

# **NORTHERN CRICKET UNION OF IRELAND**



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **2021 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

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## 2020-21 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<br>Rosemary Bryans<br>Andrew Cowden<br>Stephen Dyer<br>Michael Humphreys<br>Richard Johnson<br>Ken Nixon<br>Allan Rutherford<br>Alan Waite<br>Brian Walsh |

### ATTENDANCES

|                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Sam Beckett       | 7                         |
| Peter McMorran    | 7                         |
| Kailash Chada     | 7                         |
| Alan Waite        | 7                         |
| Allan Rutherford  | 6                         |
| Richard Johnson   | 7                         |
| Rosemary Bryans   | 5                         |
| Ken Nixon         | 7                         |
| Michael Humphreys | 4                         |
| Stephen Dyer      | 4                         |
| Brian Walsh       | 7                         |
| Andrew Cowden     | 3 (Joined Board mid-year) |

#### In Attendance:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Roger Bell    | 5 |
| Angela Platt  | 7 |
| Murray Power  | 7 |
| Bryan Milford | 7 |

## OFFICIALS AND COMMITTEES

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>President</b>                             | Roger Bell  |   |
| <b>Vice President</b>                        | Brian Walsh   |   |
| <b>Company Secretary</b>                     | Murray Power  |   |
| <b>Child Welfare Officer</b>                 | Owen Lambert  |   |
| <b>Public Relations Officer</b>              | Oliver Thorpe (April to June)<br>Johnny Morton (July to September)  |   |
| <b>General Manager</b>                       | Angela Platt (up to 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2021)  |   |
| <b>General Secretary</b>                     | Bryan Milford   |   |
| <b>Domestic Cricket Directorate</b>          | Alan Waite<br>Colin McClean<br>Ross Ellerby<br>Jack Quinn<br>Amy Benson<br>Staci Maxwell                            | Roger Bell<br>Andrew Cowden<br>Andrew Rose<br>David Skelton<br>Amy Caulfield                                    |
| <b>Representative Cricket Directorate</b>    | Alan Rutherford<br>Stephen Hanna<br>Alison Cowan<br>Beth Healy  | Stephen Dyer<br>Brian Walsh<br>Charlotte Lyons  |
| <b>Finance &amp; Sponsorship Directorate</b> | Kailash Chada<br>Richard Johnson  | Mark Fitzpatrick<br>Peter McMorran  |
| <b>Competitions Committee</b>                | Roger Bell<br>Michael McDowell<br>Ryan McMaster<br>Kyle Weir<br>Adrian Campbell<br>Dave Williams<br>Richard Johnson | Jack Quinn<br>Wylie McKinty<br>David Skelton<br>Gordon Scott<br>Colin McCaughey<br>Tony Lemon<br>Derek McKinley |
| <b>Disciplinary Panel</b>                    | Colin Webster<br>Alan McMillan<br>Peter Shepherd<br>Bobby Fleetham  | Ian Dickie<br>Alan Johnston<br>Gordon Scott   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Appeals Panel</b>  | Neale Matthews<br>Carson McCullough<br>Andrew Babington<br>Jack Quinn                                      | Julie Knight<br>Graeme Pollock<br>Harry McFadden |
| <b>Nominees to Cricket Ireland Board</b>  | Sam Beckett  | Peter McMorran                                   |
| <b>Nominees to Cricket Ireland Cricket Committee</b>                                    | Alan Waite   |  |
| <b>Cricket Operations Manager</b>   | Uel Graham (up to 31 <sup>st</sup> May 2021)   |  |
| <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 (up to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021)<br>Mike Grossett (up to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021) |  |
| <b>Inter Provincial / MTB Northern Knights<br/>Head Coach<br/>Manager<br/>Selectors</b> | Simon Johnston<br>Andrew Rose<br>Ryan Eagleson<br>James Kennedy<br>Brian Walsh                             | Simon Johnston<br>Alan Rutherford                |
| <b>Honorary Life Members</b>  | IJ Anderson<br>JRW Boyce OBE<br>JC Hiles<br>P Lunney<br>C Walker MBE                                       |  |

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Whilst we hoped and planned for a season in 2021 resembling those which preceded the onset of the pandemic, the effects of coronavirus carried on and continued to impact our activities.

We were unable to run our full indoor off-season regional development programme with only elite sport eventually able to use facilities under tight protocols.

Uncertainty surrounding government announcements for lifting restrictions meant that we only had a few weeks to organise our league and cup cricket. Nonetheless volunteers and staff put plans in place for several different scenarios and regular communication with clubs ensured that everyone was ready to go when government regulations permitted. In the event, whilst the start of the season was delayed by a couple of weeks and, initially, we could only play 20 over games we still managed to complete a full season of both league and cup cricket. There wasn't the edge of relegation in Senior cricket but there was much to play for and there was a real feeling that good competition had returned. Congratulations to all league and cup winners. With so many games and numerous notable achievements it is invidious to pick out one. However, I must mention John Glass scoring 36 off the final over to win the LVS T20 Trophy – an unprecedented feat which attracted worldwide publicity.

