

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

Review Club

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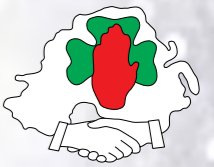
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A Christmas message from your Chairman and Secretary



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



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

It's almost Christmas 2023, and with the worst effects of the pandemic behind us, we nevertheless are still being impacted by difficult economic times. Despite inflation reducing, one of the biggest economies in the world still sees its citizens regularly having to visit food banks!

With the Autumn Statement having been announced by the Chancellor, it will be interesting to see if there is any substance to the claims made in relation to the reduction of taxation, both personal and business. Being an integral part of the hospitality sector, we are fully aware of the difficulties faced by our members in respect to staffing and overheads. The recent announcement of the National Minimum Wage increase won't do anything to allay these concerns, but it is hoped that the promised tax cuts will help offset the wage increases coming in April.

We remain encouraged by the number of clubs availing of the Helpline facility, which is resulting in an increased number of clubs joining the Federation.

It is our hope that matters at the Assembly can be resolved to the benefit of everyone, allowing us to move forward to a more positive future.

It is evident that the number of registered clubs now providing restaurant quality food for members and guests is paying off through increased attendances. Older members may well view this as an opportunity to socialise with like minded members and, of course, save on their own home energy costs!

At the October Executive Committee meeting, the Federation AGM was discussed, with the said meeting planned for early 2024; members will be notified in good time. Members may recall that Covid restrictions were set in place on the Saturday of our last planned AGM in 2020, with notices having to be put up at the RAOB HQ Club on that morning, apologising for the cancellation of the meeting.

Members will also recall that, despite the difficulties of Covid, we continued to provide services for our members. The Helpline facility proved to be

enormously helpful, keeping us all in contact to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

As 2023 draws to a close, we look forward to better times ahead - we must remain positive and confident that 2024 will bring better times to every part of our society.

We take this opportunity to thank those companies that continue to support the Federation and ask members to be mindful of the support times, asking that you utilise their services when possible:
Diageo, Tennent's NI, Molson Coors, Proximo, United Wines, Drinks Inc, McCabe's, Coca-Cola,

Philip Russell, Britvic NI, SHS Group, Sky Sports, PPL PRS, Rollins Insurance, Pubs Clubs Interiors, Stocktaking.com, MJ Utilities, Oasis, P&F Amusements, AVA Leisure, Shean Dickson Merrick, Trans4mations Upholstery, O'Hara Shearer Accountants, BOIPA UK, BOC, and McConnell's Surveyors.

Your support of the aforementioned companies is important to the Federation.

We close the year by wishing everyone a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2024. We also hope, and indeed pray, for much needed peace in a much troubled world.



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Creating your club's alcohol-free menu

With one in three visits to clubs now being alcohol free, how can clubs create the perfect drinks offering to satisfy this demand?

Most people are taking days off alcohol, especially at the beginning of the week. And even at the weekend, alcohol consumption is declining. So how can you keep people coming in and spending at your club?

Creating a good alcohol-free menu does not mean stacking the shelves with soft drinks. Adults want drinks designed for a grown-up occasion, and lower in sugar. Next to water, one of the healthiest things you can drink in a club is an alcohol-free beer. It has no sugar, is low in calories, and is packed with

vitamin B12. It could also be a favourite for your customers with type two diabetes. Adding in a low alcohol "table beer" or two may also be a good idea.

Venues that have upped their alcohol-free offer have found that they have:

- Boosted their footfall at lunchtime and start of the week.
- Increased group bookings, as everyone in the group will feel equally included.
- Built loyalty from customers who feel they have been treated well.
- Made sure everyone is included in celebrations and events.

What to consider when building your alcohol-free range?

- Make sure the quality of your alcohol-free matches your alcohol-full range. If you have beer on draught, then add an alcohol-free one on one of your taps.
- Free up space in the fridge for premium alcohol-free drinks by moving out pre-mixed cordials. You could buy some cordials and syrups instead that can sit ambient on your back-bar to be mixed with soda at the bar into satisfying halves and pints. These long hydrating options are also good for alcohol drinkers.
- Make sure your alcohol-free drinks are easy to find on the menu. As this space grows, positioning low and alcohol-free in its own section and by category is worth doing.



