



# **CONNACHT**

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## **CRICKET UNION**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **2024 – 2029**

*Connacht Cricket Union Strategic Plan Working Group*

*Ms. T. Schäfer; Mr. R. Dalwini; Mr. G. O'Neill; Mr. J.F. Smith*

*June 2024*

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# SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND ON C.C.U.



The Connacht Cricket Union (C.C.U.) is one of the five provincial governing bodies overseeing cricket in Ireland, alongside Cricket Leinster, Munster Cricket Union, Northern Cricket Union, and North West Cricket Union, collectively forming Cricket Ireland (formerly the Irish Cricket Union). Founded on October 29, 2010, at Durkin's Bar & Restaurant in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, the C.C.U. serves as the primary authority for cricket in the traditional Irish province of Connacht. It revitalized itself in March 2021 with a new Constitution and Governance structure and was formally recognized as an Associate Member of Cricket Ireland. The Union became a limited company on June 26, 2023. Despite its recent formal establishment, cricket has a long history in Connacht, with the first formal cricket club in Ireland founded in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, in 1825.

As of 2024, the Connacht Cricket Union has nine registered clubs, with six actively participating in the Leagues and Cups. The Union oversees the Connacht Senior League, now in its fourteenth season and played for "The Ranji Trophy – Ireland", as well as the Connacht Senior Cup, the Connaught Perpetual Trophy (dating back to 1855), a Junior League, and a T/20 Shield League. In 2012, Union teams participated in Cricket Ireland's National Cup for the first time, marking a significant milestone in the resurgence of cricket in Connacht. Additionally, many clubs are focusing on expanding into underage cricket, with plans to launch an underage league within the next two years.



Roscommon Town CC Ground search continues



Shamrock CC Men's Team



Kilconnell CC Men's Team



County Galway CC Women's Team



Galway Parade, March 2023



County Galway CC Men's Team



Ballina CC Men's Team



Uni of Galway CC Men's Team



Ballyhaunis CC Men's Team

# SECTION TWO: INTRODUCTION

## 2.1. Presidents Address

Initially, a huge amount of gratitude must be given to Tanja, aided by her sub- committee, to develop and roll out the first Strategic Plan for the Connacht Cricket Union. The importance of the implementation of the plan for our emerging Union cannot be underestimated, as the opportunity to fully develop cricket in the West of Ireland can assist the appeal of our fantastic team sport. The increase in the number of clubs participating in the league and competitions in the West, shows that Cricket is gathering pace as a game for all. Youth Cricket, Women's Cricket and the Adult Men's Teams are enjoying the skills and determination shown by all those participating and in the background. The Chairman of the Union, Jeff Smith, has expressed his determination that the Board of the Connacht Cricket Union will do all in their power to achieve the goals set out in the Connacht Cricket Union Strategic Plan. I will give my full support to these efforts.



Yours in Cricket,

*Ronan F. Mahon*

**President of the Connacht Cricket Union**

## 2.2. Chairperson's Address

This is our Union's first meaningful Strategic Plan, which, in itself, is a notable milestone in our brief history. Hopefully, it will result in the significant growth of our Union, and the continued improvement of the service it provides to our Clubs. It is based on the detailed feedback from extensive research undertaken with our Clubs, their players, the Board of our Union and many with a close interest in the development of Cricket throughout Connacht. The research, which was painstakingly carried out, has enabled the Union to set out its aims, together with its objectives over the next five years. The Plan's success will, largely, depend on the support of the Union's Clubs. In its preparation, the level of enthusiasm for the game throughout the Province was immediately obvious, while the potential for growth is enormous. Capitalising on this potential will only be achieved with the support, and commitment of our Clubs, who must now prepare their own Strategic Plans, to compliment the Union's efforts. Our future is in their hands! However, from the work to date, this future is very bright.



