

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

Review Club

VOLUME 33 - Issue 8, 2020

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GUINNESS

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End of year message



*John Davidson, Chairman,
N.I. Federation of Clubs*

That was quite a year, and the problems are still present and have still to be overcome.

With the pandemic came the financial problems which impacted on the entire hospitality sector. Despite the promises of help, which may have been well intended, the delay in getting that support released was disappointing.

We were pleased to assist quite a number of our sector members who fell short of compliance during the first support package, which required us to challenge the fairness in the support and the way in which it was structured.

Eventually a further support package was created which proved helpful, but not everyone was in a position to benefit. However, through support of a twelve month rate free period, and the furlough scheme, we have battled on and will hopefully see the sector open on December 11th.

Many clubs contacted us seeking advice on holding their club AGM, which require contacting the Federation Solicitor who advised that it was acceptable to follow Government Covid-19 guidelines. Naturally, it would have been preferred to hold an AGM, however common sense and the aforesaid Government



*Harry Beckinsale, Secretary,
N.I. Federation of Clubs*

advice led everyone to adopt caution. Indeed, many will be aware that the Federation AGM was to be held on day one of the first lockdown!

The Federation continue to work remotely, conducting business via Zoom and telephone.

This method of communication will again be adopted when we meet the Communities Minister, the Assembly Committee, a meeting on the Entertainments License Consultation, and a meeting with officials and the PSNI on the Accounts regulations pertaining to registered clubs.

In relation to the aforementioned, members can feel reassured that we remain active in pursuance of fair legislation for the registered club sector; legislation which has gone unaddressed for far too long! We have continually asked the question, 'why do the accounts regulations need to be prescribed, rather than being similar to those afforded to other business sectors?'

'Why are registered clubs restricted in the number of late extensions available to them, particularly when they cater for an age group less likely to create anti-social behaviour?'

'Why have registered clubs been prevented from placing notices in the press? While some of these issues are likely to be addressed in the Licensing Amendment Bill, a number are less likely to be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, we survived the 2008 financial crisis, so hopefully we can overcome this to reach better times. With all the necessary equipment already in place, we are in a good position to adhere to good practice to protect our members, guests and staff alike.

I feel it important to recognise the outstanding way our suppliers have stood by us during this difficult time. Our established associations have been in place for some years, and I would ask our members to reciprocate the support they

have provided. The Federation will certainly not forget it, as it was forthcoming at a time of great uncertainty.

I also take this opportunity to thank my fellow officers and the executive committee, Media Design and Print for the administration facilities placed at our disposal, and to our secretary's son, Harold, for keeping the Federation website updated and preparing the digitised edition of Club Review.

May I wish everyone good health and a peaceful Christmas with good wishes for safe passage through these difficult times into what I hope will be a much better New Year.

*John Davidson - Chairman
Harry Beckinsale - Secretary*

Update on amendments to NI Licensing Bill

Dear Secretary,

With the Northern Ireland Licensing Amendment bill having recently reached the second stage at the Northern Ireland Assembly, we thought it important to inform you that we have been invited to address the Assembly Communities Committee and to meet the Communities Minister in early December 2020.

Please be reassured that your Federation has been working tirelessly over recent months, and in earlier years, to bring the Registered Clubs Legislation, including the Accounts Regulations, into a more acceptable, appropriate and suitable format.

These are times we are unlikely to see again in our lifetime, and it is our sincere hope that all our sector members, and suppliers alike, will come through this to better times in the not too distant future.

The following details outline those issues we are satisfied as having secured, and those we are unhappy with and wish to focus our energy upon.

- a) The requirement for Childrens Certificates will be removed, allowing children on all club premises until 10pm.
- b) A clubs registration to provide alcohol will be permitted to extend their area to include sports grounds, six times per year, with an

application of this kind being available to cover a period of one to six days. This could be utilised for a range of events, such as those related to sport and concerts etc.

- c) At long last the restriction on advertising will be removed - but with 'Members and Guests' highlighted in advertising copy, unless it is for a charity event, in which case the advertisement will not be subject to such restrictions.
- d) Late extensions to remain at 85 per year.
- e) Young people to be permitted on sports club premises until 11pm during June, July and August.
- f) Restrictions on Easter opening hours to be abolished.
- g) Drinking-up time to be extended by 30 minutes to provide one hour.

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Latest update on gaming machine VAT case

As most clubs will be aware, HMRC conceded defeat earlier this year in the longstanding litigation with Rank Group Plc in respect of VAT paid to HMRC incorrectly, and at HMRC's insistence, on gaming machines operated by Rank prior to December 6, 2005.

