



MAYO HURLING

10 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
2020-2030



Strategic Plan for Mayo Hurling for next 5/10 years

Introduction

Over this last number of months, the Hurling Review Committee have met with the Clubs, Hurling and Football Boards, Adrian Hession, Martin Fogarty, Damien Coleman and other individuals involved in some way with Mayo hurling. The main objective of these meetings was to examine how we could put Mayo hurling on a more secure footing. The primary aim is to have 8 clubs playing at an adult level, within an agreed timeframe. At the same time, we were conscious that there was a need to secure the wellbeing of existing clubs, some of which were encountering obstacles in their efforts to keep hurling alive.

We found, during our many meetings, a recognition within hurling clubs that a bright future can be built for Mayo hurling by working together. The large turnout at our general meetings demonstrated this unity of purpose. We were inspired too by our meetings with our Football and Hurling Chairmen, with National GPO Martin Fogarty, and Connacht GPO Damien Coleman. We believe this period of time offers a great opportunity to ensure our hopes for the future of Mayo Hurling become a reality.

This review is perceived as only the start of a long and arduous process. Reaching our objectives will not be easy. Clubs and individuals will need to look outside their own boundaries and while we should compete strenuously on the field of play, we must become friends in the combining of our efforts off it. Hurling Boards and any additional committees formed, arising from this review, will have to double their efforts towards attaining our goals.

We firmly believe that this review is a major step in the right direction. With the support and good will of all who purport to develop and foster our national games, great strides can be made in putting hurling on a stronger footing.

The remainder of this review will deal with the issues that need addressing. It will be up to future committees and task forces to identify specific timeframes, together with the action required, in pursuit of these goals.

Cover image: Kenny Feeney, Mayo. Photo Sportsfile



The expansion of hurling from 4 to 8 adult clubs

This remains our primary objective. It is at the very core of this review. Selecting County representative senior teams from only 4 clubs makes it very difficult for Mayo to compete in National competitions. The only surprise is how well we have competed in the past, from such a small base.

Related Task:

-  We cannot create 8 adult clubs overnight and the aim is to have 8 clubs playing at U12 with immediate effect. All eight clubs will evolve through the grades to Senior/ Junior status by 2030.
-  **The 8 clubs/areas identified are;**
Tooreen, Ballyhaunis, Castlebar, Westport, Claremorris, Caiseal Gaels, Ballina and Ballyvary.
-  It is hoped that **Ballinrobe, Cong, Bellmullet and Achill** will resume their efforts to restart hurling in their own areas, at some point during the life of this plan.
-  It is important that every young hurler in Mayo is given the opportunity to play hurling, wherever he may live. In this regard, amalgamations, permission to play rules, 13 or 11 a-side Tournaments, should all be considered as an interim measure.

Shane Boland, (Tooreen) Mayo v Roscommon, 2018.
Image courtesy of Adian Morley, Ard-Doire Video/Dvd

A second Games Promotion Officer for Mayo

There is widespread recognition that Adrian Hession is doing wonderful work in the expansion of hurling in the county. We have 48 National schools playing hurling in Mayo and this is a testament to his fine work. But this great effort could be wasted if not built upon by both Clubs and Post Primary schools. A second GPO is seen as the most important requirement in the county to lay solid foundations for Mayo hurling. Mayo is a vast county, with hurling clubs and schools spread over a large area.



Adrian Hession

Coaching in general or more specifically the lack of experienced coaches was seen as the single biggest problem in Mayo. The introduction of a second GPO would be a major help, as this would allow both of them sufficient time to train voluntary coaches from within each club's catchment area. Attracting and training more coaches is especially important for the new clubs, as there may not be a long or continuous tradition of hurling in their area. It would also be advisable that the Clubs, through the GPO'S, tap into the vast experiences of our Connaught and National Hurling Development managers, Damien Coleman and Martin Fogarty respectively.