I would especially like to express the Board's gratitude to the Working Party for its preparation of this Plan. In particular, I wish to thank our External Directors, Ms. Tanja Schafer, and Gerry O'Neill, whose experience and expertise has been invaluable. They, together with our Chairperson of our Participation & Development Committee, Rakesh Dalwini, have shown enormous commitment and dedication. Their work will play an invaluable part in the development of our fledgling Union.

*Jeff Smith*

**Chairperson of the Connacht Cricket Union**



## 2.3. Developing the Union for the Future

The Connacht Cricket Union (C.C.U.) Board is dedicated to fostering the growth and development of cricket in Connacht. As a relatively new organization, we are focused on creating opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds to participate in and enjoy the sport.

Through grassroots initiatives and community outreach programs, we aim to engage aspiring cricketers and provide them with the support and resources they need to succeed. Additionally, we are committed to building strong partnerships with local clubs, schools, and organizations to expand the reach of cricket and ensure its long-term sustainability.

By embracing a collaborative and inclusive approach, we hope to lay the groundwork for a bright future for cricket in Connacht.

### *C.C.U. Board*

*President: R.F. Mahon; Chairperson: J.F. Smith; Hon. Secretary: S. Mishra; Hon Treasurer/Company Secretary: A. Babu; Competitions Committee Chairperson: Ms. T. Schäfer; Participation & Pathways Secretary: R. Dalwini; Grounds Committee Chairperson & Child Protection Officer: R.F. Mahon; Board Members: J. O'Dea; P.T. Shelly; A. Shafique; External Directors: J.F. Martin; G. O'Neill, Ms. T. Schäfer.*

## 2.3. Stakeholder Consultation Process

The CCU conducted a consultation process to gather insights from its board members, affiliated club committees, and club members. Board Members and Club Committees were provided with a survey to be submitted via email to the Chairperson of the Board, while club members were invited to complete an anonymous online survey.

The surveys were conducted between September 2023 and February 2024 to capture the perspectives of CCU-affiliated clubs and their members. The primary objective was to understand members' views on the future of cricket in Connacht.

The information gathered from these surveys was instrumental in developing this document.



Roscommon Town C.C



Cricket

## SECTION THREE: THE NOW, HOW & WHERE TO

### 3.1. Current Club Participation and Future Expansion

As of 2024, the C.C.U. comprises of nine (9) clubs, with six (6) actively participating in league competitions. The remaining clubs are affiliated with the Union and are anticipated to begin competing in the 2025 season.

The Union currently organizes the following competitions each season:

- Knockout Cup
- Senior League
- Junior League
- T/20 League

#### *Future Expansion*

The C.C.U. aims to expand its offerings to include under-age and women's league structures, integrating these into the existing competition framework. Achieving this expansion will necessitate the establishment of improved support structures and the development of additional cricket-friendly facilities throughout Connacht. These efforts are crucial to accommodating a more diverse and inclusive range of participants and ensuring the sustainable growth of cricket in the region.

### 3.2. Our VISION

#### *“Growing our Connacht Community, Developing our Game”*

The vision statement "*Growing our Connacht Community, Developing our Game*" outlines the Connacht Cricket Union's commitment to both expanding its community base and enhancing the quality and reach of the sport itself within in the West of Ireland.

- **Growing our Connacht Community:** This part of the vision emphasizes the association's dedication to increasing participation and involvement in cricket across the Connacht region. It seeks to expand the cricketing community by attracting new members, fostering inclusivity, and building strong connections with potentially new and existing stakeholders.
- **Developing our Game:** This highlights the association's focus on improving the standards and infrastructure of cricket within Connacht. It encompasses initiatives aimed at enhancing player skills, coaching programs, facilities, and organizational structures. The goal is to elevate the overall quality and competitiveness of cricket in the region.

In summary, this vision statement underscores Connacht Cricket Union's dual objectives of expanding its community base while simultaneously advancing the sport itself. By prioritizing both growth and development, the Union aims to create a vibrant and sustainable cricketing ecosystem that benefits individuals, clubs, and communities across Connacht.