HMRC published a Revenue & Customs Brief 5 (2020) setting out HMRC's position and inviting all taxpayers who considered they had a valid claim for repayment for such VAT to make application for its repayment. HMRC set out a list of information they consider they require to validate a claim in Brief 5 (2020).

Brief 5 (2020) makes clear that any taxpayer with a valid claim and a valid appeal will be repaid as soon as HMRC have undertaken the checks they need to make and authorised the claim, but HMRC expect any taxpayer who thinks they have a valid claim to contact HMRC.

It is insufficient, having originally been paid by HMRC in 2010/2011 and subsequently recovered by HMRC in 2014, to expect HMRC to repay the monies without making such an application.

In addition, we have recently been made aware that the opportunity to recover these monies may soon disappear, as after January 1st 2021 when the UK leaves the EU, the UK will no longer be obliged to act according to principles set out by EU legislation, and in this instance the principal of fiscal neutrality (i.e. treating each taxpayer in an identical manner) may no longer be observed by the UK government.

Initial observations indicate that HMRC are rejecting some claims as having no valid appeal on the basis that there is no appeal against the protective assessment, which is a requirement set out in an earlier Tribunal hearing. What HMRC seemingly fail to mention is that any person in this position can make application to the Tribunal to join an appeal against the protective assessment to the earlier Tribunal appeal.

HMRC require a letter to be sent to HM Courts and Tribunals Service (copied to HMRC solicitors office) requesting that this happen, and where possible, with a copy of the protective assessment.

Other reasons where HMRC have been seen to reject



applications for payment, are where original appeals were mistakenly withdrawn, no appeal was made at the time soon after the claim was initially made as there was no notice of rejection from HMRC or a valid claim was not originally submitted. It may be possible, subject to the individual circumstances of each claimant, to resurrect an appeal or a claim.

To conclude, clubs need to confirm these three questions:

1. During 2007 did they or the club auditor apply to HMRC to be refunded VAT on gaming machine monies for the period 1st October 2002 to 5th December 2005?
2. Did the club successfully receive this vat refund from HMRC?
3. Did the club have to repay this vat refund plus interest to HMRC around 2010 or 2011?

3. Did the club have to repay this vat refund plus interest to HMRC around 2010 or 2011?

If the answers to the above questions is YES, then the club should be entitled to apply via the Tax Tribunals Service to get HMRC to repay this money, plus interest.

If your club needs help in respect to a claim, the Federation accountant, Lawrence Shearer, is happy to assist for a small covering fee. You can contact Lawrence by phone or email (contact details in the advertisement below).

Please note: Litigation remains ongoing for Linneweber 2 claims (VAT paid on gaming machine income in any VAT period between 6th December 2005 and 31st January 2013).

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Questions & Answers

Q. Can you let us know if an employee is able to work alone inside the Club? Our cleaner works on her own in the morning prior to the Club opening.

A. I can confirm that it is perfectly legal to allow an employee to work alone and that in many Clubs the Club's cleaner will often perform their duties

on their own simply because of when the cleaning takes place. Having said that, the Club does have a duty of care to its employees and if any employee is concerned about working on their own then such concerns should be appropriately addressed by the Committee. In any event, it would be worth performing a risk assessment to assess if there are any inherent risks for an employee working alone (*a cellar door which could inadvertently lock an employee inside for instance*).

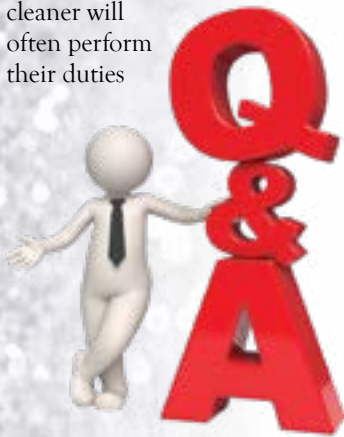
Q. The Committee has recently questioned if the Club should have a formal 'whistleblowing' procedure in place for employees wishing to report something which is wrong. Do you have any advice as to how such a policy could be formed?

A. I am not aware of a Club which actually has in place a specific 'whistle-blowing procedure'. I would suggest that a Member of the Committee, possibly the Club's Secretary, is simply appointed as a point of contact for the Club's employees. The Club's employees should then be encouraged to speak to the appointed contact person regarding any issues which have arisen or problems which they have.

Q. A member of our club recently attempted to purchase a beer so that a shandy could be made for an underage Member of their family. In this instance, the Club's bar staff refused to sell the Member the drink as they knew what it was intended for. Is it correct that a diluted beer, such as a shandy, is still

unlawful to serve to a person aged under 18?