- Offer alcohol-free wines by the glass and the bottle. With a good preservation device, they will last as long as their alcohol-full counterparts.

India Sasha takes the wheel for Coca-Cola's Designated Driver campaign

For the 15th year in a row, Coca-Cola HBC's Designated Driver campaign is back to reward those drivers who get loved ones home safely after a night out. With a 36% increase in deaths on our roads so far this year, planning your route home and potentially being the Designated Driver has never been more important.

To reward those unsung heroes of Christmas who gift their friends a lift, the Coca-Cola Designated Driver is back in over 78 participating venues across Northern Ireland. Drivers can grab two soft drinks from the Coca-Cola range for free by simply making themselves known to bar staff!

To help get the message out, social media star and disability activist, India Sasha, has joined the campaign to raise awareness across Northern Ireland and encourage all of us to be the Designated Driver this Christmas.

Speaking at the campaign launch in Belfast, Head of Roads Policing, Graham Dodds said, "The Police service is pleased to support the launch

of this year's Designated Driver campaign. To date this year, 57 people have tragically lost their lives on roads across Northern Ireland, eleven more than this time last year.

"We all want to celebrate this Christmas season with our loved ones, but I urge everyone to ensure they plan ahead to get home safely this Christmas. The Designated Driver campaign rewards safe drivers, and I encourage those going out this Christmas to get involved.

"This Christmas, police will continue to use all the powers and legislation at our disposal, including the authorised checkpoints, to detect people who insist on driving after having taken drugs or alcohol. All motorists need to consider the consequences of their actions. Never take the risk of having even one drink if you are driving. The consequences can be catastrophic.

"Our road safety message is very simple; follow the Fatal Five, five simple rules which road users should follow in order to ensure they stay safe. These



Pictured at the launch of the Designated Driver initiative is India Sasha and Davide Franzetti, General Manager of Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland.

are - don't drink or take drugs and drive; slow down; don't be careless; always wear your seat belt and never use your mobile phone whilst driving."

Speaking on behalf of Coca-Cola HBC Ireland and Northern Ireland, Davide Franzetti, General Manager, said, "I am incredibly proud that we are marking 15 years of the Coca-Cola Designated Driver campaign of rewarding safe drivers and of partnering with our incredible customers in the hospitality industry who make this initiative possible. This is my first time seeing the initiative in action, and I am looking

forward to playing my part and being a Coca-Cola Designated Driver over the Christmas period."

Social media star, disability activist, and Coca-Cola Ambassador, India Sasha, said, "I am so excited to be celebrating the real Christmas heroes, our Designated Drivers, alongside Coca-Cola. As a recently qualified driver, I'm looking forward to being a Designated Driver for my friends and family over the festive season. There is nothing better than Christmas celebrations, and it's great knowing all your loved ones are home safely."

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Condolences to the CIU

It is with deep sadness that the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs extends heartfelt condolences to the entire membership of the Club & Institute Union (CIU) on the passing of their former President, Derek Dormer OBE.

Derek's legacy is one that has left an indelible mark on the history of the CIU and the club movement on the mainland.

Tributes have poured in for Derek, who peacefully passed away on September 25th at the age of 97. His remarkable tenure as President, spanning from 1981 to 2003, showcased his unwavering dedication to the values of the Union. Recognised for his outstanding contributions, Derek was

appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1991 for his 'services to working people.'

In addition to his pivotal role within the CIU, Derek remained an active and committed club man throughout his life, serving on the Committee of Higham Ferrers WMC for over 50 years.

His familiar presence at the CIU Conference Weekend, attending the Annual Meeting for over 60 years, reflected his enduring passion for the club community.

Current Union President, George Smith, aptly paid tribute to Mr Dormer, acknowledging his towering presence in the Union's history

and his significant contributions to the club movement.

Derek's instrumental role in establishing the Parliamentary Group for members' clubs at Westminster and the Committee of Registered Clubs Associations (CORCA) underscored his commitment to shaping legislation that impacted our clubs.

On behalf of the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs, we join President George Smith in expressing our deepest sympathy



to all of Derek's family and friends for their profound loss. May his legacy continue to inspire us all as we remember a leader, advocate, and friend to the club movement.