Related Task:

- 📌 We garnered from our meeting with the Football Board that finance would be the determining factor in whether a second GPO would be made available in Mayo. It is our intention to look at where money is presently being spent in hurling and to examine if any savings can be implemented in particular areas. We should examine all possibilities including the amalgamation of specified roles and this may involve some tough decision making in the future.
- 📌 There is also a need for clubs to offer more assistance to our GPO, and the possibility of past senior hurlers playing some role in this respect should be examined. Martin Fogarty has suggested that past players could be approached to give at least one hour each week in the training of a specific skill to our young hurlers.

Promotion of Hurling in our Post Primary Schools.

Post Primary school hurling is the foundation stone for hurling in first and second tier hurling counties, but we cannot expand hurling into our colleges, without the goodwill of the management of these schools. We must recognise the great work being carried out by our teachers. While under pressure to educate our youngsters in all aspects of a broad curriculum they are often the keepers of many of our sporting traditions. Following the granting of UNESCO status to hurling it is important that we stress the importance of hurling as our most traditional of sports.

Hurling is being played in the following Post Primary Schools and we appreciate the efforts being made by all involved:

Ballyhaunis C.S;

St Colman's, Claremorris;

Rice College, Westport;

St. Muredach's College, Ballina;

St Patrick's College, Lacken Cross
and **Colaiste Pobail**, Achill.

Other Post Primary Schools feeding into surrounding hurling clubs but with no hurling on board yet are:

St Nathy's, Ballaghaderreen; **St. Gerald's College**, Castlebar and **St. Louis C.S.**, Kiltimagh.

Related Task:



A task force to be formed with the intention of meeting with School Management in 9 Post Primary schools, 6 of which already have some hurling. The specific aim would be to ascertain the state of hurling in their school, the problems experienced by the colleges in promoting hurling, and to find out what assistance they need from their local clubs and from the Hurling Board.



Anthony Flaherty (Connacht GAA) presents the Connacht U13 Connolly Cup to Fionan Burke (East Mayo), 2019.

Provision of a Fixtures Committee

There is a lot of hurling activity within the county, much of it due to the efforts of Adrian Hession and the many volunteers who give generously of their time at Club and county level. But it can be very disheartening for these people when they come up against so many issues regarding games fixtures and frequent cancellations. We understand that this is primarily a football county, but we must finally ask the question: 'Is there is a real desire to accommodate hurling within the GAA structures that presently exist in the county?' Our objective to have 8 clubs in the county, fulfilling fixtures in all age grades from U12 upwards, will of course mean more games. This will place a greater strain on our clubs in their efforts to balance hurling and football. It also means that there is a greater need for good organisation on our part and a more flexible and inclusive approach from our footballing brethren.

Related Task:

- 📌 The formulation of a Fixtures Committee under the auspices of the Hurling Board, fully supported by individual clubs. This committee would form an important part of our hurling structure. It would have sole power to fix hurling games and deal with associated problems that may arise from time to time.
- 📌 There is a need to seek some assistance and agreement from the Football County and Divisional Boards regarding the assignment and maintenance of a specified hurling day.
- 📌 Due consideration also needs to be given to our many dual players, when planning football and hurling fixtures.



Far left: Mayo v Roscommon (2017)
Left: Mayo v Roscommon (2018)
Pics courtesy of Adian Morley, Ard-Doire Video/Dvd

Have separate Management structures for our County representative teams

Adrian Hession has by and large been a one man show and managing county underage teams has placed a further strain on his time and his main responsibility i.e. to promote hurling at foundation level. We understand that Clubs have great difficulty in providing coaching and management personnel for their own club teams. This was a problem raised by all clubs in our review. Nevertheless, we would appeal to clubs that they take on a more countywide approach to hurling. We ask that they look beyond the boundaries of their own clubs and recognize that what is good for the county will have an even greater impact for the betterment of the club. We can never expect to compete with football in this county until the day comes that it is every hurler's dream to pull on a Mayo jersey.

Related Task:



Meet with Clubs to request that they provide management and coaching personnel for our underage County representative teams.



Seek out and be open to approaches from hurling individuals who may not necessarily be attached to a particular club, but who may be willing to play some role at county level.