A. It is indeed unlawful to serve any drink which contains alcohol to a minor and your bar staff were correct to refuse the sale once they knew what the Member was intending. The only exceptions to the law preventing alcohol sales to persons under 18 are for aged 16 or 17 when purchasing a drink with a meal (is the meal is to be consumed in an area specifically set aside for food) or a product which contains 0.5% alcohol or less which can be legally sold to anyone. However, the Committee may wish to instruct bar staff to simply not serve alcohol to anyone under 18 irrespective of these allowances to make sure any appearance of impropriety is avoided.



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Q. We had an incident inside the club and as a result the police were called. After taking statements from the parties involved the police have decided to take no action. Several members of the committee feel that the member involved should face a disciplinary hearing; can we take disciplinary action against a member if the police have already decided that they will not prosecute the member?

A. The committee are not bound by the decision of the police not to prosecute. The police base a decision to prosecute or not to prosecute on a number of factors and a decision not to prosecute does not necessarily mean that the person is not guilty of the allegation. The committee can hold a disciplinary meeting and review the allegations and make their own decision regarding what, if any, action is required under the terms of the club's rules.

Q. We have a car park which is intended for Club Members only. We frequently have nonmembers using the car park. Is there anything we can do to prevent this behaviour?

A. There are a number of ways to deal with cars which are parking without authorisation in the Club's car park.

One of the most effective ways is to simply install a physical barrier, although this is not practical for every Club.

Alternatively, pursuing parking invoices through civil action can be very effective. If the correct documentation is affixed to the car park then a Parking Charge Notice can be affixed to cars parked in the car park without authorisation. These notices will inform users of the car park that a fee will be charged if the car does not have the authorisation to park in the car park. If the person, once issued with the notice, does not

send payment then the Club can simply pursue this matter through the Small Claims Court.

I suggest obtaining clear photographic evidence of the car parked and the signs which indicate that the charge notice will be issued and the level of which the charge has been set at. This documentation will assist with any resulting legal claim. You will need to place signs in the car park stating the cost of unauthorised parking and then attach a notice to any cars which use the car park without authorisation stating that they have to now pay this cost to the Club otherwise legal

action will be taken to enforce payment. Essentially, by parking in the Club's private car park it will be considered, if proper notices have been displayed in the car park, that they have entered into a contract with the Club and will therefore pay the agreed rate listed on the car park signs. There are also third party companies which will deal with this type of enforcement on the behalf of the Club although we have no direct experience of these companies.

If you have any questions you need answered for your club, then please send them to us at: info@nifederationofclubs.com

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Another month, another change in coronavirus legislation



In November the Government announced that the furlough scheme (CJRS) was to be extended until March 31st 2021. This means that the Job Support Scheme and the Job Retention Bonus (*and our previous guidance*) is currently on hold. We are unsure if the Government is planning on re-introducing both schemes next year, but it could be that they are replaced with another incentive.

Until 31st December 2020, the Government will pay 80% of an employee's wage whilst furloughed with employers paying pension contributions as well as NIC's. It is likely that the Government

will increase employer contributions whilst dropping their own contributions come January 2021, however, no official guidance has been released as of yet. It is expected we will know more before the end of December to enable a swift transition onto the new contribution requirements.

There are some things worth noting when it comes to the re-introduction of the CJRS:

- You do not need to have used the furlough scheme before to use this scheme
- Flexible furlough still applies if you can offer part time working

- Employees who have previously been furloughed continue to have their reference pay and hours based on the existing furlough calculations (the same as those under the old scheme).
- For those employees who have not previously been furloughed it appears that the pay is based on 80% of the wages payable in the last pay period ending on or before 30th October 2020 (for those on fixed wages).
- For those employees on variable wages, it appears that the pay is based on 80% of the average payable between the start of their employment or 6th April 2020 (whichever is later) and the day before their CJRS extension furlough period begins.
- Those shielding in line with public health guidance or those who need to stay at home with someone who is shielding can be furloughed
- Employees that were employed and on the payroll on 23rd September 2020 who were made redundant or stopped working for their

employer after that date can be re-employed and claimed for if appropriate.

An importance difference between the CJRS this time round is that for claim periods that start on or after December 1st 2020, you will not be able to claim for any days after this date where your employees are serving a contractual or statutory notice period (*or have resigned and are serving notice*).

You will also need to make an adjustment if an employee starts a period of notice and any days cross into the period after December 1st 2020.

Previously, you were able to see out the entire notice period whilst on furlough (*albeit potentially at 100% pay*).

It appears that this change is an attempt to deter redundancies further.

If you're unsure about how to navigate the re-introduction of the furlough scheme, or are still unfortunately looking at making redundancies, then we're here to help.