Yet again cricket activity was carried out against a background of strict protocols regarding Covid safety and NCU staff worked quickly as protocols were introduced to ensure clubs were conversant with their requirements. Clubs, and NCU staff and coaches are to be commended for their unstinting efforts to ensure the safety of players and spectators such that we had surprisingly few cricket related cases of coronavirus transmission.

A seemingly unintended consequence of Brexit was that the legality of the importation from England of Surrey loam was cast into doubt. Only considerable efforts by our staff and the Domestic Cricket Directorate working with DAERA officials convinced suppliers that they could continue to supply the loam.

In a restructured and more competitive Interprovincial season the MTB Northern Knights had a frustrating and inconsistent campaign. In the IP50 the team inflicted the only defeat suffered by the winners, Leinster Lightning, had two games rained off and lost the other three matches played. We finished second in the IP20 competition where the weather again played a part in the overall result. The Emerging Knights competed in the first Interprovincial tournament. This provided Head coach Simon Johnston with the vehicle to give aspiring senior Knights players the opportunity to play at a testing level which bridges the gap between club and full interprovincial standard. The eight-match series proved most beneficial. At Youth level the NCU Under-15 squad must be congratulated for winning the Interprovincial series.

The introduction of a series of matches between the NCU women and their North West counterparts was a welcome development – yet another step in the steady progression of the women's game in a relatively short time.

Stormont welcomed the first women's international series to be played in the NCU with the visit of Scotland during the last week in May. The competitive series, which was won by Ireland, was live-streamed, and received considerable viewing figures helping to raise further the profile of the

women's game. This, however, was as nothing as compared with the publicity attracted by the performance of Amy Hunter who, on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, became the youngest player in the world, male or female, to score an ODI century. In making 121 not out in the away series with Zimbabwe she also recorded the highest ODI score by an Irishwoman.

Stormont was kept busy this year as Ireland men played two T20 matches against South Africa and three 50 over games against Zimbabwe in the World Cricket Super League.

The Union acknowledges with thanks the support we receive from all those clubs who make their grounds available to host cup finals, representative matches, and practice sessions – an essential ingredient in the recipe for the smooth running of our expanding fixture list.

In difficult economic conditions we were delighted with the continuing support we received from our commercial partners which helps to defray the cost of running cricket in the NCU. As well as working with local press and Cricket Europe to ensure widespread coverage for NCU cricket we strove to increase our own social media output with some quantifiable success. This was undoubtedly helped when the stories of John Glass's six sixes, Amy Hunter's record-breaking century and CSNI player Aoife Fisher's dog, Dazzle, fielding the ball in CSNI's All-Ireland semi-final against Bready went viral!

We have published our Strategy for 2021-23 which aligns with that of Cricket Ireland for the same period and aims to support and strengthen our clubs and schools and to grow the game of cricket in the NCU over the next three years at which point we want to be well placed to meet the challenges and opportunities anticipated in the next cycle.

Alas this year we had to bid adieu to Mike Grossett and James Cameron-Dow when the funding contribution ceased (a casualty of Covid), Uel Graham retired, and Angela Platt moved on to become Director of Women's Football at the IFA. We thank each of them for their contribution to the work of the Union and wish them well.

I also thank Allan Rutherford, Chairman of the Representative Directorate and Stephen Dyer as club representative on the Representative Directorate who are standing down from the Board, but, no doubt, will maintain their involvement with the Union.

We reflect on another year made difficult by circumstances outwith our control and should take pride in the way clubs and umpires, volunteers and staff have pulled together to provide an enjoyable and memorable cricket season.

Let us look forward with a clear strategy in place and the collective will of our member clubs to a successful and above all enjoyable year ahead.

**Sam Beckett**  
**Chairman**

## GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Angela Platt has been General Manager since April 2017. 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. The past year has continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and management of the Union's response to restrictions imposed by the NI Executive remained a high priority during the year.

