



DOWN GAA Press Release 28-07-2021

Planning approved for Down GAA Centre at Ballykinlar

GAA President welcomes significant step towards a new county Centre of Excellence

The development of a state-of-the-art Centre of Excellence for Down GAA took a major step forward today with the planning approval by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the proposed complex at Ballykinlar.

The decision is a green light for Down to advance towards an exciting new chapter for the GAA and Gaelic Games in the county, with detailed capital plans now in place to bring an historic project to reality.

The approval from the Council's Planning Committee will allow for the development of 4 full size GAA pitches (3 of which are floodlit), spectator seating, multi-use games area (MUGA), changing rooms, fitness studio and ancillary offices.

The latest step forward comes almost four years after the Down GAA County Committee gave approval for advanced negotiations with the Ministry of Defence on the proposal of a lease for development. After discussions and agreement between officials of Down GAA and MoD representatives on the proposed lease and development of part of the Abercorn Barracks site at Ballykinlar into a multi-purpose GAA complex, the plans for drafted and advanced through the consultation and planning phases.

The design phase was led by McGurk Architects Ltd.

Ballykinlar has a vibrant GAA community and history, and the local club facility had been a training base for Down senior teams for a number of years. Whilst the new centre will cater for the training and administrative needs of Down teams in all Gaelic Games codes, it will also be a significant resource for the Ballykinlar club and the local communities.

The site at Ballykinlar was an MoD military base and training centre that also served as an internment camp during and after the Irish War of Independence, a century ago.

Down GAA Chairman John Devaney welcomed the decision and looked forward to the next stages of the project.

"The development of the proposed centre is now in our own hands. We are excited by the prospect of a facility that can cater for our sporting, administrative and cultural, but we know that a significant amount of work lies ahead. The planning approval brings the vision into view and allows our members and supporters across the county and beyond to imagine an impressive complex that will serve our future needs. It will take the efforts and support of everyone to bring it to fruition, and I want to particularly commend the work of Seán Óg McAteer, Colm McGurk, Anthony McNeill, Sarah McDowell, Sean Foy and their teams, as well as the personnel whom we have worked with within the Ministry of Defence, and all others who have helped to bring the project to this point.

“The facility will also open up new opportunities for the Ballykinlar club and the local area, providing a focal point and an enhancement of the GAA provision in the locality, so that the club and our games can blossom and grow.

“We also know that the story of Ballykinlar and its history provides a fascinating backdrop. Parts of our local and national history intertwine at this place, and we have an opportunity to reflect past, present and future in what we build and develop.

Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael (President of the Gaelic Athletic Association) Larry McCarthy added:
“I congratulate Down GAA on getting this ambitious project to this stage. With planning permission secured, the attention of their project board can now focus on bringing the initiative to fruition.

“The project is both imaginative and creative and underlines the potential of collaboration when forward-thinking entities work together.

“It has the potential to bolster Down GAA in every area of its activity and also the Ballykinlar club and the wider community in this part of the county.

“Of behalf of the GAA at national level, I wish you all every success and I look forward to visiting the new facility.”

Attention will now turn to the establishment of a Project Board under the chairmanship of Feargal P McCormack, which will provide the strategic direction for the project.

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Further Info:

Mr Sean Óg McAteer (Down GAA County Secretary)

secretary.down@gaa.ie

07739 700705.