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- Employment Law Documentation
- Covid-19 Advice and Support
- Tribunal Preparation and Representation

For more information on how ELAS can support your club during these challenging times, please contact:

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on

ronnie.mccullough@elas.uk.com

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Covid-19 and its effect on energy tariffs

The last 5-6 months have been very tough; particularly for businesses involved in the hospitality sector and for any business whose income is mainly or partly reliant on the sale of food and/or beverages.

Covid-19 has brought along many challenges for businesses, however, we have seen something positive result from it. Due to the 'supply & demand' factor the lockdown has been responsible for a reduction in energy tariffs.

Back in March, when many businesses were forced to close, the demand for electricity and gas reduced drastically. The supply was there but just no

demand for it. This resulted in a fall in energy prices, meaning it was a fantastic time for businesses to review their energy contracts and lock in some great rates.

Normally businesses will not look at contract renewals until nearer the renewal time. As a broker however, we are in a very different position. Using our relationships with suppliers we can have rates agreed and locked in with suppliers up to 12 months in advance. This means that businesses can take advantage of current market prices.



Also, as we move into the cooler, darker months, more energy is used on heating and lighting etc., meaning prices

will historically start to rise. It's the perfect time for a review, so please do the right thing for your club and get in touch now.

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Over recent months we have found that more and more businesses are moving towards 'cashless' payments and have been asking if we can help. We are pleased to announce that we have teamed up with MK Merchant Services meaning we can now offer this additional service to all clubs.

As a well established and reputable company, MK Merchant Services provides that personal touch to all of their clients. They pride themselves on their excellent customer

service and provide that link between bank, business and customer.

Clients can rest assured that they will benefit from some of the most competitive rates on the market, along with faster payments which will help with cashflow.

For further information contact:

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Sky line-up for a December like no other



It's certainly a December like no other but at Sky Sports, our festive line-up is the one thing you can rely on.

Sky Sports will continue to bring you the biggest names and the biggest games in December including the Manchester Derby and two Premier League games on Boxing Day including Chelsea's trip to Arsenal. Plus, your members can enjoy Tottenham's visit to Wolves and Liverpool's home clash with West Brom on 27 December.

The last race of the F1 2020 season takes place with the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on 13th December and there's all the build up to the race plus the

practice and qualifying sessions live on Sky Sports.

And it wouldn't be December without the darts so it's great news that the 2021 PDC World Championship returns to the Ally Pally and Sky Sports. Step up to the oche and give your members their festive fix.

There's plenty more for your members to enjoy too - we've got action from the Carabao Cup, the EFL and Scottish Premiership, plus plenty of golf, including the Women's Open, the LGPA Tour and European Tour.

Your members won't want to miss out on any of the action

and we have everything you need to promote the games on MySkySports.com including scheduling social media posts and creating posters detailing fixtures from every broadcaster.

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Picture courtesy of Getty Images

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DECEMBER

- 11th to 13th December Abu Dhabi Grand Prix
- 12th December Manchester Utd v Manchester City
- 15th December to 4th January World Darts Championship
- 20th December Tottenham Hotspur v Leicester
- 20th December Manchester Utd v Leeds Utd
- 22nd December Carabao Cup - Arsenal v Manchester City
- 23rd December Everton v Manchester Utd
- 26th December Arsenal v Chelsea
- 27th December Liverpool v West Brom

*all fixtures provided were correct on the date of submission, 2nd December

CHRISTMAS IS FOR FOOTBALL

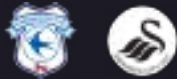
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**CARDIFF
SWANSEA**
Saturday 12 December, 12.30pm



Premier League
**MAN UTD
MAN CITY**
Saturday 12 December, 5.30pm



Premier League
**CRYSTAL PALACE
TOTTENHAM**
Sunday 13 December, 2.15pm



Sky Bet Championship
**DERBY
SWANSEA**
Wednesday 16 December, 5.30pm



Sky Bet Championship
**READING
NORWICH**
Wednesday 16 December, 8pm



Premier League
**EVERTON
ARSENAL**
Saturday 19 December, 5.30pm



Premier League
**NEWCASTLE
FULHAM**
Saturday 19 December, 8pm



Scottish Premiership
**KILMARNOCK
ABERDEEN**
Sunday 20 December, 12pm



Premier League
**TOTTENHAM
LEICESTER**
Sunday 20 December, 2.15pm



Premier League
**MAN UTD
LEEDS**
Sunday 20 December, 4.30pm



Premier League
**BURNLEY
WOLVES**
Monday 21 December, 5.30pm



Premier League
**CHELSEA
WEST HAM**
Monday 21 December, 8pm

LIVE SPORT



Scottish Premiership
RANGERS
HIBERNIAN
Saturday 26 December, 12.30pm



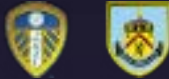
Scottish Premiership
HAMILTON
CELTIC
Saturday 26 December, 3pm