### 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** – during the past year significant work was undertaken to develop the Union's new Strategic Plan 2021-2023 which has now been finalised. The operational plans to underpin the Strategy have been finalised and adopted by the NCU Board. During the development of the plan the General Manager focused on ensuring staff were continuing to work toward achieving key targets and objectives. Regular updates and reports were provided to the Board, relevant partners, and funding stakeholders on progress.
- **Governance** – the Governance Working Group, led by Michael Humphreys, continued its work in reviewing the NCU governance and operations as we progress our 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, as well as regular reviews and updates undertaken with Sport Northern Ireland.
- **Staff Management** – the General Manager continued to line manage all Union staff ensuring achievement against targets and objectives were measured and reported appropriately. Unfortunately, during the year, we lost several members of staff for various reasons. In March Mike Grossett and James Cameron Dow left the Union due to funding for their roles ending. In May, Uel Graham, retired from his role as Cricket Operations Manager. However, despite the loss of personnel, the rest of the staff team and volunteers ensured that work from those roles continued to be delivered. 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 continued to provide support to key NCU Directorates during the period including:
  - **Domestic Directorate**
    - Competition planning
    - Covid-19 protocols – overseeing the requirements for compliance of regulations
    - Club consultation meetings and ongoing engagement
  - **Finance & Sponsorship Directorate**
    - Continued oversight of all budgets relating to all areas of the business
  - **Representative Directorate**

- Representative programme planning
- Cricket operations following the departure of Uel Graham
- Liaison with Cricket Ireland on all representative matters relating to Interpros and regional training hubs

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

## Financial Management and Control

As the Union's activities and programmes continue to expand and grow the area of financial management and controls has also expanded. A very important function, the General Manager continued to oversee this area of work in collaboration with the Honorary Treasurer and General Secretary. 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 for all transactions were completed daily, and reports generated for relevant programme leads, Finance Directorate and Board to ensure the Union remains in a sound financial position. This also supported finance forecasting during the challenging environment the pandemic presented with the loss of some income streams.
- **Budgets** – planning for 2021 budgets began in November 2020 and the General Manager co-ordinated with Directorate and programme leads to prepare draft budgets for 2021, in line with the Union's strategic and operational priorities. This exercise also coincided with the development of the Union's Strategic Plan and Operational Plans to ensure longer term financial planning for beyond the current financial year. Forecasting of budgets relating to activity within the Strategic Plan has now been completed up to 2023.
- **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 Finance Directorate and Management Board on performance against budget and other financial matters, as well as financial reports for key funding bodies.
- **Monitoring of funding Requirements** – due to impacts of the pandemic grant opportunities were not as readily accessible as previous years. However, various programmes involved oversight of funding requirements. This included the SNI Sustainability funding to support our clubs to access much need support during the year. The NCU submission on behalf of NCU clubs was overseen by the General Manager and it was pleasing to see clubs receive much needed financial support during what has been a difficult time. There continued to be 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 2020, the NCU met with 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 2021 season. It was pleasing to see a return to normal cricket activities in the 2021 season and the continued support of our sponsors too. During the 2021 season new activation activity was undertaken to ensure greater visibility of sponsor brands as well as NCU activity. Thanks to Oliver Thorpe and Johnny Morton for their work in that area as both positively impacted on the improved profile of NCU activity during the summer months.
- **Future opportunities** – the pandemic reduced our opportunities to engage in new partnerships with potential sponsors. However, this continues to be a priority area of work for the NCU.

### Grants

The period wasn't as successful as previous year with grant opportunities, largely due to the pandemic impacts.

- **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 was unfortunately delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we have been able to secure an extension to the grant delivery period that will see us utilise this grant opportunity for young boys and girls in our talent programmes in April 2022.

### Partnership Management

The General Manager role continues to lead on overseeing, maintaining 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**  
Unfortunately funding from Ulster University Sportsmatch programme ceased in March 2021, which ended the two development officer roles we had in place. However, we have continued to engage with UU in redefining our partnership with the installation of a new 4-bay net in Sports hall 1 at UU, funding secured for that by the NCU. This will give further opportunity to expand our winter talent and performance programming.
- **Sport Northern Ireland**

Investment from SNI was again 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. Further engagement occurred with SNI along with other sporting bodies, to help navigate the various changes to covid-19 regulations for sport.

- **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**

A large volume of work continued to be 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 period:

- Senior Management Team
- Match Allocation Group (MAG)
- Cricket Ireland Strategy Steering Group
- Women's Strategy Steering Group
- Interpro Working Group
- Participation Development Groups
- Covid-19 response Group
- Cricket Operations Match Planning Group (Summer 2021)

A significant element of the General Manager's work during the year continued to be focused on our approach to the return to train and return to play protocols. For the 2021 season we were in a great position having already developed robust protocols and procedures for the previous season. However, refreshing the protocols and agreeing an aligned approach to scheduling of return to activity took some time to complete by CI staff, Provincial Union General Managers, and others. The challenge again facing us in 2021 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, again 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. It was pleasing to see a return to cricket earlier than anticipated to allow a nearly normal season to be completed.