John Davidson, NIFC Chairman

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Employee retention in the current business climate - RKM Business Solutions

Employee retention is crucial for the success of any organisation, and in the current business climate, it's even more important to address the unique challenges employees may be facing.

Implementing some retention strategies to keep good employees is imperative to keep ahead of the competition and retain key skills within the business:

1. Flexible Work Arrangements

Where appropriate you may wish to try to accommodate a good healthy work-life balance approach and:-

- Offer flexible work hours or remote work options.
- Implement hybrid work models to accommodate various preferences

2. Competitive Compensation and Benefits

In order to retain key skills and high performing employees, staying competitive with salary and benefits in the market is essential:-

- Regularly review and adjust salaries to remain competitive in the market.
- Provide comprehensive benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and wellness programs.

3. Professional Development Opportunities

Ensuring the company has development opportunities and also invests in employees will support staff retention:

- Invest in training and development programs to help employees enhance their skills.
- Create a clear career path for employees and provide opportunities for advancement.

4. Recognition and Rewards

Recognition strategies and ensuring employees are aware of their performance efforts ensures employee engagement and long-term commitment:

- Acknowledge and reward employees for their hard work and achievements.
- Establish an employee recognition program to celebrate milestones and accomplishments.

5. Work-Life Balance

As with flexible working, more often employees require a healthy work life balance:

- Encourage a healthy work-life balance to prevent burnout.
- Consider implementing policies that assist with individual work-life balance requests or flexible working.

6. Employee Engagement

Highly engaged teams are 21% more productive:

- Foster a positive and inclusive work culture.
- Conduct regular employee surveys to gather feedback - it is important to act and make improvements based on the responses.

7. Communication and Transparency

Employees who feel part of the bigger picture of taking the business to the next level are more likely to remain within the business:

- Keep employees informed about organisational changes and future plans.
- Encourage open communication and provide a platform for employees to voice their concerns.

8. Wellness & Employee Assistance (EAP) Programmes

Employees appreciate employers who are invested in their health and well-being:

- Offer wellness initiatives to support employees' physical and mental health.
- Provide resources for stress management, fitness, and mental health support.
- Provide access to counselling services and resources for personal challenges.
- Demonstrate a commitment to supporting employees beyond the workplace.

9. Team Building Activities

Building high performing teams supports employee engagement:

- Organise team-building events to strengthen relationships among team members.
- Foster a sense of community within the organisation.

10. Feedback and Developmental Conversations

Regular performance conversations will assist employees with achieving their objectives:

- Conduct regular performance reviews and provide constructive feedback.
- Collaborate on creating development plans that align with employees' career goals.

11. Inclusive Leadership

An organisation with a good culture will retain employees as a "great place" to work:

- Promote diversity and inclusion within the workplace.
- Ensure that leadership is representative and committed to creating an inclusive environment.

12. Exit Interviews

Continual improvement is key to employee retention:

- Conduct exit interviews to understand the reasons for employee departures and gather valuable feedback for improvement.

By implementing a combination of these strategies, organisations can create a positive work environment that encourages employee loyalty and reduces turnover in the current business climate. It's essential to regularly assess and adjust these strategies based on the evolving needs and expectations of employees.



Ronnie McCullough,
Managing Director
Tel: 07835 255794



Nicola Curry,
HR Consultant



Alan Hall,
Health & Safety Specialist



Q. We have received a petition of 30 members requesting a SGM to vote on removing the committee from office. Since we have received the petition, several members who are on the petition have said they do not support it and did not know what they were signing. Should the SGM still go ahead if these members formally withdraw their support?

A. Most clubs have a mechanism where 30 or more members can sign a petition which will mean a SGM will be held and a vote taken on whether to remove the committee.

If it became apparent that some of the names of the list had requested that their names be removed and this caused the number of names on the list to fall below 30 then a new petition would have to be circulated and submitted to the committee.

An SGM can only be held if a valid petition of at least 30 names has been submitted and if those named on the petition objectively support the petition.

As a matter of course, we would suggest that any member leading such an operation obtains at least 30 names and ensures that all the persons signing the petition are aware

of the nature of the petition and that by signing the petition they are calling for an SGM to be held in order to vote on removing the committee.

If an SGM is successfully called then 75% of those members who attend the SGM are required to vote in favour of the motion removing the committee from office in order for it to succeed.

