

# **NORTHERN CRICKET UNION OF IRELAND**



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **2020 SEASON**

The Northern Cricket Union of Ireland is a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in Northern Ireland (Company Number NI 649724) and a Charity registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (Charity Number NIC 106791) having its registered office at The Pavilion, Stormont Estate, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. BT4 3TA

## CONTENTS

<b>2019-20 REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
BOARD OF DIRECTORS .....	3
OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES .....	4
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT .....	6
GENERAL MANAGER .....	8
GENERAL SECRETARY .....	15
SCHOOL AND CLUB ENGAGEMENT OFFICER .....	19
CLUB AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER .....	23
CRICKET DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (UU) .....	27
CRICKET OPERATIONS MANAGER .....	29
KNIGHTS AND PATHWAY LEAD COACH .....	34
DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE .....	38
APPEALS COMMITTEE .....	38
ANNUAL DINNER .....	38
SPONSORS .....	39
OBITUARIES .....	40

## 2019-20 REVIEW

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

<b>Chairman</b>	Sam Beckett
<b>Vice-Chairman</b>	Peter McMorran
<b>Hon Treasurer</b>	Kailash Chada
<b>Directors</b>	Roger Bell Rosemary Bryans Alastair Burton Stephen Dyer Michael Humphreys Ken Nixon Allan Rutherford Alan Waite Brian Walsh

Ten meetings of the Board were held in the period covered by the report:

Sam Beckett	10
Peter McMorran	7
Kailash Chada	9
Alastair Burton	5
Alan Waite	9
Allan Rutherford	10
Rosemary Bryans	8
Ken Nixon	9
Michael Humphreys	7
Roger Bell	8
Stephen Dyer	7
Brian Walsh	10

Those representatives 'In Attendance':

Richard Johnson	8
Angela Platt	10
Murray Power	10
Bryan Milford	10

## OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES

<b>President</b>	Richard Johnson	
<b>Vice President</b>	Roger Bell	
<b>Company Secretary</b>	Murray Power	
<b>Child Welfare Officer</b>	Owen Lambert	
<b>Public Relations Officer</b>	Richard White	
<b>General Manager</b>	Angela Platt	
<b>General Secretary</b>	Bryan Milford	
<b>Domestic Cricket Directorate</b>	Alan Waite Gary Blair Ross Ellerby Jack Quinn	Roger Bell Andrew Cowden Andrew Rose David Skelton
<b>Representative Cricket Directorate</b>	Alan Rutherford Stephen Hanna	Stephen Dyer Brian Walsh
<b>Finance &amp; Sponsorship Directorate</b>	Alastair Burton Richard Hood Peter McMorran	Kailash Chada Richard Johnson
<b>Competitions Committee</b>	Roger Bell Michael McDowell Wylie McKinty David Skelton Gordon Scott Colin McCaughey Tony Lemon Derek McKinley	Jack Quinn Staci Maxwell Ryan McMaster Kyle Weir Adrian Campbell Dave Williams Richard Johnson
<b>Disciplinary Panel</b>	Colin Webster Alan McMillan Peter Shepherd Bobby Fleetham	Ian Dickie Alan Johnston Gordon Scott
<b>Appeals Panel</b>	Neale Matthews Carson McCullough Andrew Babington Jack Quinn	Julie Knight Graeme Pollock Harry McFadden

<b>Nominees to Cricket Ireland Board</b>	Sam Beckett	Peter McMorran
<b>Nominees to Cricket Ireland Cricket Committee</b>	Alan Waite	
<b>Nominees to Cricket Ireland Finance Committee</b>	Alastair Burton	Angela Platt
<b>Cricket Operations Manager</b>	Uel Graham	
<b>Club and Partnership Officer</b>	Callum Atkinson	
<b>School &amp; Club Engagement Officer</b>	Wayne Hughes	
<b>Knights &amp; Pathway Head Coach</b>	Simon Johnston	
<b>UU Cricket Development Officers</b>	James Cameron Dow Mike Grossett	
<b>Inter Provincial / MTB Northern Knights Head Coach Manager Selectors</b>	Simon Johnston Andrew Rose Ryan Eagleson Alan Rutherford	Simon Johnston Brian Walsh
<b>Honorary Life Members</b>	IJ Anderson JRW Boyce OBE JC Hiles JR Law P Lunney H McCrory (deceased 15 August 2020) C Walker MBE	

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In the annals of the Northern Cricket Union few will look back upon the year 2020 with any great fondness. Over the past year the onset of the coronavirus pandemic occurred just as we were preparing for the season and played havoc with our plans. When we eventually got cricket underway, poor weather affected many games towards the end of an already truncated season. And yet, there was much to be positive about.

With financial assistance from Ulster University we engaged James Cameron-Dow and Mike Grossett as cricket development officers to work with UU students and more widely in the community as a means of further developing participation in the game.

Substantial grants were also obtained from the Department for Communities to help develop the women's and girls' game and to purchase equipment to enhance the indoor facility at Jordanstown and for use by clubs for grounds maintenance.

During lockdown, our staff rose to the challenge with the innovative use of technology to support clubs and to deliver umpires and scorers courses as well as coaching to a range of groups. When the protocols were introduced, first for training and then for return to playing, staff worked extremely hard with all clubs to ensure they were fully conversant with the requirements and ready to go.

At very short notice a small group comprising volunteers and staff worked tirelessly to revamp our competitions and with the ready cooperation of clubs we managed to arrange and complete a variety of competitions for men and women in just half a season. The interest shown by players and spectators alike together with their obvious enjoyment was very satisfying.

We are grateful to all our sponsors – league, cup and representative - who stood by us in what has been a challenging year for business.

As ever we are indebted to the many volunteers who give so willingly of their time and talents and without whom the game simply would not function. To those who are standing down we thank you for your dedication and contribution to the Union.

The winter and spring saw increased numbers at the regional development sessions at Jordanstown. Building on this good work much was planned for the season, but several games, tours and tournaments fell victim, first to coronavirus restrictions and then to the weather. Our thanks are due to the many dedicated coaches who, under the direction of Simon Johnston, were involved in delivering the still many programmes and matches that took place.

The MTB Northern Knights' season was condensed into IP20 and IP50 competitions towards the end of the season. We recorded wins against the North West Warriors, but Leinster dominated the competitions which were badly affected by weather, frustrating both players and coaches alike. All are to be commended for their commitment.

Stormont was due to host the World Cup runners up, New Zealand for three 50 over games in the inaugural World Cricket Super League but alas the tour was cancelled. Ireland did manage some

cricket against England in the bubble of Southampton. Paul Stirling played a match winning role in a memorable victory in the last of three 50 over matches to give them valuable points in the World Cricket Super League.

On behalf of the NCU I wish to thank all the clubs who made their grounds available, sometimes at short notice, to host finals, representative games, and practice sessions.

The restrictions meant that we were required to hold meetings via Zoom. Moreover because of the necessity to reorganise competitions and the ongoing consultation regarding league restructuring we had to hold an unprecedented number of club meetings.

An unintended but happy consequence of this resulted in more clubs participating than when we had held meetings at a venue. I hope that this helped all our clubs to feel engaged with the process. Accordingly thought will be given to the way in which we hold future meetings when some semblance of normality returns.

I feel very proud of the way in which clubs, volunteers, umpires and staff came together to deliver a season which was worthwhile and enjoyable for those who took part, especially when one considers that in other regions of the UK there was no domestic cricket.

Let us all approach next year hoping and planning for normality and doing our best to ensure that can happen but confident in the knowledge, should restrictions still apply that with the same “can do” attitude we will be able to deliver a meaningful cricket season.

I hope everyone enjoys the winter break and wish you all well for a healthy and enjoyable 2021.

**Sam Beckett**  
**Chairman**

## GENERAL MANAGER

Angela Platt was appointed to the General Manager position in April 2017. During that time progress has been made in some key areas of business. The following report outlines the key areas of responsibility the General Manager covers, highlighting some of the achievements that have been delivered during the past year. However, the year just past has been the most challenging, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the work required to navigate us through that with so much uncertainty at times.

The report is divided into sections outlining areas of responsibility, delivery of activity and achievements before Covid-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20), during Covid-19 lockdown (Apr 20 – Jul 20) and then after COVID-19 lockdown (Jul 20 – Oct 20).

### Before COVID-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20)

This was a period that, on reflection now, was “business as usual” as we carried out our normal winter programme functions and prepared ourselves for a new 2020. We could not have imagined what would be ahead for us. However, between October and March the role of the General Manager was focused on several key areas that are outlined below.