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

One of the successes we had from the 2020 process in dealing with the pandemic was the open and regular dialogue between NCU staff, volunteers and clubs. We continued to utilise online zoom meetings to facilitate ease of meetings during lock down periods as well as when activity resumed. Ongoing meetings and regular communication updates were required during this time. We all wanted to ensure everyone was aware of the requirements placed upon all of us to get cricket playing

again in 2021 and to ensure everyone understood their role in ensuring we returned to activity as safely as possible. All clubs can be proud of the work and effort they put in to ensuring the sport we all love returned to near normal activity levels during the 2021 season. Thank you to everyone who played their part in ensuring that cricket in the NCU returned and we could all enjoy our sport again.

Sincere thanks to all the NCU volunteers, staff and club representatives who all gave up so much time during the year 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 during the summer months. An immense effort by everyone and you can all be extremely proud of what cricket has again 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 return to “normality” for the 2022 season.

As I finish off my final report as NCU General Manager before moving on to a new role with the Irish FA, I thank everyone in the cricket family for making me feel so welcome during my time working in the NCU. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the role, and I will enjoy watching the progress that I know will continue to happen in cricket in the region. The dedicated volunteers and staff leading the way in the sport will ensure cricket is in safe hands. I extend my best wishes to everyone for the future and I look forward to coming back to the many grounds around the region next summer to enjoy the great game that cricket is.

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

## **DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

Ten disciplinary reports were submitted by umpires during the season.

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Level 1 offences proven | 9 |
| Level 2 offences proven | 1 |

Penalties awarded:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Suspension for two matches                 | 1 |
| Reprimand and warning as to future conduct | 9 |

Clubs:

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Premier League  | 3 |
| Senior League 1 | 4 |
| Senior League 3 | 2 |
| Junior League 1 | 1 |

Four disciplinary reports were received in the 2020 season.

## **APPEALS COMMITTEE**

The Appeals Committee considered two appeals from clubs.

Neither appeal was upheld.

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

The Annual Dinner was cancelled due to the COVID -19 pandemic. However, a smaller scale trophy presentation event was held on 6<sup>th</sup> October in Malone Golf Club. Trophies were awarded to league and cup winners as well as individual award winners. It is hoped the Annual Dinner will return in its normal format in October 2022.

## **SPONSORS**

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

The following Companies and Bodies sponsored the Union during the 2021 season:

Cleaver Black

Gallagher Insurance

Men's and Women's Challenge Cups

GMcG

Men's Junior Cup

Lagan Valley Steels

Men's Twenty20 Cup, Trophy and Shield

McCartan, Turkington & Breen

Northern Knights and Emerging Knights

Robinson Services

Men's Premier and Senior Leagues

Gribben & Watt

Boys Quoile Cup and U11 Development Cup

Norman Shannon

Boys Youth Competition Medals

## **THANKS**

The Union also wishes to record its thanks to the Schools and Clubs who made their facilities available during the 2021 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**

### **DAVID EDWARDS**

David Edwards died on 3 April 2021 following a road traffic accident.

David had been a stalwart of Derriaghly as a player, coach and captain of junior sides for many years.

He served on several NCU Directorates at one time as well as a period on the Management Board.

### **JOHN LAW**

John Law was very much a North of Ireland CC stalwart having a distinguished career as a player, captain, administrator and loyal supporter. He was always a welcoming face at Ormeau with his gentle and warm personality making you feel right at ease.

John joined the North club in an era dominated by some of its greatest cricketers Stuart Pollock, EDR Shearer, Sonny Hool et al.

John played for the senior team for some 25 years (Captain 1<sup>st</sup> XI in 1962-1963) and then for the 2nd XI in the mid 70's. He was part of the sides that won the Senior League 6 times during the 50's-60's and 1971 and the Challenge Cup in 1960 and 1969.

He was also a talented rugby player being part of the Collegians XV that won the Ulster Senior League and Cup in 1952 and the League in 1956. He was capped by Ulster in 1955.

John was a regular at NCU AGM's and often spoke with his common sense philosophy. His love of and dedication to cricket didn't go unnoticed by the NCU as he served in various administrative roles including the office of President. He was also an Honorary Life Member.

### **ROBERT MATIER**

Robert (Bobby) Matier died on 30 March 2021. He came from a Woodvale cricketing family but played his adult cricket for Queen's University from 1954 to 1958, captaining the side in his final year, before joining Instonians, for whom he scored over 2,000 runs (3 hundreds and 10 fifties), including a vital 73 in their Challenge Cup final victory in 1964.

His teaching career then took him to Lurgan, where he captained the local club to victory in the 1972 final.

He was selected three times for Ireland in 1963 against West Indies (twice) and Leicestershire as a top-order batsman.

He was a regular interprovincial selection, playing in 20 matches between 1956 and 1971, and served as Chairman of the NCU Senior Committee in 1975, standing down when a headmaster appointment took him to Limavady.