recreational purposes that are not considered contrary to the GAA's own Aims and Objectives.
4. Use of GAA controlled property (including leasing or renting to any outside body or community group) for any purposes not specifically covered in items 1-3 above, requires the express permission of Central Council via the relevant County Committee.

**Ancillary Facilities are defined as Club Houses, Halls, Dressing Rooms, Handball Alleys, Meeting rooms, Indoor halls, non-full-size Astro Turf facilities, squash, basketball or tennis courts and any similar facilities controlled by units of the Association.*

Operational Policy in respect of Full Size and Juvenile Size Outdoor Playing pitches (inc. full size astro turf pitches)

The reference in the Rule to “Grounds” can be interpreted as referring to outdoor playing facilities. Games not controlled by the Association will typically (but not exclusively) include the following:

- American Football
- Australian Rules Football
- Soccer
- Rugby Union
- Rugby League
- Hockey
- Cricket

Apart from the specific exceptions provided for in the case of Croke Park, only American Football, Australian Rules Football and Soccer have in the past received the sanction of Central Council to be played on GAA facilities, and all on the basis that they were not considered to be contrary to the objectives of the GAA.

Following Congress 2019 Central Council has the right to sanction the use of certain GAA Grounds for use by other sports in the specific circumstances set out below

Ard Chomhairle policy on use of Full size and Juvenile Size Outdoor Playing pitches (inc.full size astro turf pitches) controlled by units of the Association:

1. The GAA does not permit use of its playing facilities by other sporting bodies or for sporting activities other than those controlled by the Association itself.
2. However, Ard Chomhairle, as enshrined in rule, retains the right to sanction use of GAA grounds, from time to time and in limited circumstances, for other field sports.
3. Such usage may only be sanctioned in the case of Croke Park and grounds designated with county ground status.
4. Applications for such usage may only be considered from the national governing body of the other sport concerned directly to Ard Chomhairle.
5. Usage may only be permitted where the event is considered by Ard Chomhairle to be in the broad interest of the Association and in accord with its aims.

PENALTY

Penalty for breach of Rule 5.1

In the event of any Club, County Committee, or Provincial Council acting contrary to this Rule, that body shall be subject to suspension or fine, as deemed appropriate.