### 3.3. Our MISSION

***“To enrich Connacht Cricket’s Brand by cultivating community growth and elevating sporting standards”***

This mission statement reflects the Connacht Cricket Union's dedication to enriching the region's cricketing landscape. Through fostering community growth, the mission seeks to expand participation, promote inclusivity, and strengthen bonds within the Connacht cricket community. Simultaneously, by elevating sporting standards, the mission aims to enhance player development, coaching quality, facilities, and overall competitiveness. Through these concerted efforts, the Connacht Cricket Union endeavours to create a thriving and dynamic cricketing environment that enriches the lives of all involved.

### 3.4. Our VALUES

The Connacht Cricket Union is focussed on instilling these five (5) core values within our cricketing community;

<b>Enjoyment</b>	Cricket is not just a sport but also a source of joy and fulfilment. By promoting this as a core value, the C.C.U. encourages players, officials and supporters to find pleasure in every aspect of the game. Prioritizing enjoyment will foster a positive and vibrant cricketing culture within the province.
<b>Accountability</b>	This value instils a sense of responsibility and ownership among all members of the Connacht Cricket Union. When individuals hold themselves and each other accountable for their actions, it nurtures trust, integrity, and reliability within the Union. This commitment to accountability ensures that decisions are made thoughtfully, actions are carried out diligently, and everyone upholds the values and standards of the C.C.U.
<b>Sportsmanship</b>	This lies at the heart and spirit of cricket, embodying fairness, respect and integrity both on and off the field. By embracing sportsmanship as a core value, the C.C.U. promotes healthy competition, gracious conduct, and mutual respect among players, officials and supporters. This fosters a culture of inclusivity, camaraderie, and goodwill, enhancing the overall cricketing experience for everyone involved.
<b>Teamwork</b>	Cricket is a team sport that thrives on collaboration, cooperation, and unity. Emphasizing teamwork as a core value encourages the Board, Club Committees and all its members to work together towards common goals, support one another through challenges, and celebrate shared successes. By fostering a strong sense of teamwork, the Connacht Cricket Union cultivates a culture of camaraderie, unity, and mutual support, both on and off the field.
<b>Professionalism</b>	Professionalism encompasses a commitment to excellence, integrity, and continuous improvement in all aspects of cricket. By upholding professionalism as a core value, the Connacht Cricket Union sets high standards for performance, conduct, and organizational efficiency. This instils confidence, trust, and credibility among stakeholders, ensuring that the Union operates with professionalism and integrity at all times.

# SECTION FOUR: THE PLAN

## 4.1. Our OBJECTIVES

The Connacht Cricket Union aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Develop and maintain a strong relationships with Cricket Ireland and other Cricket Unions on the island of Ireland.
- 2) Provision of a reliable governance framework and enhance communication channels for efficient cricket administration in Connacht.
- 3) Develop an inclusive participation model for senior and underage cricket in Connacht, ensuring accessibility and diversity.
- 4) Implement structures and offer support to facilitate the development of cricket-friendly grounds and facilities throughout the province.
- 5) Deliver coaching and officials' education programmes for cricket at all levels within the province, promoting skill development and professionalism.
- 6) Formulate a sustainable financial model to support Connacht Cricket Union's activities and initiatives.

To achieve our objectives, the Connacht Cricket Union has identified four pillars that form the foundation of this Strategic Plan. These are explained under these four headings;

- Governance
- Participation
- Sustainability
- Development

As a young Union, with a small member base, we are committed to achieve and uphold the highest of standards of governance, ensuring transparency, accountability and ethical conduct in all our endeavours. Our dedication to fostering active participation drives us to create inclusive opportunities for individuals of all ages and backgrounds to engage with the sport, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie within our cricketing community. With a steadfast commitment to sustainability, we strive to preserve and protect the environment while also ensuring the long-term viability and growth of cricket in Connacht. Through our focus on development, we aim to develop talent, enhance infrastructure, and promote innovation, motivating our players, coaches, officials, and clubs to develop their potential and aim to achieve higher standards in every aspect of the game.