Premier League
ARSENAL
CHELSEA
Saturday 26 December, 5.30pm



Sky Bet Championship
WATFORD
NORWICH
Saturday 26 December, 7.45pm



Premier League
LEEDS
BURNLEY
Sunday 27 December, 12pm



Premier League
LIVERPOOL
WEST BROM
Sunday 27 December, 4.30pm



Premier League
WOLVES
TOTTENHAM
Sunday 27 December, 7.15pm



Sky Bet Championship
STOKE
FOREST
Tuesday 29 December, 8pm



Sky Bet Championship
BRENTFORD
BOURNEMOUTH
Wednesday 30 December, 5.30pm

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WKD offers Xmassive prizes and buckets of trade support

With Christmas trading conditions this year set to be unlike anything licensees in Northern Ireland have ever experienced, SHS Drinks - owner of WKD, the UK's no.1 RTD1 - has plans in place to help maximise whatever opportunities the prevailing guidance permits. With free support packs ready to aid outlets, WKD Bucket Kits to promote table service, and festive-themed communications to engage consumers, SHS has prepared an 'agile' programme which can be deployed as appropriate.

Free WKD support packs have been developed to assist customers in the on-trade. Designed to help stockists in all parts of the UK, whatever the local restrictions, the POS kits include functional items - staff t-shirts, bar runners, bottle openers etc - enabling outlets

to concentrate on building sales and adhering to the latest guidance when re-opening, without worrying about supplies or costs of peripheral items.

In addition, thousands of free WKD Bucket Kits are being offered to stockists this winter. The kits are designed to support the multi-buy deals which have proven so popular in 2020; multi-buys being an ideal way to adhere to guidance regarding table-service whilst also helping staff minimise both serving and payment interactions with consumers. Each kit includes ice buckets and POS items which both promote the offer and prompt consumers to have fun compiling their own 'bucket lists' to keep in mind for less restricted times.

Supplementing the in-outlet activity, a Christmas-themed

social media campaign will offer much-needed glimmers of festive fun to consumers. Reaching a target audience of over one million via WKD's ever-popular social channels, the online activity will include opportunities to win WKD Xmassive Stockings containing a selection of drinks, a variety of branded merchandise and that most 2020 of items, the WKD-branded face-mask. The campaign will also include humorous suggestions for Christmas WKD-ecorations, a Christmas cracker joke competition and, for those who can't get to a pub, recipes for DIY festive drinks, courtesy of WKD's very own mixologist.

Also, **exclusively for Northern Ireland**, a seasonal outdoor

campaign will feature on billboards in tactical locations. The ads will feature a festive bottle-tree made from the brand's colourful flavour variants and proclaim 'Have A WKD Christmas'.

Alison Gray, head of brand - WKD, at owner SHS Drinks, said, "WKD wants to do whatever it can, in whichever ways it can, to raise a few smiles, support stockists, and help bring 2020 safely to a close."



Bibendum named Drinks Company of the Year



Michael Saunders, CEO of Bibendum Wine.

Bibendum Wine, one of the UK's leading premium wine and spirits distributors, has been named Drinks Company of the Year at the 2020 Drinks Business Awards, which is held annually to recognise achievement in the UK alcoholic drinks industry.

Judges praised Bibendum's management, partnerships and numerous new initiatives. Michael Saunders, CEO of Bibendum Wine is delighted with the award, 'I couldn't be happier that we have been awarded Drinks Company of the Year, one of the most important awards in the industry. It is a true testament to everyone in the company's hard work over the last few years. A huge thank you to all our producers and customers too, without them this wouldn't be possible.' Bibendum were also named Runners-up in the On Trade Supplier of the Year category for the whole of the UK and won Merchant of the Year at the Sommelier Wine Awards in May 2020.

Andrew Schnell, NI's local Bibendum Wine Manager said, "We are delighted that Bibendum Wine have yet again won one of the most important awards in the industry, adding to a growing list of accolades. This only re-affirms the confidence in our diverse and exciting portfolio which we can offer our customers at a local level."

@teambdb on twitter for the awards and @bibendumwine

Donations urgently needed for Cancer Focus NI charity shops



Cancer Focus Northern Ireland is urgently appealing to Belfast people to help refill its charity shop rails. They are asking local people to donate any unwanted pre-loved, good quality items to one of their stores on the Lisburn Road, Ormeau Road or Ballyhackamore.