Q. Each year our club holds one or two events, the admissions to which have, in recent years, been by 'ticket only.' We have some members who question this and say that they must be allowed to enter the club, even if they do not wish to buy a ticket. We would appreciate your clarification of this matter.

A. I confirm that it is in order for an event to be promoted at the club, the admission to which is by ticket only. A member of a club does

not have an automatic legal right of entry to their club. Consequently, if a ticket only event is organised and promoted then members who do not wish to purchase a ticket may not enter a club at such an occasion.

Ticket events are few and far between and in most clubs only take place on New Year's Eve. By selling tickets for such an event the committee will at least be able to manage the number of staff required and levels of entertainment and refreshments required etc., which otherwise they may not be able to do on what can be either a very busy or a very quiet night.

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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Young adults more likely to drink at high risk levels

Young adult drinkers are more likely to binge drink and drink at high-risk or possible dependent levels compared to the rest of the population, according to new research by Drinkaware.

The research surveyed 5,213 young adults aged 18 to 24 over a six-year period and revealed that while more young adults are not drinking alcohol, rising from 14% in 2017 to 21% in 2023, four in five (79%) still drink alcohol.

The survey showed that young adults who drink alcohol are more likely to binge drink, and they are twice as likely to drink at high risk or possible dependent levels compared to the rest of the population.

The survey also found that compared to drinkers aged 25 and over:

- Young adult drinkers are more likely to screen positive for anxiety or depression.
- Young adult drinkers are more likely to experience memory loss, morning cravings, and failure to meet their usual responsibilities.
- Young adult drinkers are more likely to drink alcohol on nights out with friends but less likely to drink alone at home.
- Young adults drink less often, at least once a week.

Karen Tyrell, the charity Drinkaware's Chief Executive, said, "It is really encouraging to see more young adults choosing not to drink and those that

do, drink less often. These positive trends are welcome, but we must be careful that they don't mask some of the more concerning drinking behaviours that still exist. Young people are still more likely to binge drink than other age groups and suffer from memory loss and depression, linked to their drinking.



"We must ensure that young people's drinking habits are not ignored and they are properly addressed as part of any new alcohol strategy. We need to normalise conversations around alcohol, making it easier for people to speak up and get help

if they are worried about their own or others drinking."

- A full copy of The Sober Myth: Are Young Adults Really a Generation of Non-Drinkers is available to download for free at www.drinkaware.co.uk/research/research-and-evaluation-reports

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Please note.. being in contract does not necessarily mean that savings cannot be made.

MJU told us recently of a review they conducted for one client mid-way through a contract, and they identified over £14,000 in overcharges by their supplier. Their review resulted in a substantial refund.

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THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR.

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New NMW rates announced

In November, the government announced it had accepted the Low Pay Commission's recommendations on minimum wage rates to apply from 1st April 2024.

This is the largest ever increase to the minimum wage in cash terms, and businesses will need to prepare early for the increased employment costs.

For the first time, the National Living Wage will apply to all workers aged 21 and over, previously applying only to those aged 23 and over.

The annual increases to the minimum wage and national living wage with effect from 1st April 2024 are as follows:

21+	- £11.44 (+ £1.02ph)
18-20	- £8.60 (+ £1.11ph)
16-17	- £6.40 (+ £1.12ph)

and apprentices

Amidst the ongoing challenges posed by the rising cost of living, the upward adjustments to the National Minimum Wage stand as a positive development for millions of workers across the nation.



Nevertheless, the business landscape is currently grappling with financial difficulties, and recent reports indicate that the number of companies facing insolvency this year is on course to reach levels not seen since the 2009 financial crisis.

Navigating the heightened expenses associated with increased employment costs poses a significant challenge for numerous businesses, particularly those in the hospitality and care sectors.

We recommend that businesses, especially clubs, proactively prepare for the impending wage increases. This involves early assessment of staffing costs using the updated minimums and a thorough examination of profitability.

Considerations should include whether there is a need to adjust prices or explore cost-cutting measures in other areas. By taking a proactive stance now, businesses can mitigate the potential shock and avoid impulsive reactions when the increases take effect next year.

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sky sports

It's a sports bonanza in December, courtesy of Sky Sports

The breadth of live sports continues throughout December with a range of content on offer to provide the best sports experience for your members.