### Strategic Planning and General Management

The General Manager focused on continuing to provide clarity of the Union’s Strategic direction in relation to strategy, operational plans and delivery against targets and objectives for all our programmes across the business. This work area included:

- **Oversight of Strategic & Operational Plans** – following agreement by the Board of the key strategic priorities for the NCU, the General Manager focused on ensuring staff and areas of the business were working toward achieving key targets and objectives. Regular updates and reports were provided to the Board, relevant partners, and funding stakeholders on progress.
- **Governance** – the Union established a new Governance Working Group, led by Michael Humphreys QC, in November 2019. The group was charged with reviewing the NCU work required as we work towards achieving the requirements within the Good Governance Guide for Sports Organisations. Progress continues to be made in key areas of the code with regular reports provided to the Board on this.
- **Staff Management** – the General Manager continued to line manage all Union staff ensuring achievement against targets and objectives were measured and reported appropriately. The General Manager was also responsible for effective performance review and support for development of staff. This involved high frequency of staff team meetings (both individual and collective) to ensure clarity in responsibility for delivery of projects during this period.
- **Directorate Support** – the General Manager also provided support to key NCU Directorates during the period including:
  - **Domestic Directorate**

- **Finance & Sponsorship Directorate**
- **Representative Directorate**

This involved attendance at all meetings, preparation of relevant reports and input into strategic discussions as required by the relevant Directorates.

## Financial Management and Control

This work area has continued to expand as the Union's activities expand and our financial transactions grow. An important function, in collaboration with the Honorary Treasurer, was to ensure the Union has robust financial systems in place. This work involved the following areas of responsibility during this period:

- **Xero Accounts Package** – the General Manager continued to lead on the co-ordination of the Union's Xero Online Accounts system, alongside the General Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. Regular reconciliations were completed daily, and reports generated for relevant programme leads, Finance Committee and Board to ensure the Union remains in a sound financial position.
- **Budgets** – planning for 2020 budgets began in November 2019 and the General Manager co-ordinated with Directorate and programme leads to prepare draft budgets for 2020, in line with the Union's strategic and operational priorities.
- **Reports** – work continued to ensure effective planning and preparation of relevant Finance Reports in conjunction with the Honorary Treasurer. This required preparing reports (both cashflow and projections) for the Board on performance against budget and other financial matters, as well as financial reports for key funding bodies.
- **Monitoring of funding Requirements** – given significant success this year in sourcing and securing a range of grants there was a large volume of work required in tracking and monitoring spend against key funding bodies including Cricket Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, Department for Communities and Local Councils.

## Income Generation and Commercial Activity

### Sponsorship

Work on sponsorship during this period involved communication with current and future sponsors as outlined below:

- **Current Sponsors** - In November 2019, the NCU met with all key sponsors to review the previous season to understand how the partnerships with each organisation could be evolved and grown. This work involved preparing tailored presentations for each sponsor to ensure they were aware of the work we undertook to enable efficient and effective activation and reach of each relevant brand. All key sponsors had positive feedback about the work we were doing. However, they also outlined how we could improve the profile of the activities and relevant brands as we prepared for the 2020 season.
- **Future opportunities** – work was also ongoing to outline a strategy for attracting and securing new sponsorship opportunities. This involved compiling presentations for some key areas of the business in preparation for approaches to some organisations. Unfortunately, due to impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the landscape was not positive to secure further sponsorships.

- **Commercial Committee** – a committee was established in December 2019 to look at key areas of commercial interest and income generation across the business. Plans were developed to work towards specific targets in this area. However, lockdown impact paused this element of work from March onwards.

## Grants

This period was extremely successful in sourcing and securing a range of grants to support the activities of the NCU, club and schools within the region. These grants included

- **Department for Communities Legacy Programme**  
This grant secured £42,500 for a project focused on the development of women and girls' cricket across the NCU region. Significant work required in overseeing the implementation and achievement of all aspects of the application process, delivering on the targets, as well as tracking budget and expenditure to ensure compliance with funding agreement.
- **Department for Communities Capital Programme**  
This grant secured £29,994 for a capital equipment purchase of a Dream Netting Cricket Net installation that will be utilised by Stormont when enhancements to the existing facility are complete.
- **Sport Northern Ireland Capital Grant Programme**  
This grant secured £100,000 for capital equipment to support the NCU player pathway and regional performance hub, as well as securing much needed ground maintenance support equipment to benefit clubs and facilities in the NCU region. Again, significant work was involved in securing the grant, as well as overseeing the purchase and delivery of all items to meet tender, procurement, and funder requirements.
- **Erasmus+ Grant Programme**  
This grant secured €50,000 for performance training camps for NCU U18 Boys and U18 Girls groups as well as CPD opportunities for lead and support coaches. An exciting project that has unfortunately been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Partnership Management

The General Manager role continues to lead on managing and developing key partnerships for the Union to collaborate with. Some of these partnerships required significant time and investment during this period including:

- **Ulster University**  
Following the appointment of Callum Atkinson to the newly created Club and Partnership Officer role this left a vacancy in the UU Cricket Development Officer position, which is part funded by Ulster University. Engagement and consultation with Ulster University resulted in a new approach to the continuation of the role as two part time roles. The Capital Grant project also enabled the NCU to secure improvements to the cricket facility at UUJ with the installation of a new 4-bay net system in Sports Hall 1, further expanding our regional hub training facilities.
- **Sport Northern Ireland**  
Investment from SNI was received through the Sporting Clubs programme, that funds several NCU staff roles. Continued reporting and collaboration with SNI was required to ensure we remained on target to meet the objectives of the grant, as well as ensuring

effective financial accounting to track spend against budget, and any revisions to the programme delivery that may be required.

## Cricket Ireland

A large volume of work was required to ensure the Union was appropriately represented on a range of groups covering various topics. This included contributions to the following Cricket Ireland groups during this pre-covid-19 period:

- Finance Committee
- Cricket Committee
- Match Allocation Group (MAG)
- Senior Management Team
- Women's Strategy Steering Group
- Interpro Working Group

## During COVID-19 Lockdown (Mar 20 – Jul 20)

In March 2020 none of us could have predicted what was to come next, particularly as we were preparing for the new 2020 cricket season. However, once clarification was received from Government of the lockdown being implemented and the suspension of all sporting activity we were stunned, but understood the need to protect the NHS, our communities and play our part in minimising the spread of the virus.

This was a period of uncertainty for all of us and a worry that we may not get any cricket played in 2020 at all. However, the Management Board and staff team quickly focused our attention on doing everything we could to support our clubs, schools and the wider cricket community to navigate the pandemic, in the hope that we would return to action later in the summer.

Responsibility during this time focused on various areas of the business including:

## Strategic Planning and General Management

The General Manager focused on continuing to provide clarity of the Union's Strategic direction in relation to strategy, operational plans and delivery against targets and objectives for all our programmes across the business. This work area included:

- **Staff Management** – in a period of uncertainty for all staff, and with the office closed, all staff were working from home. This required IT intervention to ensure that we had regular means of communication and we had systems in place to support staff through this period. This was certainly not an easy time for anyone but the General Manager is proud of the way the NCU staff responded to the challenges they faced and found innovative ways to support our players, coaches, schools and clubs during this time.
- **Directorate Support** – given the uncertainty, this was also a time that required a higher frequency of meetings for the Directorates, via zoom, as we tried to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for cricket and plan for any future return to activity. Support continued for key NCU Directorates during the period including:

- **Domestic Directorate**
  - Competitions planning
  - COVID-19 protocols
- **Finance & Sponsorship Directorate**
  - Financial impact assessments
  - Financial support opportunities
  - Cashflow and financial forecast modelling
- **Representative Directorate**
  - Programme planning
  - COVID-19 protocols

## **Income Generation and Commercial Activity**

### **Sponsorship**

During this period work was focused on discussing possible options with our current sponsors once clarity was received in relation to what potential competition structures and programmes could be implemented. This also looked at planning for activation and media coverage of branding across a range of platforms.

### **Grants & Financial support**

Given the uncertainty and the fast changing landscape much of this time focused on understanding what financial support packages might be available for the Union and our clubs. Assessments were made, and clear communication and support provided to clubs to assist them to access financial support, if they were eligible.

### **Partnership Management**

The General Manager continued to communicate regularly with key partners during the challenging COVID-19 lockdown period which included:

- **Ulster University**  
Discussions focused on understanding how restrictions were impacting the delivery of activity by the UU Cricket Development Officers. Ulster University was very supportive during this time and appreciated the regular communications given to ensure we all understood the steps in our approach to returning to cricket activity.
- **Sport Northern Ireland**  
The General Manager attended regular online meetings with SNI, along with other Governing Bodies, to ensure we all understood how the restrictions and regulations impacted sport. This assisted us in ensuring we developed robust protocols for returning to train and returning to play phases. These meetings also focused on discussion about possible support SNI could give to clubs and governing bodies given the significant impact the pandemic had on sporting activity.
- **Department for Communities**  
The General Manager also attended regular online meetings with representatives from DfC to contribute to discussions about the impact on sport and possible support interventions from the NI Executive.

