

Fundamental changes planned for *eircom* League Prize fund doubles as radical structural changes put forward

The *eircom* League is to undergo fundamental changes over the next 3 years with a near doubling of the prize fund and widespread structural, competition and governance changes.

The proposals to radically overhaul the League arose following the work of an implementation committee charged with evaluating the Sep 2005 Genesis “White paper” on the *eircom* League. This paper – Genesis II – recommended radical changes to ensure the long-term survival and financial stability of the League.

The key changes recommended by the Committee are:

- Prize fund investment pot to rise to €803,000 (from €450,000 in 2006; €98,000 in 2004)
- This includes grants of €120,000 for community related Club Promotions Officers
- Premiership winner to net €225,000 (was €100,000 in 2006; €18,000 in 2004) – represents a 12 fold increase in 3 years
- 1st division winner to net €50,000 (was €25,000 in 2006; €10,000 in 2004) – a 5 fold increase in 3 years
- 4 tier League structure with Premiership, 1st Division, new “A” Championship and under 20 league from 2008
- Premiership to be reduced from 12 to 10 teams from 2009
- Responsibilities of Management committee and Board of Control of *eircom* League to be assumed by 6 person committee including 2 outside specialists
- Mandatory participation agreements to be introduced
- Merge the *eircom* League with the FAI

An Independent Assessment Group has been appointed to use set criteria to rank clubs for the 2007 season to determine which clubs populate the Premiership/1st divisions. This committee is chaired by Des Casey, UEFA Life Member and includes Dublin City Manager John Fitzgerald, former Irish International Niall Quinn and former Chairman of the Irish Sports Council Pat O’Neill.

Commenting on the proposals, FAI Chief Executive Officer said that the Genesis II white paper on the League had indicated that a no-change situation was untenable and that change had to be radical. “The proposals being put forward will bring the League to a whole new level”, he said. “There is a clear and progressive path forward”, he added. “The doubling of prizefund investment money, the reshaped 4 tier structure and the streamlined governance structures will provide a new base for developing the *eircom* League, making it more competitive, sustainable and financially viable”, Delaney said. “I believe we have one chance to get this right”, he added.

On the subject of change, Delaney said that the 1st Genesis report in 2002 has been implemented and the FAI was now a radically different organisation to that which existed in 2002. “We have a new management team in place working alongside the many volunteers who contribute so much to the game and this structure is working very well”, he said. “Terrific work is being done across the country and the result is that the game of football is now the biggest team sport in the country”, he added.

Delaney said that very few people outside the game understood that the *eircom* League is not run by the FAI. “This merger, recommended as part of the Genesis II white paper gives the chance to merge the League with the FAI and bring the same type of progress to the senior domestic game and hopefully achieve the same type of results over a period”, he concluded.

Chairman of the *eircom* League Paddy McCaul said he fully endorsed the pathway proposed in the document issued today. “The proposals generated by the Committee are strong, well thought out and are the basis on which we can achieve what we all want - a successful and sustainable National League, played in good stadia, with ever improving standards on and off the pitch”, he said.

“There is something to play for in all tiers of the new League system and the prospect of a more appealing product for supporters”, he added. “These are fundamental changes, yet they are fair”, McCaul stated. “As Chairman of the *eircom* League, I endorse wholeheartedly the proposals and look forward to hearing the views of the clubs over the coming days and weeks”, he concluded.

The proposals are due to be put before a Special General Meeting of the *eircom* League clubs next month.

The full set of proposals as recommended by the Committee is available at www.fai.ie

End

Declan Conroy
Director Strategic, Stadium and Media Affairs
Football Association of Ireland
80 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
087 9159009
declan.conroy@fai.ie