John Grierson, Ballyhackamore shop manager, said, "The income from our shops stays in Northern Ireland and helps pay for our many services for local cancer patients and their families. Although we've had to reduce many of our services due to Covid-19, we are still able to provide counselling, family support, stop smoking sessions and virtual Sing for Life choir

practice via phone, Zoom and private Facebook groups.

"We need your help to raise funds to continue with these important support services for as many people as possible, particularly during this challenging and daunting period. We also need to be in a healthy financial position for a time when we can resume our full services."

Cancer Focus NI has faced an 80% drop in income as fundraising events have had to be cancelled or postponed and staff furloughed, so the charity is more reliant than ever on its charity shops for much-needed income.



John added, "At the moment, we badly need to replenish our stocks to help with these important services that provide a vital lifeline to many people at one of the toughest times of their lives.

"We need continued support from the local community to help meet the high demand so when you're clearing out please think of us. We welcome donations of quality clothing,

accessories, furniture and bric a brac with open arms. And if you've never been to our charity shop, drop in today and you'll discover a high street gem. Whether you're looking for vintage chic, retro trends, smart tailoring or a special gift - they have everything you need for your must-have collection."

For more information about Cancer Focus NI visit www.cancerfocusni.org/shops

Take part in a Tinsel Tiptoe this Christmas

Add a sprinkle of Christmas cheer to December and take part in a magical Tinsel Tiptoe for charity.

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland is calling on families all over Northern Ireland to organise a glittering tinsel 5k challenge to raise money for its vital counselling service.



Everyone who takes part will receive a medal kindly donated by Deep RiverRock Belfast City Marathon from its 8 mile walk event.

To sign up for the Tinsel Tiptoe visit: www.cancerfocusni.org/tinsel



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REC-IT continue to support local charities and good causes



Nigel Blair, Belfast 89FM.

This month I get the full story from Cameron McIntyre on the success of the band REC-IT, and the release of their new single and video in support of the "Tiny Life" charity. It gives me the greatest pleasure to share a good news story in this, the last issue of Club Review in 2020. Cameron McIntyre has been writing poetry for forty years, and recently released his tenth book in support of the "Tiny Life" charity.

In 2017, Cameron decided to form a band to perform songs he had written, and from which, any profit generated would be used to support local

charities. Working as a self-employed plumber, he already had in mind customers from his business, as well as friends, who all had the attributes with which to form a band. All those approached agreed, and the band REC-IT was formed; its name taken from the initials of the first names of the band members.

The ages of the members varies from those in their thirties, right up to sixty, with Cameron holding his hand up to being the senior. The band members come from all walks of life - Esther McNeill, Occupational Therapist; Ian McNeill and Robb Lindsay, music teachers; Svenja Gadd, social worker; Tim East, civil servant; and the poetic plumber, Cameron McIntyre.

Cameron, at a recent interview with me in Belfast 89 FM, said, "It has been a wonderful experience doing something you really love with like-minded people. Over the past few years we have released eight singles, including the most recent, 'We Got the Beat', raising thousands of pounds to support local charities, such as the N.H.S.,



Northern Ireland Children's Hospice, Helping Hand, The Children's Cancer Unit Charity, Addiction N.I. and Tiny Life (Northern Ireland's premature and vulnerable baby charity), who will be the charity to benefit from our latest single and video release.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have supported us by downloading our songs from I-Tunes, Amazon, Spotify and CD Baby. The majority of money raised comes from donating directly to REC-IT through Esther's Just Giving page, which can be found from the band Facebook page.

"Family and friends, and Facebook buddies, we hope to continue as long as the public want us to. Our videos are made to uplift people, highlight the charities, and raise money for good causes. Thank you to all the wonderful people who volunteer, and take part in our videos."

Cameron concluded by saying, "A special thank you must go

to Ian and Esther McNeill, who donate so much time to this each year, as well as the press and radio stations who encourage us by playing our music."

I would like to thank Cameron and all the members of REC-IT for the wonderful work they do and the times we have shared at Belfast 89FM.

Before signing off, I have to congratulate Ian and Esther on the birth of their son Joshua. At one stage I thought he might have made an appearance whilst on air, as Esther was heavily pregnant at our last interview. Now that would have been a new experience for us all!

I would like to wish you all a happy, healthy Christmas and New Year, and thank you for reading my column and sharing my experiences. I look forward to writing for you again in 2021.

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Nigel

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Education Minister praises Ulster GAA and IFA sports programme

Ulster GAA, in partnership with Irish Football Association (IFA), recently delivered a school sports programme aimed at encouraging a love of sport and increasing emotional resilience for young pupils.

The programme, focusing on pupils aged 7 to 11, promoted the benefits of participating in sport and physical activity and encouraged pupils to develop a lifelong interest in maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle.