Far left: Mayo v Roscommon (2018). Pic Aidan Morley.
Left: Niall Fleming (Caiseal Gaels & Mayo) receives All-Ireland U14B title from Martin Fogarty (National Hurling Development Manager). Pic Adrian Hession.

Other areas requiring further consideration and follow up

✓ Fundraising for Hurling

All future fundraising must come under the auspices of the County Board. We have been assured that any monies raised specifically for hurling, will be assigned to a targeted area or function, and transparent accounting practices will be in place.

Related Task: 📌 The Hurling Board should identify particular functions or projects which could benefit from additional finance, which may have to be raised through sponsorship or fundraising events.

✓ The use of Outside Referees for County Senior Finals

Mayo is one of the few counties that have maintained the rule that only referees from Mayo are considered for Senior County Finals.

Related Task: 📌 While it is important that we get this resolved, it is more important that we attract younger referees to Mayo hurling from within the county. The recent employment of two young hurling referees is encouraging in this respect.

✓ Duties of the Hurling Board

There is a need to examine the role and authority of the Hurling Board, with a view towards giving them more autonomy in areas that would benefit the smooth management of hurling, while at the same time not impacting on the responsibilities and authority of the County Board. This would include entrusting the Hurling Board to manage affairs that relate to the promotion of hurling and the management of games in the county.

Related Task: 📌 Evaluate the present role of the Hurling Board and the part it plays in the management of Mayo hurling, and in particular its relationship with the County Board and the hurling clubs.



Use of Hurling Role Models

Marketing is a key feature of all our lives in this digital age. We must use our role models to promote hurling in the county, to a wider audience.

It was suggested that the Mayo Senior hurling team train in various clubs providing a 'meet and greet' moment for young hurlers in these areas. Clubs must be reciprocal in ensuring that every effort is made towards making their young hurlers available for those sessions and that attendance is encouraged at inter county games, especially home games.

We already have fantastic role models in our ranks, through their involvement with both the Mayo Senior Football and Hurling teams. We should request that they be ambassadors in the promotion of our wonderful game.

Keith Higgins of Mayo lifts the cup after the Nicky Rackard Cup Final on 4 June 2016, between Armagh and Mayo in Croke Park.
Photo by Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile



Blueprint for individual Hurling Clubs

It is especially important that each club initiates its own club plan for the next 5 and 10 years.

While aligned to our county plan it should place greater emphasis on its own individual requirements and the unique issues facing its development.



Annual Hurling Meeting

Following the success of our general meeting in Kiltimagh last November, it is obvious there is a need to hold such a meeting on an annual basis. We will be making a proposal to the Hurling Board that such an annual get together be included in our hurling calendar on a permanent basis.



Progress Review Committee

It is the duty of the Hurling Board to audit the progress of this plan at predetermined stages.

Progress, or lack of it, should be fed back to Clubs at regular intervals, and corrective action taken as required.

Top: Stephen Coyne (Tooreen) playing for Mayo v London 2019.
Left: Paddy Dozio (Caiseal Gaels and Mayo) being presented with the U16 Niall McInerney Shield by Damien Coleman (Connacht GAA).

Current status of Hurling Clubs in Mayo (January 2020)

Senior Club:	4	Tooreen, Ballyhaunis, Castlebar and Westport.
Under 21:	2	Tooreen and Westport
Under 19:	2	Tooreen and Westport
Under 18:	2	Tooreen and Castlebar
Under 17:	4	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar and Caiseal Gaels
Under 16:	4	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar and Caiseal Gaels
Under 15:	6	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar, Caiseal Gaels Claremorris and Ballyvary/Ballina
Under 14:	6	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar, Caiseal Gaels Claremorris and Ballyvary/Ballina
Under 13:	6	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar, Caiseal Gaels Claremorris and Ballyvary/Ballina
Under 12:	7	Tooreen, Westport, Castlebar, Caiseal Gaels Claremorris, Ballyvary and Ballina

The true measure of success of this effort will be 8 clubs or more playing at all grades by the end of 2030.



Mayo players celebrate their victory over Armagh in the Nicky Rackard Cup Final on 4 June 2016. Photo by Piaras Ó Midheach/Sportsfile
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