Together, these four pillars form the cornerstone of our mission to enrich our community and elevate the Connacht cricketing experience for all.

### Pillar 1: Governance

Good governance serves as the cornerstone to any organizations' framework. The Connacht Cricket Union is guided by the principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity, we are dedicated to fostering a culture of effective governance within the Union that upholds high standards of ethical conduct and decision-making.

Our governance objectives are designed to ensure that the interests of our members, stakeholders, and the broader cricketing community are represented and safeguarded with diligence and care. By adhering to robust governance practices, we strive to build trust, promote stability, and drive excellence in all aspects of our operations.

We have identified the following strategies to help drive us forward;



## ***Policies and Procedures:***

- Review and update existing policies and procedures to ensure alignment with Sport Ireland, Cricket Ireland, and best practices.
- Develop new policies as needed to address governance, ethics, and conduct within the Connacht Cricket Union.
- Implement a process for regular review and revision of policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

## ***Structure:***

- Clarify roles and responsibilities within the Connacht Cricket Union's governance structure, including the board of directors and any sub-committees.
- Develop clear reporting lines and communication channels to facilitate transparency and accountability.
- Establish term limits and succession plans for Connacht Cricket Union Board Members to ensure inclusivity, continuity and effective leadership.
- Enhance the representation of women on the board by implementing targeted recruitment strategies and support programs.
- Explore the feasibility and necessity of hiring part-time or full-time staff to bolster the development of cricket and aid in the administrative tasks of overseeing the sport within Connacht.

## ***Communication:***

- Implement a comprehensive communication strategy to keep stakeholders informed about Connacht Cricket Union activities, decisions, and opportunities.
- Identify and utilize the best channels to communication updates and important news to reach clubs, its members and the wider cricketing community.
- Encourage open communication and feedback mechanisms to foster engagement and participation.

## **Pillar 2: Participation**

### ***Increasing Club Member Numbers:***

- Develop targeted recruitment campaigns to attract new members from diverse backgrounds and age groups.
- Partner with schools, community organizations, and local clubs to promote cricket and recruit new participants.

### ***Promoting and Creating Opportunities to Play:***

- Organize regular cricket events, tournaments, and leagues to provide opportunities for members to play and compete.
- Establish partnerships with local councils and potential facility providers to explore and secure access to cricket friendly grounds and facilities.
- Offer coaching clinics, skill development sessions, and social cricket programs to cater to different skill levels and interests.

## **Pillar 3: Sustainability**

### ***Revenue:***

- Diversify revenue streams through membership fees, sponsorships, fundraising events, and merchandise sales.
- Develop a strategic plan for revenue generation with clear targets and action plans for each source of income.
- Monitor financial performance regularly and adjust revenue strategies as needed to ensure financial sustainability.

### ***Sponsorship:***

- Identify potential sponsors and develop tailored sponsorship packages to meet their marketing objectives.
- Build relationships with local businesses, corporations, and community organizations to secure sponsorships and partnerships.
- Provide sponsors with opportunities for brand exposure, recognition, and engagement through Union events and activities.

### ***Grants:***

- Research, identify and apply for grants that will be beneficial to Cricket using available government, Cricket Ireland, local sports partnership grant opportunities to support cricket development initiatives in Connacht.
- Develop grant proposals that align with funding priorities and demonstrate the impact of proposed projects on cricket development and community engagement within Connacht.
- Implement effective grant compliance procedures and controls to ensure adherence to award conditions and maximize the value of each grant.

### ***Facility Development:***

- Identify priority areas for facility development based on community needs, participation levels, and growth projections.
- Investigate, in conjunction with Cricket Ireland, opportunities for clubs to secure funding and resources for the purchase of land with the view to develop cricket facilities, and to support upgrades and renovations to existing club owned facilities.
- Identify suitable facility options and collaborate with local councils, other sports facility providers, and potential stakeholders to plan and implement cricket facility development initiatives.
- Ensure that new and existing cricket facility development projects are designed to meet the specific needs of players, coaches, officials, and spectators.
- Facilitate the creation of inclusive and accessible facilities that cater to the needs of diverse cricketing communities and populations.