It is also designed to help students increase their emotional resilience with a particular focus on boosting sporting participation among girls.

Education Minister Peter Weir was visiting St Comgall's

Primary School in Bangor to see at first hand pupils taking part in the sports initiative. The Minister commented, "Children's wellbeing is fundamentally important and central to all I do. The link between physical health and the wellbeing of young people is well-known. It is pleasing to see at first hand how this initiative helps pupils learn about mental health and wellbeing, including resilience and self-esteem.

"I recognise the contribution sport makes, not only in terms of its physical benefits, but also in raising the confidence of young people. That is why my Department has invested significantly in sports coaching provided by Ulster GAA and the IFA to support PE in primary schools."



During the visit, coaches also showcased how physical activity could be delivered in the current climate.

The Minister concluded, "This programme helps to strengthen and deepen the delivery of the

PE curriculum and introduces children to new sports and skills as they approach the transition to post-primary school."

Sport Uniting Communities BAME programme

Seven different countries were represented by participants on this year's BAME programme, organised by Sport Uniting Communities (SUC). SUC, which is run by Ulster GAA alongside the Irish FA and Ulster Rugby, launched the programme in collaboration with Multi Ethnic Sport and Culture NI (MSCNI).

The project, which aims to work with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in order to increase participation, break down barriers and provide education and opportunities in local sports, got up and running at Olympia Leisure Centre in Belfast before Covid-19 restrictions put it on hold.

To date, it has attracted sixteen people from seven different countries, including participants from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Ethiopia. Each session consisted of education and participation around the sports and cultures within Gaelic games, football and rugby, with participants having the opportunity to try the various skills involved in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

Jahswill Emmanuel, founder and chairperson of MSCNI, said, "It has been really great having this programme to enable our members to integrate and be educated on sports played in Northern Ireland. It was really nice to get back



onto the pitch after such a stressful few months. We thank Ryan McShane (Ulster GAA) and the guys for the set-up. Our guys really enjoyed the different sports and hopefully it encourages them to join a club to further their skills and to

integrate and build friendships in the community."

For further information contact Ulster GAA's Community Sports Development Officer, Ryan McShane (ryan.mcshane@ulster@gaa.ie)

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NI Football Writers Awards

The Northern Ireland Football Writers' Association and Danske Bank UK are pleased to unveil Linfield Football Club winger Kirk Millar and Glentoran Women FC & Academy midfielder star Caragh Hamilton as the first Player of the Month winners under a new partnership agreement.

The NIFWA Danske Bank Premiership Player of the Month and NIFWA Danske Bank Women's Premiership Player of the Month will recognise the top male and female performers as part of a partnership agreement that covers the 2020-21 Danske Bank Premiership season and both the 2020 and 2021 Danske Bank Women's Premiership seasons.

NIFWA Chairman Stuart McKinley said, "As an association, we are very pleased to have secured this partnership with Danske Bank. Danske Bank has become a name that is synonymous with football in Northern Ireland over a number of years now through its sponsorship of the Men's and Women's Premiership. To have Danske Bank attached to our Player of the Month awards for both leagues is a natural fit

given their long-term support of the domestic game in Northern Ireland, which our members cover extensively for their various media outlets.

"It is also a great way to start the 2020-21 season after the unfortunate curtailment of 2019-20 and for us to move forward after our recent annual awards marked the 50th anniversary of them first being presented."

Linfield ace Millar was the popular choice of the NIFWA awards committee after capping a hugely impressive month with a superb goal in Linfield's victory over Ballymena United as the Blues started the Danske Bank Premiership season with victories in each of their first three games.

"It's great to get this award - my first Player of the Month award as a Linfield player," said Millar.

"We have had a great start to the season and while it's nice to get personal recognition, ultimately it means that I am contributing to the team."

Caragh's award is a reflection of outstanding early-season form for Glentoran Women, which



Linfield winger, Kirk Millar, and Glentoran Women midfielder star, Caragh Hamilton, pick up their respective Player of the Month awards.

saw her score three times in five games during August and September to put the team at the top of the Danske Bank Women's Premiership. That form also won her a recall to the Northern Ireland international team.

"I'm delighted to win this award as I was away from the game for a while," said Caragh.

"I surprised myself, as I thought I would be a bit 'rusty'. I got a few pre-season games under my belt to blow the cobwebs away, the team played well and gelled well, and I scored a few goals, which was a great boost. Obviously I've picked up an injury, which is hard to take, but I'm pleased I was able to make an impact this season."

Larne Football Club manager Tiernan Lynch has been named October Manager of the Month by the Northern Ireland Football Writers' Association.