## **Cricket Ireland**

It is fair to say the bulk of work during the lock down period with Cricket Ireland was focused on developing an all island approach to the return to train and return to play protocols. This took a huge amount of time by CI staff, Provincial Union General Managers, and others. The challenge facing us was understanding the jurisdictional differences between the restrictions being put in place by the two Governments, as well as different approaches by Sport Northern Ireland and Sport Ireland. However, we felt the hard work was worth it to ensure we had robust protocols approved for a return to training and return to play when restrictions allowed.

Some normal business still had to continue with Cricket Ireland committees during this time and the General Manager continued to contribute to the relevant committees as previously outlined in this report. In addition, regular meetings and communication occurred between General Managers from all Provincial Unions to ensure similar approaches were taken, where possible, for our return to activity.

## **NCU Staff, Volunteers & Clubs**

Many meetings and regular communication updates were required during this time with NCU staff, volunteers, and our clubs. We all wanted to ensure everyone was aware of the requirements placed upon all of us to get cricket playing again. Once protocols were agreed we held a range of zoom meetings with clubs to outline what would be required and the Development staff team provided ongoing support to clubs. All clubs can be proud of the work and effort they put in to ensuring the sport we all love had a chance of returning during the summer in some way. Thank you to everyone who played their part in ensuring that cricket in the NCU returned and we could all enjoy our sport again.

## **After COVID-19 Lockdown (Jul 20 – Sept 20)**

With the relatively short notice from the NI Executive approving a return to sport we had to ensure we were as ready as we could be to get activity going again. Excellent collaboration and planning by our Domestic Directorate, staff and club volunteers ensured that we were ready once the green light was given.

The period between July and September 2020 was one that was immensely satisfying. We managed, against all the odds, to put in place a great programme of competitions and development activity that we did not think would be possible back in April when the season was delayed. We did that by pulling together in a way that we never had before and worked towards the common goal of enabling people to play our great sport, even with modified programmes.

Much of this period was spent waiting for the weekly NI Executive announcements to understand what potential impact the changes in restrictions might have for our cricket communities. We hoped we would get to the end of our planned season without any further lockdowns occurring. The various announcements were digested, followed by a flurry of meetings and discussions before we then communicated clear messages with our clubs. Thank you to everyone who showed patience with us in what was an extremely frustrating time as you all just wanted to play cricket. Hopefully, everyone can look back on the positives that we can take away from what we all hope will be a season, the like of which we will never see again.

Sincere thanks to all of the NCU volunteers, staff and club representatives who all gave up so much time during the summer to plan and prepare for activity and then ensure it all happened in as safe a manner as we could provide. Thank you also to our many facility providers who gave their club facilities to us for our development, representative, and domestic competition programmes. An immense effort by everyone and you can all be extremely proud of what we have achieved in such challenging circumstances.

The NCU hopes everyone stays safe during the winter months and we all look forward to better times in 2021, with a hopeful return to “normality” for our 2021 season.

**Angela Platt**  
**General Manager**

## **GENERAL SECRETARY**

Bryan Milford, the Union's General Secretary, continues to carry out an extremely important administration function to support our clubs and schools and make life easier for our members. The General Secretary is the main communication channel between the Union and all members. Much of Bryan's work is often carried out behind the scenes where his hard work is focused on making a positive impact for other people. In a year as challenging as the past year has been, Bryan has contributed a huge amount to the running of the Union's activities, particularly the revised domestic competitions in a truncated season.

The following report outlines just some of the work that Bryan has carried out this year, and all within part-time hours.

### **Before COVID-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20)**

During this period, the planning of activities was well underway as it normally would be and there no idea of what was ahead of us. Bryan's work focused on preparing the Union for the coming season in 2020 and involved the following areas of business.

#### **Administration Support Function**

Bryan provided an important secretariat function to the Management Board, Directorates and Committees. This included the arrangement of all meetings of the Management Board, Directorates, and sub-committees, as well as collating and issuing all associated papers. During the winter months the frequency of meetings was very high, often having several meetings each week, to ensure planning and preparation for the new season ahead.

#### **Domestic Competitions**

Preparation for the new season got underway as soon as the AGM was complete in October 2019. This period required a significant workload for Bryan with the collation of information relating to all adult and youth Competitions, including:

- **Competitions Committee**  
Various meetings were arranged of the Competitions Committee for planning competitions and fixtures with Bryan keeping minutes of all meetings. A key function carried out was also to notify clubs of any updates to competitions and fixtures as required, as well as arranging the relevant fixtures meetings.
- **Competition Entries**  
Bryan co-ordinated communication with all clubs to seek and collate entries for all adult and youth competitions. Not a small task for the number of clubs and teams we have within the NCU region across our Domestic Competitions.
- **Registrations and Starrings**  
Bryan was responsible for the collation of all registrations and starrings prior to the new season which is an essential function of managing the competitions. These were sought during this period in preparation for the new season and distributed to relevant league and cup secretaries.

- **Fixtures**  
Premier League and Senior Leagues 1, 2 and 3 fixtures were compiled for a normal season (ensuring club requests, cup final and representative venues are considered) and distributed to clubs. Fixture meetings were also arranged for Junior Leagues and issued to clubs, as well as draws for various cup competitions.
- **Pre-Season Material**  
Bryan provided regular updates regarding all competition forms for the use of clubs e.g. Registration forms, Starring forms, Result forms, Umpire Report Forms, Ground Report Forms etc. These were all in place ready for distribution to clubs prior to start of season.

### **Finance Administration**

An important function for the General Secretary is supporting the financial operations of the Union. This is particularly important during the winter period as the volume of financial transactions increase with development programmes being expanded and various grants being secured, meaning payments were increased. During this time Bryan carried out the following financial duties:

- Prepared and issued all invoices as necessary using the Xero accounts package.
- Recorded all payments received and lodged with bank.
- Issued payments for invoices received.
- Maintained the payment journal records
- Liaised with the General Manager and Honorary Treasurer on day to day finances

### **During COVID-19 Lockdown (Mar 20 – Jul 20)**

As news came through in mid-March of the lock down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the planning and preparation for our new season that Bryan had in place was all put on hold. The uncertainty of the situation meant that we would not know if, and when, any cricket activity would occur but remained hopeful that we would be able to deliver some competitions for our clubs.

### **Administration Support Function**

During this time Bryan continued to provide the secretariat function to the Management Board, Directorates and Committees. All meetings were moved to use the online meeting platform, Zoom. The frequency of meetings remained high, often having several meetings each week, to discuss how regulations and restrictions were impacting the Union's activities and to discuss how we could support our clubs to navigate the challenges of the pandemic.

### **Domestic Competitions**

With the uncertainty of the situation various meetings were required to map out what options we would have to restructure our domestic competitions to ensure some delivery of activity when lock down was removed. Bryan's role in this was integral as the communication channel with clubs and ensuring that the competitions we devised were complying with the return to train and return to play protocols.

Once the go ahead was given for a return to competitions, albeit just in a 20 overs format, Bryan collated all of the fixture schedules for all competitions and ensured these were communicated to all involved in preparation for the season beginning in mid-July.

Bryan also had a role during this time supporting several clubs through their Return to Train and Return to Play protocol compliance processes. His focus clubs were Cregagh CC, CSNI CC, CIYMS CC, North Down CC, Holywood CC and Saintfield CC.

### **Finance Administration**

During this time Bryan continued to provide the finance administration support required by the Union. Although activities were on hold there were still requirements to manage payments and income due for operating costs etc.

### **After COVID-19 Lockdown (Jul 20 – Sept 20)**

#### **Administration Support Function**

As we moved into the period where lockdown restrictions were lifted and Cricket returned it became a hands on time for everyone within the Union. Again, Bryan continued to provide the secretariat function to the Management Board, Directorates and Committees, who were all required to continue to meet via zoom to navigate the regulations and what they would mean for Cricket.