Top flight football is in full swing over the festive period amongst the World Darts Championship beginning on Friday 15th December. Your members have a ton of reasons to remain in venue, as they can look forward to two Carabao Cup fixtures, five golf Tournaments from the DP World Tour and PGA Tour, alongside action from the Premier League, EFL & SPFL.

The Premier League provides some great fixtures across December. Super Sunday on 3rd December brings two great match-ups with a London derby as West Ham take on Crystal Palace at 2pm and Manchester City host Tottenham at the Etihad Stadium in the 4.30pm kick-off. On Sunday 17th December, a historic rivalry returns as Manchester Utd head to Anfield to play Liverpool in the 4.30pm


kick-off, and on Saturday 23rd December Liverpool welcome Arsenal to Anfield in what is sure to be an epic contest between two former Premier League Champions at 5.30pm. This is just a handful of some of the great fixtures available. Visit MySkySports.com to find out when all the key matches are on in order to plan ahead.

Members will also be able to watch a host of EFL games including matches from the Championship and Carabao Cup throughout December. Tuesday 19th December sees Chelsea play Newcastle at 8pm, and Liverpool face West Ham on Wednesday 20th December at 8pm. A midlands derby is live on Friday 8th December with Coventry hosting Birmingham in the 8pm kick-off, and on Saturday 23rd December the race for promotion heats up as Leeds Utd face Ipswich in the 12.30pm kick-off.

The World Darts Championship begins on Friday 15th December lasting until Wednesday 3rd January, and there is also golf



© Getty Images



A selection of sports fixtures in December:

Wednesday 6th Dec.....Hearts v Rangers - 8pm (SPFL)

Thursday 7th Dec...Alfred Dunhill Championship (DP World Tour Golf)
World Champions Cup (PGA Tour Golf)

Friday 8th Dec.....Coventry v Birmingham, 8pm (EFL Championship)

Saturday 9th Dec... Sunderland v West Brom - 12.30pm (EFL Champ.)
Aston Villa v Arsenal - 5.30pm (Premier League)

Sunday 10th Dec.....South Africa v India (T20I Series, Cricket)
Kilmarnock v Celtic - 12pm (SPFL)
Luton Town v Manchester City - 2.00pm (Premier League)
Tottenham v Newcastle - 4.30pm (Premier League)
Tottenham v Manchester Utd - 6.45pm (WSL)

Tuesday 12th Dec..... Watford v Ipswich - 7.45pm (EFL Championship)
Sunderland v Leeds Utd - 8.00pm (EFL Championship)

Friday 15th Dec..... World Darts Championships (Begins)
Nottingham Forest v Tottenham - 8.00pm (Premier League)

Saturday 16th Dec..... Burnley v Everton, 5:30pm (Premier League)

Sunday 17th Dec..... South Africa v India (ODI Series, Cricket)
West Brom v Stoke - 12.00pm (EFL Championship)
West Ham v Wolves - 2.00pm (Premier League)
Liverpool v Manchester Utd - 4.30pm (Premier League)

Tuesday 19th Dec..... Chelsea v Newcastle - 8.00pm (Carabao Cup)

Wednesday 20th Dec... Liverpool v West Ham - 8.00pm (Carabao Cup)

Thursday 21st Dec.. Crystal Palace v Brighton - 8.00pm (Premier League)

Friday 22nd Dec.....Aston Villa v Sheffield Utd - 8.00pm (Premier League)

Saturday 23rd Dec.....Liverpool v Arsenal - 5.30pm (Premier League)

Sunday 24th Dec.....Motherwell v Rangers - 12.00pm (SPFL)
Wolves v Chelsea - 1.00pm (Premier League)

Saturday 30th Dec..... Celtic v Rangers - 12.30pm (SPFL)
Notts Forest v Man. Utd - 5.30pm (Premier League)

Sunday 31st Dec..... Fulham v Arsenal - 2.00pm (Premier League)

action including the Alfred Dunhill Championship 7th-10th December. The action doesn't stop there, as the NFL continues with key fixtures leading up to the play-offs and Super Bowl, giving your members front row seats to watch the great sporting content throughout December on Sky Sports.