The Invermen finished the month with a 100% record, thanks to wins over Dungannon Swifts, Carrick Rangers and Ballymena United. Larne also defeated local rivals Ballyclare Comrades and Crusaders on their way to the County Antrim Shield final.

Upon collecting the Belleek trophy, Lynch said, "I greatly appreciate winning this award and I accept it on behalf of the club as this is a collective



honour. I am just a cog in the wheel. This award is the product of hard work by many people, both on and off the field. I'd like to thank the Football Writers' for recognising that work."

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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2005

Liverpool's miracle in Istanbul



Liverpool's 2005 champions of Europe.

Liverpool achieved a staggering victory over AC Milan in 2005, culminating in a penalty shoot-out to win the Champions League after amazingly coming from three goals down at half-time. On a night that has become known to fans as the 'miracle of Istanbul', Liverpool reclaimed their crown as 'kings of Europe' after overcoming a seemingly insurmountable challenge at the Ataturk Stadium in Istanbul.

The 2005 UEFA Champions League Final was the final match of the 2004-05 UEFA Champions League. The showpiece event took place on 25th May 2005. Liverpool, who had won the competition four times, were appearing in their sixth final, and their first since 1985. Milan, who had won the competition six times, were appearing in their second final in three years and tenth overall. It was the Reds' first appearance in a European Cup final in two decades and, despite defeating Juventus and Chelsea during a memorable run to the final, they went into the game as underdogs. Milan were seen by all as the favourites. Their team included many experienced players who had played in the competition previously. Liverpool's manager was Rafael Benitez. He acknowledged the perceived imbalance. "Maybe Milan are favourites, but we have confidence, and we can win," he said.

An estimated 40,000 fans followed their team to Istanbul. But, by the time the half-time whistle came, it was looking as though their trip was in vain. Paolo Maldini gave AC Milan a lead within the first minute of the match. Hernan Crespo then went on to score a double. All of which appeared to give the team an unassailable advantage. Milan added a third goal when Kaka brilliantly passed to Crespo. Then came half-time.

After some serious half-time discussions between players and manager, Liverpool managed to reinvigorate themselves. Rallying

cries from still-believing supporters helped too, providing the added impetus to hopefully tip the balance.

Liverpool substituted Dietmar Hamann in place of Steve Finnan. They also changed to a 3-5-2 formation, with Riise and Smicer on the outside edges, Alonso and Hamann as holding midfielders and Gerrard as an attacking midfielder.

Liverpool seized the advantage early on with Xabi Alonso sending the ball narrowly past Milan's right hand post. Dudek managed a save against Shevchenko's free-kick to stop Liverpool going four down. Steven Gerrard managed to provide some cheer for Liverpool, while Vladimir Smicer and Xabi Alonso fought back and brought things to a symmetrical balance, equalising.

Gerrard offered Liverpool further promise of salvation with a header from John Arne Riise's cross. This also helped to bring some life back to the team; and now the fight-back was in earnest. This was evidenced when Gennaro Gattuso pulled out all the stops to bring down Gerrard just as he was about to equalise. Dida saw off Alonso's attack, but the Spanish midfielder returned to produce the goods. Milan could only look on as their victory looked to be falling apart.

In extra time, Milan launched a fight-back. They managed to keep possession for most of the remaining half-hour and nearly scored in the final minutes. Then came the penalty shoot-outs.

Serginho and Pirlo missed Milan's first two, while Hamann and Djibril Cisse hit the button for Liverpool. Andriy Shevchenko was the third Milan player to miss a penalty, making it look like the end was both near and inevitable. Jerzy Dudek managed to see off goal attempts from Andrea Pirlo and Andriy Shevchenko in the nail-biting finish to clinch a stunning victory for Liverpool.

The city of Liverpool celebrated their victory by parading the trophy around town in an open-top double-decker bus the day after the final. They were cheered by around a million supporters. Benitez expressed his own disbelief at the stunning victory. "My problem is that I don't have words to express the things that I feel at this moment," he said.

It happened in 2005

Athletics - Asafa Powell of Jamaica sets a new 100m world record of 9.77 seconds at the Athens Olympic Stadium.

Crickets - Shane Warne becomes the first bowler to take 600 Test wickets.

Cycling - American superstar, Lance Armstrong, won his record-setting seventh Tour de France title. He was subsequently to be stripped of all seven titles after admitting, in 2013, to the doping allegations that had been made against him over the course of his career.

GAA - In the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship, Tyrone triumphed over Kerry 1-16 to 2-10. This was Kerry's second consecutive final, but their win against Mayo in 2004 wasn't to be repeated in 2005.

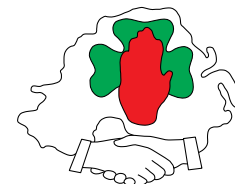
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