#### **Domestic Competitions**

With the green light given for cricket to return to competitions, Bryan's main role was focused on ensuring the scheduling of our competitions and the management of all aspects of that. This included:

- **Fixtures**  
With the revised competition structure and shortened season Bryan was responsible for co-ordinating the new fixtures schedule for all domestic competitions in conjunction with the Competitions Committee and the Domestic Directorate.
- **Registrations and starrings**  
Throughout the season any additional registrations and starrings or amendments were monitored and communicated to the appropriate people. Maintenance of the master copies of registrations and starrings for each club was carried out and at end of season the total number of registered adult players for each club was collated and utilised for invoicing.
- **Cup Finals**  
It was pleasing to be able to hold some cup finals this season. Bryan co-ordinated the organisation and logistics for all Cup Finals including
  - Liaising with host club to discuss arrangements, with particular focus on COVID protocols compliance.
  - Advising competing clubs of arrangements.
  - Overseeing requirements for players and umpires.
  - Arranging for presentation of trophy and medals.
- **Disciplinary Reports**  
In conjunction with Chairman of Disciplinary Panel the General Secretary processes all Disciplinary Reports

- For Level 1 cases this includes forwarding details to the Chairman and offender, seeking responses, obtaining a decision from the Chairman and advising offender and club.
- Level 2 cases and above he establishes a Disciplinary Committee from the panel, forwards to it and offender details, arranges meeting, advises offender and club of outcome.
- **Appeals**  
In conjunction with the Chairman of the Appeals Panel, Bryan processes all appeals. He establishes an Appeals Committee from the panel, provides all relevant paperwork, arranges the meetings, and advises the individual/club of the outcome.

### **Finance Administration**

During this time financial administration became very busy with issuing of invoices to clubs and sponsors. Bryan carried out the following financial duties:

- Invoiced all clubs regarding affiliation fees, registration fees and umpire's fees.
- Regularly followed-up any late payments.
- Invoiced sponsors and advertisers.
- Prepared and issued any miscellaneous invoices, as necessary.
- Recorded all payments received and lodged with bank.
- Issued payments for invoices received.
- Maintained payment journal records and liaised with the General Manager and Honorary Treasurer on day to day finances

## SCHOOL AND CLUB ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

The School and Club Engagement Officer role was implemented in March 2019 thanks to financial investment from Sport NI and Cricket Ireland. The role is focused on making the NCU school cricket programmes sustainable by getting more boys and girls playing at primary and secondary school levels and linking this in with the local club game. Since his appointment Wayne Hughes has worked hard to develop school and club engagement programmes.

The past year has been a challenging environment with the COVID-19 pandemic impacting school programmes significantly. The following report is divided into sections outlining areas of responsibility, delivery of activity and achievements before Covid-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20), during Covid-19 lockdown (Apr 20 – Jul 20) and then after COVID-19 lockdown (Jul 20 – Oct 20).

The work program covered the following key areas outlined below.

### Before COVID-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20)

#### October-December 2019

This phase of programme delivery was focused on providing participation opportunities as well as the implementation of some new initiatives to a broader number of participants. The activities included:

- **Halloween Camp** – a two day camp was delivered during the school holiday period at Wallace High School. The camp was fully booked with 10 clubs represented. Day 1 focused on U9 and U11 boys and girls with 25 participants. Day 2 focused on U13 and 15 boys and girls, also with 25 participants.
- **Walking Cricket** – a new Pilot Programme was introduced at Lisburn Leisureplex in conjunction with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. This was an eight week indoor programme with 15 participants (male and female aged 55+) who had never played cricket before. The plan was to roll out the programme to three other council areas. However, unfortunately due to Covid19 this was not possible.
- **Disability Cricket** – a partnership was established with Disability Sport NI to discuss how cricket could become more inclusive for those with disabilities. Several meetings were held helping to lay the foundations for a disability cricket programme in schools that was planned to be delivered after Christmas.
- **School Engagement** – delivery of programmes in schools during this period included
  - Primary school coaching in Ben Madigan Prep (P4-7) with Ulster University Cricket Development Officers
  - Meetings with four new secondary schools to establish an U13 Girls Programme in the New Year (Jan 20). This involved Assumption GS, Glenlola Collegiate, Hunterhouse College, Our Lady & St. Patricks College Knock (OLSPCK)
  - Planning for January 2020 schools coaching and summer term coaching. The focus was to look at the need to create cricket playing opportunities all year round at different age groups.

- **Club Engagement** – It was also an important focus to ensure there was collaboration with schools to ensure strong school club links across the region. Wayne attended club meetings with Callum Atkinson to discuss any schools coaching and to support clubs to develop or improve their school-club links.
- **Coaching** – Wayne was also involved in delivery of the NCU regional Girls Coaching programme at U13 and U15 age groups.

## January-March 2020

This phase of activity and programme delivery saw a focus on implementing some new programmes that were planned during the pre-Christmas phase to help support the longer term development of cricket in across the region.

- **U13 Girls Programme** – several new schools were introduced to cricket during this period:
  - Our Lady & St. Pat’s College Knock (boys and girls)
  - Assumption Grammar School
  - Glenlola Collegiate
  - Hunterhouse College
  - Dromore High School were also introduced after Easter
- **Disability Primary Schools** – this new programme was supported by a grant from the Department for Communities and delivery involved the following schools:
  - Oakwood AC
  - Thornfield House
  - Beechlawn School
  - Ceara Special School

A worthwhile programme that we are keen to expand and develop further once COVID-19 restrictions ease.

- **Teacher Training** – opportunities were provided for training for teachers through the delivery of coaching courses, supported by grant funding from the Department for Communities:
  - Coaching kids 5-11 - 18 teachers, students and council staff attended
  - Level 1 coaching course - 10 teachers, students and council staff attended
- **Secondary School Consultations** - pre and post lockdown a key focus was on junior school cricket from years 8-10 where the development staff can have the most impact. Consultations were based on seeking feedback on:
  - SCEO role and what support the NCU can offer
  - Individual school’s views on junior school cricket
  - Development of girls’ cricket
  - School/club links
  - Facilities
  - NCU development work at primary school level
  - Events/blitzes

Feedback has been invaluable in helping to shape the future direction of development activities in both primary and secondary schools to grow the game.

### March-June 2020 (Covid19 Lockdown)

When the COVID-19 lockdown occurred, it was a challenging and uncertain time given that all planned school coaching and competition programmes were not able to be delivered. However, it gave the development team an opportunity to focus on other areas of engagement using online platforms. The activity delivered during this phase was:

- **School Consultations** – following the feedback from the school consultations a presentation was delivered by zoom to the NCU Domestic Directorate to outline the feedback and help to shape the future direction of schools' development, both in the short term and long term.
- **Google Classroom Engagement** - All primary and secondary schools were invited to join the NCU Google Classroom to provide further school support with cricket specific content for relevant age groups, coaches and teachers.
- **Social Media Engagement** – This was an important project to continue the positive communication with Primary and Secondary schools. We collaborated with schools to create cricket social media content for NCU and this was shared across various media platforms. Thanks to those schools involved particularly during a very challenging time for schools.
  - Primary Schools:
    - Ben Madigan Prep
    - Campbell JS
    - Fairview PS
    - Gilnahirk PS
    - Pond Park PS.
  - Secondary Schools:
    - Ballyclare HS
    - Campbell College
    - Methodist College
    - Wallace HS
- **Cricket Ireland Junior Programmes Group** – project groups were established by Cricket Ireland and engaged Development Officers from all Provincial Unions on a range of topics. The project Wayne was engaged with was discussing mass participation programmes aimed at age 5-8 (Smash IT) and Girls age 8-13 (Its Wicket). Plans are in place for these programmes to be implemented in the NCU when restrictions are eased.
- **Personal Development** – It was also an opportunity for Wayne to avail of some excellent content online through Sport NI webinars and linking in with other sports and development staff to collaborate further during such challenging times.