Don't forget to promote all this content by using your MySkySports.com account to create posters and social media posts - helping members to plan ahead and visit your club more, so you can establish yourself as the best place to enjoy live sport.

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United Wines supports safe driving

Drivers say 'cheers to no alcohol' with complimentary Heineken 0.0 or Birra Moretti Zero

Craigavon-based United Wines, one of the biggest drinks distributors on the island of Ireland, has launched details of its festive safer driving campaign to help Northern Ireland revellers enjoy the party season and get home safely.

The Designated Driver campaign will help drivers enjoy their night out whilst getting friends and family home safely. Partygoers who volunteer themselves as a designated driver will be rewarded with a free Heineken 0.0 or Birra Moretti Zero when they make themselves known to staff at participating venues by showing their car keys at the bar.

"We are delighted once again to launch this important safety campaign to help 'drive home' the important message of getting home safely and keeping our roads alcohol free during the busy upcoming festive party season," said United Wines Brand Manager, Gemma Herdman.

"Those who volunteer to drive deserve to enjoy their sober night out also, so we are confident this Heineken 0.0 and Birra Moretti Zero initiative will help bring some extra festive cheer for all.

"Recent media reports on the dwindling number of taxi drivers operating post Covid has resonated with approximately 50% of no/low alcohol drinkers who are designated drivers. Getting home safely from a night out is becoming an increasingly challenging priority for people, especially at Christmas," she added.

"Research tells us that 62% of no/low alcohol drinkers stay within the beer category, which is why we have selected two of our most popular brands, Heineken 0.0 and Birra Moretti Zero, to give customers the opportunity to enjoy great tasting beers in a festive atmosphere whilst keeping safe on the roads," concluded Gemma.



Launching the United Wines safe driving campaign are (lr) Gemma Herdman and Maura Bradshaw of United Wines.

Statistics show that 45% of no/low alcohol drinkers want to see more options for them in the On Trade and almost 30% of no/low drinkers are drinking more no/low products than they were a year ago.

United Wines' Designated Driver campaign forms part of Heineken's global drive to promote responsible drinking, which includes the recruitment of Max Verstappen, F1 World

Champion for the past three years, as its new ambassador for Heineken 0.0.

United Wines was founded in 1985 and is headquartered in Craigavon with a 75,000 square foot warehouse and 6,000 square foot office. The company employs 50 people on the island of Ireland and boasts an extensive portfolio of products, including wine, beer, spirits and soft drinks.

Magners' Bee-Friendly campaign raises £21,250

This year, Magners partnered with the Bee Friendly Trust, supporting its vital work with honey bees and pollinators facing decline.

Bees are integral to Magners' cider production in Clonmel, making the charity collaboration a natural fit. Teaming up with Good-Loop, an online advertising company, Magners raised an impressive

£21,250 for the Bee Friendly Trust by incorporating a "listen-to-donate" format into Spotify ads.

Iain Telford, Magners' senior brand manager, emphasised the critical role of bees in Magners' production and expressed delight in contributing to the Bee Friendly Trust's mission. The partnership with Good-Loop not only positions

Magners in garden moments but also directs funds to a meaningful cause.

The fundraising initiative extends to Magners gigs, where attendees can donate and enjoy a specially crafted Bees Knees cocktail. This collaboration is a noteworthy achievement, showcasing Magners' pride in supporting a significant charity.

The Bee Friendly Trust, a UK-based charity, focuses on transforming neglected spaces into thriving floral habitats for honeybees and pollinators. Committed to reversing bee population decline, their initiatives involve planting wild flowers and creating habitats in public spaces, recognising the crucial role bees play in our ecosystem and food chain.





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Ronan Keating heads to the studio to celebrate Boxing Day for Rockshore's first Christmas campaign

Irish pop music royalty, Ronan Keating, has partnered with Rockshore to release the most refreshing anthem of the season, which sees Ronan head back to the studio to celebrate the best of Boxing Day, by getting together for some playful banter with mates.

Keating shares the mic with 'Rocko' to lay down their own distinctively witty lyrics to the Christmas classic, 'It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year,' crammed with affectionate slugging and having the craic at the expense of each other on their way to the bar.