## **Pillar 4: Development**

### ***Club Administration Education:***

- Provide ongoing training and education opportunities for club committee members in specific roles to improve their skills and knowledge in running a successful sports club.
- Partner with Cricket Ireland, Sport Ireland and other sporting bodies to offer accredited club administration courses to promote good administration practices within the Union Clubs.
- Establish a mentorship program for new clubs to support their growth and promote good governance practices.

### ***Coach and Officials Education:***

- Provide ongoing training and development opportunities for coaches, umpires, and other officials to improve their skills and knowledge.
- Increase the number of women coaches, umpires and officials through targeted promotional campaigns.
- Partner with Cricket Ireland, Sport Ireland other sporting bodies to offer accredited coaching and officiating development courses.
- Establish a mentorship program to support the professional development of coaches and officials at all levels.

### ***Player Development:***

- Implement talent identification programs and player pathways to identify and develop promising cricketers from grassroots to elite levels.
- Provide access to high-quality coaching, training facilities, and competition opportunities for talented players.
- Establish partnerships with professional clubs, academies, and national teams to facilitate player development pathways and opportunities for advancement.

This strategic plan provides a comprehensive framework for the development and growth of a provincial cricket association, addressing governance, participation, sustainability, and development across various facets of the organization. Regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation will be essential to ensure the successful implementation of the plan over time.

# SECTION FIVE: APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

C.C.U. SWOT Analysis Results 2024:

<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well-structured Board with clear roles &amp; responsibilities and adherence to the Sport Ireland Governance Code.</li><li>• Robust governance measures and clarity in organizational structure.</li><li>• Experienced and knowledgeable board members with diverse skills.</li><li>• Several supportive and active clubs within the Union.</li><li>• Regular engagement and networking with other cricket bodies and sports authorities.</li><li>• Diverse community with experience from other sports organizations and business sectors.</li><li>• Strong commitment and enthusiasm to develop cricket in Connacht.</li></ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of facilities and grounds.</li><li>• Limited financial resources to develop cricket facilities.</li><li>• Lack of support and understanding from local authorities.</li><li>• Limited support from businesses.</li><li>• Lack of volunteers for roles such as umpires, scorers, and club committee officers.</li><li>• Insufficient number of suitably qualified coaches.</li><li>• Ambivalence of some clubs towards active involvement and achieving the Union's ambitions.</li><li>• Poor committee structures within some constituent clubs.</li><li>• Some clubs presume administrative tasks and fundraising will be handled for them.</li><li>• Small membership base.</li><li>• Lack of presence on social media.</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Achieving full membership/affiliation with Cricket Ireland to access financial resources and other supports.</li><li>• Potential to create new clubs.</li><li>• Collaboration with local council-owned sports grounds and facilities that are cricket-friendly.</li><li>• Access to public, national, and local sports grants.</li><li>• Potential sponsorship from local businesses.</li><li>• Collaboration with local schools to promote and develop programmes for schools.</li><li>• Development of structures and competitions for youth cricket.</li><li>• Development of women's cricket by targeting more women and girls.</li><li>• Developing cricket programs for the disabled.</li></ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of suitable sports facilities for cricket in Connacht.</li><li>• Insufficient financial resources to develop facilities and the sport.</li><li>• Persistent apathy from clubs and their members.</li><li>• Limited buy-in from clubs and their members for volunteering, officiating, and coaching.</li><li>• Lack of commitment and accountability from members who take on roles within club committees.</li><li>• Lack of knowledge or awareness of cricket due to being a minority sport.</li><li>• Declining interest in cricket due to lack of facilities.</li><li>• Competition with more popular and well-funded sports.</li><li>• Adverse weather conditions in the West of Ireland impacting fixtures and training.</li></ul>