## June-September 2020 (After lockdown)

This phase focused on the preparation for the return to activity once the return to train and return to play protocols were agreed, as well as supporting cricket activity delivery within NCU programmes and clubs. Work during this time involved:

- **Club Support** – Wayne was tasked with being the main contact on behalf of the NCU with several clubs to support them to meet the requirements in the Return to Train and Return to Play Protocols. Clubs supported by Wayne through that phase were Carrickfergus CC; Templepatrick CC, Cooke Collegians CC, Dundrum CC, Bangor CC, Dunmurry CC, Muckamore CC and BISC CC.
- **Club Youth Support** – Once activity was allowed again, Wayne was able to support several clubs with their youth programmes through coaching delivery at youth practice and summer camps. This involved delivery of 22 coaching sessions to 8 clubs throughout the region. Clubs were Cregagh CC, Derriaghy CC, DonaghcloneyMill CC, Lisburn CC, Bangor CC, Armagh CC, North Down CC and Dundrum CC.
- **Council Partnerships** – Wayne was also able to support Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council with cricket delivery within their summer Camps at Lisburn Leisureplex and Loughmoss Leisure Centre.
- **NCU RDS** – with the busy representative programme Wayne was also available to provide support through a role as Covid-19 safety officer at some games, as well as coaching delivery with some regional development squads. This included:
  - NCU U13 & U15 Girls Coaching at Campbell College (3 week programme)
  - U15 Girls Matches vs North West U15s (at Glendermott) and
  - Leinster U13s (at Rush/cancelled)
  - U13s vs North West U13s (at North Down/cancelled)

## September – October 2020

Once the playing season was complete thoughts turned to planning for winter programmes, although this has been impacted by the latest phase of COVID-19 restrictions. Planning was underway for the following:

- **Schools Development KS1 (P2-4)** – this is a focused school programme created specifically for NCU Cricket Cubs. Unfortunately, due to Covid19 delivery of this has not been possible but is a programme that is ready to be implemented once restrictions are eased and delivery in schools is allowed again.
- **Schools Online survey** – this was created to see what is and what is not possible pre-Christmas, sent to 40 primary schools. Most responses indicated no external sport would be allowed in schools until post-Christmas. However, the positive outcome of the survey was that 5 schools are willing to do cricket after Halloween, outside in small class bubbles (providing restrictions and protocols allow).
- **Planning** – also spending this time planning for implementation of programmes for November and December phase and the January to Easter phase. A lot will depend on what restrictions are in place at those times.

## **CLUB AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

Callum Atkinson was appointed to the newly created role of Club and Workforce Development Officer in the Summer of 2019. The role is in place thanks to investment from Sport NI and Cricket Ireland. Callum's responsibility focuses on Club Development initiatives to strengthen our club structures as well as workforce development across all aspects of volunteer roles within cricket.

The past year has of course been a challenging environment for everyone, particularly with the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted so significantly our clubs and volunteers. The following report is divided into sections outlining areas of responsibility, delivery of activity and achievements before Covid-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20), during Covid-19 lockdown (Apr 20 – Jul 20) and then after COVID-19 lockdown (Jul 20 – Oct 20).

### **Before COVID-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20)**

#### **Club Life**

The format of the 2019-20 Club Life programme was amended from the previous year based on feedback and learning. The Club Life programme is now a programme with various focus topics spread throughout the year. The programme focuses on building capacity and improving the workforce in NCU region. The following events under Coach Education, Coach Development, and Club Development were delivered between October 2019 and March 2020:

- Safeguarding Children & Young People x 2
- First Aid in Sport x 2
- Club Connects (new membership)
- Adapting your offer (new membership / data collection)
- Social Media x 2
- Inclusion in Sport
- Grounds
- Batting against Spin
- Batting against Pace
- Fast Bowling x 2
- Spin Bowling
- Wicket Keeping

850+ formal and informal learning opportunities were created through this year's programme.

#### **Coach Education**

Coach Education is the third strand to the Club Life programme as well as Club Development and Coach Development. With a change in Cricket Ireland's coach education Level 1 courses, we delivered two Coaching Cricket (level 1), and Coaching Kids 5-11 Years Old to clubs and teachers, respectively. Cricket Ireland delivered a Level 2 in which we supported. Five Intro 2 Cricket courses were also delivered to 100+ aspiring teachers and coaches in Tertiary Education.

## **Sporting Clubs (Sport NI Funded Programme)**

### **Winter Club Delivery**

Through club meetings, we encouraged all clubs to continue delivery throughout the winter months. The Development Team supported this delivery.

### **Clubmark**

Clubmark has been one of the areas of Callum's work in the past year that has not been as successful as he would have hoped from taking on this role in September 2019. Waringstown are the only additional club to achieve full clubmark in 2020. However, CSNI and Bangor are projected to achieve clubmark by November 2020. Lisburn, Downpatrick, Carrick, Templepatrick, and Instonians have all been registered on the Sport NI system but have not made any progress since before the season. Derriaghy and North Down have already achieved full clubmark status.

### **Club Meetings**

Through information gathered by the Sport NI Club Survey and Callum's club visits during last winter, he reported on the current landscape of clubs to the NCU Domestic Directorate. Nineteen NCU clubs participated in this report.

### **Department for Communities Grant**

Thanks to the General Manager for obtaining a substantial financial grant from the Department for Communities, we were able to deliver more learning opportunities, involvement programmes, and create a valuable resource to provide for our club coaches. The programme delivery between October 2019 and March 2020 for this grant included:

- **Umpires & Scorers Course**  
We delivered an umpires and scorers course to 15 new females.
- **Leadership Development Course**  
8 females from clubs and NCU squads worked with Jo Hopkins and Eliza Downey on leadership skills. We hope the participants will now join the various administrative bodies within the Union, giving a much needed women's cricket perspective.
- **Coaching Cricket Level 1**  
7 females achieved their Coaching Cricket Level 1
- **All Nations Cricket**  
A key part of the DfC grant was to expand our community delivery. This grant allowed us to pilot a programme for ethnic minority communities in Belfast. From the pilot programme we are expanding to 4 council's areas within the NCU. The objective is to link with clubs to break down cultural barriers and grow participation within clubs.
- **Games & Skills for NCU Coaches**  
Through our partnership with Community Sport Network, we have produced a coaching resource called 'Games & Skills for NCU Coaches'. We plan to give this to all coaches that attend our coach development events.

- **Club Kit Bags**

All clubs that attended Club Life events received a £130 equipment bag for their Clubs.

## **March-June 2020 (Covid19 Lockdown)**

### **Google Classroom**

During the challenging times of lockdown, with thanks to Charlotte Lyons, the team provided an online learning platform for our clubs and talent squads through Google Classroom. We provided 300 participants, 14 groups, and 15 coaches the opportunity to continue their development during a time of inactivity. This was important work to ensure we continued to engage with our cricket community in preparation for a return to activity.

### **Cricket Ireland Programme Development Groups**

During lockdown Callum also contributed to two Cricket Ireland groups. His main contribution was providing an online coaching session to women & girls beginner cricketers.

- **CricHIIT**
- **Club Connects**

### **Return to Cricket**

The whole Development team worked with all clubs to support them back to cricket safely. This was a success due to the hard work of volunteers within clubs. Every NCU club, apart from two, returned to training and playing during the truncated season.

One of the highlights for Callum of the protocols process was the opportunity to work directly with clubs and build relationships with individuals who he had not had contact from in his 4.5 years with the NCU.

Callum's focus clubs that he supported during this time were Instonians CC, Cliftonville Academy CC, Woodvale CC, Armagh CC, Downpatrick CC, Donaghadee CC, Drumanness Superkings CC, Ballymena CC and Ards CC.

## **June-September 2020 (After lockdown)**

### **Sporting Clubs**

- **Summer Club Delivery**

In a challenging summer due to COVID-19, we delivered 40 sessions to 800 boys and girls over 80 hours of coach contact time.

- **Holiday Camps**

Wayne Hughes led on holiday camp delivery. We provided more cricket opportunities to club cricketers from U9 to U15 at Wallace High School. Unfortunately, our plans to deliver Easter and Summer camps were cut short due to COVID-19.

### **2020-21 Programme Planning**

Since the end of the season in mid-September, Callum's time has been dedicated to reviewing and planning programmes for 2020-21 to continue expanding and providing more learning

opportunities to clubs, players, coaches, and communities. This planning includes putting preparation in place for the following programmes

- Cricket Development Camps
- Indoor Cricket Leagues
- Ethnic Minorities Programme
- Club Life Programme
- Coach Education Course Delivery
- Club Meetings
- Clubmark
- Grant Applications

### **Other Areas of Work**

Since lockdown restrictions were eased, Callum was also involved in a range of other areas of work during the period July to September which included:

- NCU U15 Lead Coach
- Pre/post-season Club Consultations
- Support for the Domestic Directorate
- Research into a new NCU Registration System
- Reporting to Sport NI about progress with Sporting Clubs targets and objectives
- Ulster University Relationship Manager

## **CRICKET DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS (UU)**

The Cricket Development Officer (UU) role has been in place for several years. It was made possible through partnership funding from Ulster University through their sports match funding programme. The role was previously fulfilled by Callum Atkinson. However, this year, following Callum's appointment to the new Club & Workforce Officer role, we had an opportunity to review the UU CDO role. Following that review of the role with Ulster University, it was agreed we would implement two part time roles rather than one full time role. Both part time roles would have separate focus areas.