Surviving Christmas traditions and family rituals is an extreme sport - board games, finding the perfect gift for granny, not burning the turkey - and for

lots of people, simply surviving Christmas dinner is their main focus when it comes to avoiding Christmas chaos over the holidays. Almost one in six adults surveyed (14%), admit they've skipped family Christmas traditions to meet their friends in the club/pub, with the same number admitting telling tales to family during the holidays to sneak off to meet friends.

Research commissioned by Rockshore discovered one third of adults in Ireland can't wait to reunite with their lifelong mates over the holidays. So, it's unsurprising that 48% adults rank Boxing Day and Christmas Eve above Christmas Day as the top days for celebrations over the holidays. One in four people (25%) would even rather



do all of the Christmas tidying up than miss Boxing Day pints with their mates.

Linda Bradley, Head of Beer, Diageo Ireland, said, "We're delighted to be teaming up with Ronan Keating to bring

some refreshment to the festive season with our first ever Christmas advert. We want to celebrate that affectionate banter that comes to life between best friends on the most refreshing day for a beer, Boxing Day."

J2O unveils new RTD Mocktails range

J2O has expanded its offering with ready-to-drink Mocktails, launching a three-strong premium range of non-alcoholic options. Strawberry & Orange Blossom Mojito, White Peach & Mango Daiquiri, and Blackberry & Blueberry Martini flavours were made available in October in on-trade venues. The move is set to help the brand expand its appeal into even more occasions, at a time when non-alcoholic options are continuing to gain relevance.

The non-alcoholic market has been growing steadily in recent years, with a third of UK adults abstaining from alcohol entirely, and is projected to reach a valuation of £432 million by 2027. The new Mocktails are designed for consumers seeking elevated experiences and interesting flavours that match up to the cocktail experience, just without any alcohol.

As one of the UK's favourite adult soft drinks, J2O is leading innovation in the category,



enticing more consumers to try something different. The new Mocktails range also allows operators to offer consumers

a trade-up option with a more premium experience based on popular cocktails they already know and love.

THIS IS ATLANTIC refreshment

THIS IS ROCKSHORE



ROCKSHORE

IRISH LAGER

An interview with George Jones

A music and broadcasting legend



Nigel Blair, Belfast 89FM.

George Jones is a man with a story to tell, having 30 years' experience of TV and radio presenting. This included 22 years with Radio Ulster presenting The Just Jones Show, where he was awarded the Sony Award for Best Local Radio Presenter.

George came from East Belfast, and at the age of 11, he took a keen interest in music. His sister gifted him his first guitar, bought from a furniture shop on credit.

He and three friends were anxious to learn their instruments. One of the boys went to private music lessons and rushed home to share what he had learned each week. Other than that, George was self-taught, going on to play guitar, bass guitar, and banjo. George told me, "I would practise at every opportunity, even in bed under the blanket. My mother would enter my room around 2am and tell me to be quiet and stop the music, as she did not want my father to be awakened in the early hours. I was young and had a wish to play on stage, and as it happened, the practice was well and truly worth it."

In 1970, George was asked to put a band together to play resident at the Abercorn Night Club in Corn Market, Belfast. George said, "I was over the moon. Our band line-up was myself on bass guitar, Billy Bingham on guitar, and Tommy Thomas on drums. Fred Hanna played keyboards for a while, to be replaced by Eddie McCrudden, and Harry Hickland on sax and clarinet.

At the beginning, we realised how important a name for the band would be. When talking to the owner of the Abercorn, Dermot O'Donnell, I asked if he had any ideas. Dermot said, "That's easy. You're playing in a club, and there is no doubt the audience will like your sound. That's your name, Clubsound, and it has been for 52 years."

Following the tragic bombing of the Abercorn, the band decided to go to South Africa, except for Tommy Thomas, who didn't like traveling. Upon their return to Northern Ireland, the band reformed, with the return of Tommy Thomas and new faces to the line-up - Crawford Bell on guitar and trumpet, who stayed for a year or so, and Dick Pentland on clarinet and sax.

Clubsound has an excellent collection of recordings, including five albums, one of which, 'Both Sides of Clubsound,' sold in excess of 25,000 copies in one year, earning them a silver disc. There were some fantastic singles, two of which became anthems, like 'Peace, the time is night' and 'The way old friends do.'

After a few years, Clubsound travelled to Miami, USA, under the management of Jack Rogers, who also owned the Edenmore Hotel. Another amazing time was shared with great entertainers, pleasing audiences around the globe. George said, "When we returned, I decided to take a year out, not total rest, as I would perform my one-man stand-up whenever requested."

In 1980, Clubsound reformed, the line-up then and to this day, George Jones on bass guitar; Alan McCartney on guitar, trombone, and sax; Davy McKnight on drums; Barry Woods on keyboards, flute, clarinet, sax, and trumpet; and Jimmy Black on guitar, banjo, and harmonica. Each member had wonderful vocals and combined excellent harmony. They toured Ireland and the UK many times, also touring with their musical 'Do You Come Here Often'. For 20 years, the show has been a favourite at the Waterfront Hall and Grand Opera House. They also supplied backing for the musical 'Rock'n' Roll Years and Dance Hall Days for seven years.

Their Final show as Clubsound will be at McClarnon's Ramble Inn on 8th Dec 2023. The final Rock'n' Roll Years and Dance Hall Days ending on 8th March 2024. For full details of the tour, contact David Hull Promotions.



Lastly, George and the boys will provide backing for the Night of Comedy tour with Roy Walker, Jimmy Cricket, Gene Fitzpatrick, and Adrian Walsh. Dates are 21st March - McNeill Theatre, Larne; 22nd March - Grand Opera House, Belfast; 23rd March - Riverside Theatre, Coleraine.

George will continue with his praise band, Heart and Soul, and with Mervyn Boyd and his Elvis Spectacular Show. George told me, "When I can no longer travel, I will retire to the paint shed, relax, and create art."

You can read all about George in his autobiography, 'Amazed, George Jones'; it would make a great Christmas gift.

Thank you, George, and the members, past and present, of Clubsound, for 52 years of excellence in entertainment. We wish you all a happy, healthy future in whatever you do next!

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Pitch perfect

Spotlight on football's finest in October

Linfield boss David Healy is the NIFWA Manager of the Month for October. The Blues enjoyed a 100% record in the month, with wins over Queen's University, Glentoran, Carrick Rangers, Cliftonville and Loughgall as they raced into an eight-point lead at the top of the table.

Healy said, "I'm pleased to win this award, not for my record, but because it means you're winning games. I'm the one collecting the prize, but this is a collective achievement. The players have been superb throughout the month and deserve the credit. We have a lot of big games coming up, starting with Larne on Saturday, so we have a lot of work to do."

It is the 16th time in his career that David Healy has won this award.

Coleraine star Conor McKendry has won the Dream Spanish Homes Player of the Month prize for October. The attacking midfielder scored five goals in the month including sublime braces against Glenavon and Newry City.

Upon collecting the prize, McKendry said, "I would like to thank Dream Spanish Homes and the Football Writers' for this prize. I think I've been playing well all season, but in October I've added goals which I think makes a big difference. Oran Kearney has always wanted me to score more goals, so I'm glad I've been able to deliver for him."

"On our day we can beat anyone in the league - we just need to turn good performances into victories consistently."

The October runner-up was Linfield defender Euan East, while Loughgall's Benji Magee took third spot.

Dundela midfielder Andy Hall is the Northern Ireland Football Writers' Association's Championship Player of the Month for October.

The former Glenavon man was a creative force for Dundela as they completed the month with a 100% record in the Playr-Fit Championship. The Duns defeated Portadown, local rivals Harland & Wolff Welders plus Knockbreda in the month, with Hall scoring in all three games.

Hall said, "I'm delighted to win this individual award, but with three big wins in the month, any of my teammates could have won this prize."

"As a team, we've just gone about our business quietly and won as many matches as possible. It's a very competitive league where anything can happen - we will just try and win as many matches as possible and see where it takes us."



Top: Linfield boss, David Healy collects the Manager of the Month award for the 16th time.
Middle: Coleraine midfielder, Conor McKendry, receives his award from NIFWA chairman Michael Clarke.
Bottom: Dundela midfielder, Andy Hall.

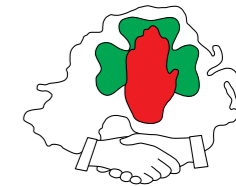
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For telephone queries call:
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(Please include your membership fee or completed standing order form with your application)

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Seconded by: Chairman

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