James Cameron Dow and Mike Grossett were appointed to the roles. The following information outlines the work that both roles carried out in the respective key focus areas:

### **Participation**

- 15 student members represented by a UU student committee (Nowman Khan – Chairman and Charlotte Lyons – Wellbeing Officer).
- Open training sessions were delivered twice a week from October through to March.
- UU Women's Academy sessions were held for the selected group of 16 players once a week from October through to March.
- Indoor Team training sessions were held once a week from October through to March. These sessions also served as an ethnic minorities cricket hub encouraging typically underrepresented groups within the University to represent the UU Cricket Club.
- UU Community Hub for clubs ran for 8 weeks from October to December 2019 and a further 3 weeks in September 2020. This programme engaged 25 U17 players from four NCU clubs within the UU catchment area (Carrickfergus CC, Cliftonville Academy CC, Muckamore CC and Templepatrick CC).
- Six coaching sessions were delivered in both Greenisland Primary School and Ben Madigan Prep School engaging 100 pupils from schools within the UU catchment area (October-February).

### **Performance**

- Students were recruited to the Ulster University cricket club through the Talented Athlete Entry Scheme.
- Funding was secured for students through the Performance Sport Scholarship Programme (£4,000 in 2019 rising to £5,000 in 2020).
- The UU Indoor Team won the local NCU Senior Indoor Cricket League.
- The UU Men's Team reached the Semi-Finals of the Irish Universities Indoor Competition at UUJ competing with 15 other Universities from across Ireland.
- For the first time UU also entered a mixed team into the Competition with three female players representing the University.
- A UU Team was entered in the Irish Universities Outdoor Competition but unfortunately this did not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 16 coaching sessions were delivered to the Ulster University Girls Academy on Campus and around the NCU region during the 2020 season, once cricket activity was allowed again.

### **Indoor League Programmes**

- A Senior Indoor League ran for 8 weeks through October and November 2019 with 8 NCU clubs and around 60 players of all ages and abilities participating. The League also ran for 5 weeks through February and March 2020 before being postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- Two Junior Indoor Leagues have been planned for Autumn 2020.
  - A Boys U13 League running for 8 weeks with 8 NCU Clubs engaged
  - A Girls U15's League running for 6 weeks with 6 NCU Clubs engaged.

Unfortunately, these have now been postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions. Hoping for both leagues to run for 4 weeks in November and December subject to restrictions being lifted and Indoor Covid-19 Protocols being published by Cricket Ireland.

### **Other NCU Programmes**

- Assisted on other NCU Programmes such as Walking Cricket, Intro to Cricket and Summer Camps.
- Involved with different aspects of Coach Development such as Coach Mentoring, Disability in Sport Inclusion Workshop and a Cricket Ireland Level One Coaching course conducted at Wallace High School.
- Head Coach of the NCU Development Programme engaging 40 U9 players from clubs across the region with 8 sessions at Campbell College (October/November) and 8 sessions at UUJ (February/March).

The lack of delivery opportunities for both part time roles during the initial COVID-19 lockdown from March to July meant that both roles were unable to deliver cricket activity at that time.

## **CRICKET OPERATIONS MANAGER**

The Cricket Operations Manager role is supported by investment from Cricket Ireland. Uel Graham has evolved the role further since joining the Union May 2018. He has had a significant impact on the organisation and development of many elements of our cricket operations, some of which are outlined below.

Generally, the Operations Report is divided into two distinct areas, namely off-season (Oct - Mar) and playing season (Apr - Sept). The report has been divided into three distinct timelines due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Prior to Covid-19 lockdown: October 2019 to March 2020
2. Covid-19 Lockdown: April 2020 to July 2020
3. Post-lockdown: July 2020 to September 2020

There are key areas across each phase as follows:

1. Representative Cricket Support
2. Domestic Cricket Support
3. NCU Golf day
4. DfC Grant
5. Erasmus Plus Project
6. MCCF Hub
7. Miscellaneous

### **Prior to Covid-19 Lockdown**

#### **Representative Cricket**

Development camps were planned and facilitated from September to December in collaboration with coaches, clubs, and facilities. In total over 200 boys and girls (aged 9-17) from over 35 clubs and schools attended sessions involving over 30 coaches. This delivery involved over 90 hours of coaching across 3 different venues. This coincided with the revamped Andrew White Academy programme and several workshops under the DfC grant funding allocation.

In January to March 2020, NCU Youth Performance and Development squads were selected at 9 different age grades (boys and girls). A 10-week programme of delivery was devised and implemented with a view to selecting squads for the 2020 summer programme. An expansive and varied match programme for Summer 2020 was compiled including:

- Boys U14 Tour to West Cricket Festival
- Senior Women's Tour to Jersey
- Boys U16 Belfast Festival
- Boys U11 Tour to Cardiff
- Number of games arranged with NWCU and CL
- In total over 60 matches were planned for NCU squads for the Summer 2020 programme

## **Domestic Cricket**

Key focus areas were:

### **Domestic League structures**

A working group was established with numerous workshops held to consult with clubs and key stakeholders to compile options for a series of alternatives to the existing Men's Senior league structures

### **Grounds Association**

A practical workshop was delivered in conjunction with Philip McCormick to over 20 representatives from 12 clubs on end of season work. A WhatsApp group was also created to enable all clubs and grounds people to share knowledge and expertise regarding grounds work. Currently 25 participants with nearly 300 posts/interactions to date.

### **Umpires**

In collaboration with NIACUS, plans were put in place to hold a Level 1 Umpiring Course in early 2020, supported by investment from the Department for Communities grant.

### **Scorers**

In collaboration with NIACUS, plans were put in place to hold a Level 1 Umpiring Course in early 2020, supported by investment from the Department for Communities grant.

### **NCU Golf Day**

Uel was involved in the new 'NCU Commercial Group' headed by David Allister. He engaged with the committee through numerous meetings on fundraising and sponsorship including planning for a Golf day for 8 April 2020 in conjunction with venue, RBGC and new sponsor Virgin Media.

Prior to lockdown, the NCU had secured 13 four balls and 10-hole sponsors, with estimated net income of c£6k projected from this venture.

### **Department for Communities Grant**

Uel worked closely working with the General Manager and wider NCU staff team to devise a programme and budget for delivery and implementation of this grant.

Uel's key areas of responsibility included:

- Planning and implementation of 5 workshops for clubs, coaches & players.
- Planning and implementation of a Coaches Trip to Surrey CCC. 12 coaches across elite and grassroots cricket were able to avail of the opportunity to learn from the Surrey set up.
- Liaising and co-ordinating delivery of equipment for coaching such as bowling machines, mats, enhancements to facilities at UUJ. This also involved equipment to support clubs in ground maintenance such as scarifying and protection against weather etc.
- All aspects of this programme completed in a timely manner, recorded for internal and external reporting and auditing and within budget.

### **Erasmus Plus Grant**

Uel also supported the General Manager in early meetings with Mechelle Law from Invest in Sport Limited to discuss the potential opportunity for applying to the Erasmus+ programme on behalf of the NCU. The proposed application was for training and learning opportunities (training camps) for

U18 Boys and U18 Girls representative squads and coaches. To support the application Uel compiled a detailed 10-day programme for two representative groups aimed at a visit to La Manga club as part of the application process. He liaised with La Manga Club and Cricket Spain, garnering their support and assisted the General Manager with final plan submission within tight timescales.

### **MCC Foundation Hub**

Uel facilitated internal discussions over the potential set up of the first MCCF Hub outside mainland GB.

He identified a potential site (Campbell College) and had initial discussions with NCU Directors, Campbell College and MCCF prior to lockdown.

### **Miscellaneous**

He provided ongoing support to the General Manager and NCU staff across a range of topics.

## **During COVID-19 Lockdown**

### **Representative Cricket**

In such a challenging environment Uel ensured he provided swift, efficient, and effective communication via email and zoom with all impacted parties including coaches, parents, players, and facilities. This ensured that everyone was aware of the unfolding situation which was particularly important as protocols were being finalised.

He liaised closely with all associates in relation to tours and match programmes including the travel agent and accommodation venues. As a direct result, the NCU did not incur any financial loss due to cancellations of flights, transport, and accommodation for any of our originally planned tours. He maintained strong communication with all key people throughout lockdown, pencilling draft calendar dates should the situation change and permit cricket to be played and travel to occur.

He also collaborated with the wider NCU staff team in setting up and managing Google Classrooms across all regional age grades to help support player development and engagement during lockdown, ensuring that all safeguarding and GDPR aspects were met.

### **Domestic Cricket**

#### **Domestic League structures**

He continued to support and input to proposals as they were developed and tabled.

#### **Grounds Association**

Unfortunately, the Practical workshop was cancelled for March at Holywood CC where Philip McCormick had planned to demonstrate and articulate pre-season grounds work. Uel continued to oversee the WhatsApp group enabling all clubs and grounds people to maintain contact during lockdown.

#### **Umpires**

In collaboration with NIACUS, a Level 1 (Introduction to Cricket Umpiring) was delivered via zoom over a four-week period with 18 participants who all received accreditation for attending all sessions.

#### **Scorers**

In collaboration with NIACUS, Stella Downes from Clontarf CC, delivered a three-week programme via zoom to 20 participants who all received accreditation for attending all sessions.

### **NCU Golf Day**

It was agreed to postpone the Golf day planned for early April and Uel was responsible for communicating this to all impacted stakeholders, sponsors, participants, venue and to defer to a date in October and to continue to review this over the summer months.

### **Department for Communities Grant**

With the impact of lockdown and closure of the NCU office at Stormont, it was imperative to make contact with suppliers to arrange either deferral of delivery or have some equipment delivered to other venues as an interim measure, including delivery of water hogs, groundsheets, mobile batting cages, coconut matting.

Umpiring and Scorers workshops were facilitated via Zoom.

### **Erasmus Plus Grant**

No activity due to lockdown.

### **MCCF Hub**

No activity due to lockdown.

### **Miscellaneous**

Uel Provided ongoing support to General Manager and NCU staff across a range of topics.

### **Cricket Ireland projects**

Uel was nominated as the NCU representative on the project group focusing on Coach education and development with specific task to review current courses and their delivery for entry point coaches. This required weekly zoom meetings through April and May and some associated work between meetings. In consultation with local NCU Coach educators and NWCU rep, we devised and designed a short '3 hour' introduction to cricket coaching course specifically for teachers and coaches of other sports who have had no exposure to cricket. This content was shared with Cricket Ireland Participation Director at the end of the project.

## **After COVID-19 lockdown**

### **Representative Cricket**

Uel was appointed NCU COVID Safety Officer and as such had accountability to oversee firstly 'Return to Training Protocols' and then 'Return to Play Protocols' for representative cricket.

He devised and implemented a Risk Assessment for Campbell College and a 3 week 'return to training' programme in conjunction with Lead coaches, with over 90 hours delivered to over 150 boys and girls, involving 25 coaches.

He devised and implemented a match programme of 39 matches within a four-week window in consultation with other PUs, venues, players, parents, coaches and NIACUS, ensuring official umpires and scorers for each game and that all programmes were delivered well within budgetary limits.

He ensured there was Covid Safety Officer cover for all matches and training sessions.

He supported Jersey women on their short tour to NCU.

MTB Northern Knights: Uel liaised with Cricket Ireland in relation to the revised T20 and IP50 Competitions including facilities, transport, accommodation, and catering. He also ensured all COVID related protocols were always adhered to.

## **Domestic Cricket**

### **Clubs**

Uel was designated as the NCU point of contact for 7 NCU clubs in relation to communicating and supporting 'Return to Train' and 'Return to Play' protocols. All his allocated clubs met all Cricket Ireland protocols within the defined timescales. He also acted as NCU Covid Safety Office at Finals and Semi-finals days for the flagship senior domestic leagues and cups.

### **Grounds Association**

He continued to support clubs who were host venues for both domestic and representative matches and supported some clubs in their end of season work.

### **NCU Golf Day**

It was agreed to further postpone the revised October date for the Golf Day, and Uel is now liaising with the venue, NCU Commercial Group and headline sponsor to look at alternative dates in 2021.

### **Department for Communities Grant**

Uel was involved in closing off this grant as follows:

- Relocating all equipment that was delivered to various venues during lockdown to the intended venues.
- Liaising with suppliers of all 'non-delivered' items and have those delivered to intended venue.
- Dispersal of ground support equipment to grounds to ensure their availability to maximise chances of play in inclement weather.
- Collection of all equipment and its return to base ahead of the winter.

All aspects of this programme were completed in a timely manner, recorded for internal and external reporting and auditing within budget.

### **Erasmus Plus Grant**

Confirmation was received from Erasmus that the NCU application has been successful. Early liaising and planning across the NCU team to plan for that programme when travel and COVID restrictions allow. Communication with La Manga and Feherty Travel has also been ongoing to devise an outline plan for how this project may be implemented.

### **MCC Foundation Hub**

Further meetings were held via zoom with the MCCF Hub Central Manager. Communication also via email, telephone, and face to face with Campbell College. Agreement in principle reached with all stakeholders with more defined plans to be agreed and devised as to how this project may be implemented.

### **Miscellaneous**

Provided ongoing support to General Manager and NCU staff across a range of topics.

## **KNIGHTS AND PATHWAY LEAD COACH**

As outlined last years' Annual Report, in January 2019 the NCU Board took the decision to support the expansion of the MTB Northern Knights Head Coach role to enable a full time coaching role, incorporating the player pathway, to be implemented for the NCU. Simon Johnston began the expanded role in February 2019. The Knights Head coach element of the role is funded by Cricket Ireland with the pathway lead coach element of the role being funded by the NCU.

This role was designed to have the following key areas of responsibility:

- Act as Head Coach for the Senior Men's MTB Northern Knights Squad
- Manage and act as lead coach for the "Andrew White Academy" and the NCU Women's Cricket Academy.
- Manage and act as lead coach for the "Emerging Knights" development programme.
- Establish, implement, monitor, and review individual development plans for relevant talent pathway players including skill, wellbeing, S & C and player welfare.
- Assist with the strategic development of the NCU RDS programme for both Boys and Girls.
- Support the development of coaches working within the NCU RDS programme and talent pathway squads

### **Before COVID-19 (Oct 19 – Mar 20)**

This phase of programme delivery was focused on providing coaching sessions through the winter months for our Senior and pathway programmes. The delivery of sessions and programmes for each category within the work programme included:

#### **MTB Northern Knights**

Throughout the winter individual and group sessions were arranged to work on developing specific aspects of player specific needs. We were able to use Monday nights at Jordanstown for some 1:1 work and small group pod sessions. These sessions focused on specific skills. For example, one week we focused on batters, the following week bowlers etc. These specific skill coaching sessions were in addition to the regular Sunday group coaching sessions. Sunday coaching group sessions for the full Knights squad also occurred every Sunday between October and March.

#### **Cricket Ireland Contracted Player Coaching Sessions**

In addition to the wider work with the Knights players, work with CI Full-time Contracted Players based in the NCU has become 3 times a week both in the summer and winter. These usually occurred on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week. These coaching sessions, at times, also included several senior knights as well, depending on the specific skill we were focusing on.

#### **Emerging Knights**

The Emerging players were once again able to train on Monday nights at Jordanstown throughout the winter and on Sundays with the senior squads. This collaboration and continuity with the Senior Knights group also helped the emerging players develop further. The NCU is keen to support

this programme further next year and add an Under 19s programme to our male pathway. Hopefully, this will help us facilitate several things such as the players who have bad birthdays at 17, the drop off rate, lack of young players breaking into first XIs etc.

### **AW Academy**

This programme has evolved massively this year with a change to a specific focus on individual skill sets. Taking learnings from Simon's level 4 coach education programme he introduced specialisation of skills earlier in the year. This took the form of skill specific coaches being brought in for 1 hour slots on a Friday evening. Simon collaborated with the Cricket Ireland youth coaches and ensured that the players in the AW Academy were getting a joined up approach throughout their programmes.

We also, for the first time, gave individual feedback to players and coaches through individual WhatsApp groups that Simon set up and maintained.

### **UU Girls Academy**

This has continued to grow from strength to strength and this year, after several weeks, Simon was able to hand over the running of this to James Cameron Dow, the NCU Women's Senior Squad head coach. Hopefully in time his job can mirror Simon's up and down the player pathway. Coaching sessions ran on Tuesday nights and the girls at various stages had 3 to 4 coaches assisting and supporting their development.

### **UU Talented Athletes**

Running every Tuesday and Thursday during the winter months it was brilliant to see a couple of our students achieve notable honours this year with Cara Murray receiving a Cricket Ireland retainer contract and Conor Olphert getting his first List A cap. It is credit to their work ethic that they have achieved this success. Through word of mouth, social media, and other advertisement, we believe that with Simon and James Cameron Dow now leading the coaching, UUJ is becoming a very attractive place for our local cricketers to want to go to University. With the added equipment and upgraded facilities this will only get better.

### **Coach Education**

Simon was also able to assist Callum Atkinson set up some exciting coach development opportunities through the winter months utilising contacts he had gained through his Level 4 coaching programme. These opportunities included:

- Stephen Croft coming over for the day to do fielding masterclass.
- Matt Spriegel delivering sessions on batting v spin
- Greg Smith delivery sessions on batting v pace and power hitting

### **During COVID-19 Lockdown**

#### **Coaching Delivery**

When restrictions were introduced, and cricket activity was not allowed, there was no opportunity to do any coaching with players. This was the case until return to train protocols were introduced in early July, meaning a return to 1:1 outdoor coaching with Senior Contracted players prior to the England series.

### **Coach Education**

When Covid-19 restrictions impacted and Simon was not on the furlough scheme, he was also able to assist in setting up the google classroom with others and kept a number of the age groups up to date, as well as working hard to set up a comprehensive coaches resource through dropbox and google classroom .

As well as this, utilising contacts, Simon was able to organise a number of exciting Zoom calls with Aaron Finch (Australian ODI captain) for our senior batters and regional coaches and Tom Curran (England world cup winner) with our senior bowlers and regional coaches. Darren Thomas also did a zoom for all club coaches on seam bowling. All excellent opportunities for our players and coaches to benefit from.

### **After COVID-19 Lockdown**

In July 2020 Simon returned to cricket activity and this was to be a busy period given the truncated playing season for representative programmes. The priority during this time was preparing the MTB Northern Knights for their IP20 and IP50 series matches.

### **MTB Northern Knights**

In the summer months individual and squad sessions were delivered weekly in preparation for relevant fixtures. Again, these were a combination of specific skill sessions and squad group sessions using grass wicket practice where we could.

### **Cricket Ireland Contracted Player Coaching Sessions**

In addition to the wider work with the Knights players, work with CI Full-time Contracted Players based in the NCU continued during the summer months to be 3 times a week. These occurred on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each week (when weather allowed). These coaching sessions, at times, also included several senior knights as well, depending on the specific skill we were focusing on.

The organising and timings of these, especially in summer, became a real challenge due to Covid-19 restrictions and because of facilities and the use of net bowlers. At various stages throughout the summer we had 12-16 Knights players attending these sessions.

### **Inter Squad Matches x4**

These opportunities were a bonus this year with Cricket Ireland asking the NCU to host and arrange these matches when the Men's senior team was in England. We used many players ranging from U15 to seniors and we felt these worked well. Culminating in the two North v South games. These took over from our emerging playing programme and provided excellent playing opportunities and competitive fixtures for our pathway players.

### **Pathway Programme Support**

With the representative schedule being truncated in a short period of time, Simon was also able to attend and provide support during some of our pathway games against other Provincial Unions. It was important for him to see our talent players in competitive opportunities and support the lead and assistant coaches where he could.

#### **UKCC Level 4**

Simon has been engaged in the Cricket Level 4 Coach Development Programme. This coach development programme includes the Master Coach Award (UKCC LEVEL 4). The programme of learning incorporates a Post Graduate Diploma in Personal and Professional Development, a range of Continuous Personal and Professional Development programmes and targeted individual support.

Simon completed the final year of his monthly trips to Loughborough for his UKCC Level 4. The final stage in that process required completion of a large body of work with a portfolio on his coaching journey over past 3 years. The deadline for submission of the portfolio was the end of October 2020.

Overall, this was a challenging period given the restrictions that COVID-19 brought but it was still pleasing to see so much activity and coaching opportunities were still able to be provided for our representative pathway during the year.

## **DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

Four disciplinary reports were submitted by umpires during the season.

Level 1 offences proven	3
Level 2 offences proven	1

Penalties awarded:

Suspension for four matches	1 (two of the four matches were suspended)
Reprimand and warning as to future conduct	3

Clubs:

Premier League	1
Senior League 1	3

Sixteen disciplinary reports were received in the 2019 season.

## **APPEALS COMMITTEE**

The Appeals Committee considered one appeal from a club.

The appeal was not upheld.

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

The Annual Dinner was cancelled due to the COVID -19 pandemic.

## **SPONSORS**

The Union wishes to record its sincere thanks to all its sponsors and encourages all members to support them.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 some of our competitions did not take place, resulting in a reduced number of competitions available for sponsorship.

The following Companies and Bodies sponsored the Union during the reduced 2020 season:

Cleaver Black

Gallagher Insurance

Lagan Valley Steels

McCartan, Turkington & Breen

Robinson Services

Women's Challenge Cup

Men's Twenty20 Cup, Trophy and Shield

Northern Knights and Emerging Knights

Men's Premier and Senior Leagues

We hope that the 2021 season returns to full competitions and our many previous sponsors can continue their support of the Union's activities.

## **THANKS**

The Union also wishes to record its thanks to the Schools and Clubs who made their facilities available during the 2020 season for cup finals and representative matches, particularly during the added challenge of complying with the COVID-19 regulations and protocols. The Union recognises that it could not carry out its cricketing programme without the generosity and support of our Schools and Clubs.

## OBITUARIES

### **Gordon Bell**

Gordon Bell died on 12 January 2020.

He played his schoolboy cricket at Methodist College before joining Cregagh CC and eventually Collegians CC for whom he opened the batting for many years. He was at the forefront of the club's move to Deramore.

He played for the club into his 50s and acted as a mentor to many generations of younger players.

Gordon served as Hon Secretary of Collegians CC and was President of the club in 1984.

He served for a time on the NCU Executive Committee and chaired its Grounds Committee.

### **Tom Flintoft**

The former Hampshire and Durham groundsman and ECB Inspector of Pitches, who created the new playing surface at Chester-le-Street and was once described by Dickie Bird as 'the best groundsman in England', died in June at the age of 86.

After his retirement from the County scene he became a good friend to Ulster cricket, initially running groundsmanship courses in 2004 and 2005 for the Northern Ireland Cricket Association, in preparation for Ireland's hosting of the ICC Trophy Tournament. Thereafter, he assisted the NCU greatly by making annual visits to local club and school grounds and passing on his wealth of practical knowledge about ground preparation to a generation of local groundsmen.

### **Harold McCrory**

Harold McCrory died on 15 August 2020.

He joined Laurelvale CC in the 1950s and went on to become a major driving force in the club over many years. Under his chairmanship the club extended its ground to become what is now a first-class facility as well as enhancing the pavilion and acquiring a bar.

Harold was a regular 1<sup>st</sup> XI player but when his senior cricket days were over, he went on to captain the club's 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> XIs insisting on the highest standards of sportsmanship from his young charges. While umpiring a cup semi-final with his side needing less than ten runs to win, he adjudged two of his players out LBW with Laurelvale going on to lose the match!

He served for several years on the Union's Executive Committee including two years as Chairman (1998-99).

Harold was elected an Honorary Life Member of the NCU in 2000.

## **Basil McNamee**

Former NCU and Cricket Ireland President Basil McNamee died aged 81.

His playing career spanned five decades, at inter-provincial cricket level for Ulster Town and he also won a cap with Ulster Rugby as a back-row forward.

Brought up in the cricket-mad village of Donemana, he played as a 15-year-old in the 1954 North West Senior Cup final while still studying at Foyle College when he also played for Ulster Schools and Irish Schools as an opening batsman.

He moved onto Queen's University where he studied medicine and after an early posting in Whiteabbey Hospital he became a cardiologist in the Royal Victoria Hospital, before transferring permanently to the South Tyrone Hospital in Dungannon in 1971.

It was on a cricket tour to Cornwall with his fellow students that he met his future wife, Carol, who was picked up by Basil while she was hitchhiking.

While studying in Belfast, he played cricket, at the old Ormeau ground for North of Ireland, captaining them to a Challenge Cup success in 1969, the year he topped the season's batting averages in the NCU.

Basil played for and against most of the big names in the North West and NCU but it was when he moved to Dungannon that he enjoyed his greatest success on the field.

He played 308 matches for the Tyrone side, scoring almost 6,500 runs, and taking 399 wickets with his medium pace bowling. He was the club's leading all-rounder for 11 seasons. His most memorable day, however, was when, at the age of 50, he played in the same team as his three sons and Victoria were dismissed for 26.

His long-service was honoured with the presidency of the NCU and then the same high office in Cricket Ireland where, uniquely, he attended two World Cup tournaments, the 2010 Twenty20 event in West Indies and the following year the ICC World Cup in India, which included Ireland's famous victory against England in Bangalore.

Basil, who was also a chairman of the Board of Governors at Royal School, Dungannon, is survived by his three sons, Peter, Andrew and Michael, a BBC Northern Ireland presenter.

## **Jonathan Walsh**

Jonathan Walsh died following a five- year battle with a severe neurological condition.

He was a former Instonians all-rounder who was part of the side that reached the 1998 NCU Senior Cup final, scoring half centuries in both the semi-final and decider.

He was also an integral member of the side which won the inaugural ClubTurf Ulster Cup final in 1999, beating Donemana at Shane Park.

Jonathan captained Instonians 2003 – 2005.

A more than useful off-spinner he represented Ulster Town on six occasions in 1994 and 1995, capturing nine wickets at just 16 apiece.

He played a prominent part at all levels at Instonians after retirement, including helping organising their title winning celebrations dinner.