



FAI / *eircom*League Implementation Committee

Proposals on the strategic direction of the

National League 2007 - 2012

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Foreword

Since its publication in September 2005, the Genesis 'White Paper' (Genesis II) on the strategic Direction of the National League has been the subject of many hours of deliberation and debate.

The work of the FAI / *eircom*League Implementation Committee has focussed on the recommendations in the Genesis II and how they could be rolled out in the best interests of the development of the game in Ireland. We believe that the proposals outlined in this document meet those parameters. Genesis II recommended actions across 10 key areas. The position in relation to each of those key areas is outlined here and detailed in the body of this Proposals Document:

- 1 *Merge fully with the FAI* – Agreed, subject to winding up of League;
- 2 *Change management structure running the League* - Clubs Annual Convention to elect Chairman & Vice Chairman of FAI National League Committee (to be a fully endorsed and supported FAI standing committee by FAI Rule change). League Director will be appointed to act as Secretary to the FAI National League Committee and to head up a fully integrated Unit of the FAI, fulfilling all the functions of a senior manager within the Association;
- 3 *Revamp League structures* - New three-tier competition structure proposed for inauguration in 2008 season in addition to a re-graded National underage league competition;
- 4 *Create mandatory participation agreements* - Signing and adhering to Participation Agreements to be a prerequisite to competing in the new competition structure;
- 5 *Prioritise investment in facilities development* - Integral part of FAI plans for capital investment in conjunction with Dept. Arts, Sport & Tourism;
- 6 *Step change in approach to marketing* – Agreed and recently appointed FAI Commercial Director will lead this work on behalf of FAI and the participant clubs (and see 10 below);
- 7 *Improve club administration* - Full package of support services, benefits, potential rewards/ incentives etc is to be generated and linked to off-pitch performance;
- 8 *Introduce wage controls* - Spending to a maximum of 65% of turnover on players' wages and costs to be monitored and enforced in Club Licensing 07;
- 9 *Create clear development structures* - Full integration with all FAI structures etc will lead to closer work with Technical Department and other facets of the game in Ireland. Youth development will become an ever more critical element of Club Licensing Scheme;
- 10 *Invest heavily in community links* - The clubs themselves fully recognise this need. In 2007 FAI will make €120,000 available to Premiership clubs to deploy Club Promotion Officers to market the club and all its activities at local level to boost revenue, attendances, interest in the game, links with other local clubs and organisations promoting soccer, in the club's catchment area.

The details of these proposals are described in this document. I look forward to discussing them with our stakeholders in the coming weeks. In particular, I hope we can agree on these proposals and work together on the required programme of work that builds the sustainable, vibrant League that we all want and know that football in this country needs.

David Blood, President FAI
Chairman
FAI / *eircom*League Implementation Committee

Executive Summary

Background – in brief

- ‘White Paper’ (Genesis II) on the strategic direction of the League published September 2005.
- FAI Board and *eircom*League adopt the Report February 2006.
- February 2006 – FAI / *eircom*League Implementation Committee convened and Project Manager appointed to oversee merger process.
- FAI / *eircom*League Implementation Committee comprises David Blood, FAI President, (Chairman); Paddy McCaul Chairman *eircom*League; Eamon Naughton, Hon Treasurer *eircom*League; Michael Cody, FAI Hon Secretary; Vincent Cummins, Affiliates Representative and senior FAI staff; John Delaney, CEO; John Byrne, Acting League Director; Declan Conroy, Director of Strategy & Pat Costello, Director of Corporate Affairs.
- 10 meetings to May 2006 when these proposals were finalised.

Existing Membership Structure Rules / Activities / Operations - *eircom*League

The National League comprises 22 member clubs. Membership entitles each club to participate in competition organised by the League and to nominate a representative to sit on FAI Council.

The League is bound together by its Rules as is the norm for an unincorporated association. A General Meeting must be held every year and such a meeting is required to change the Rules. The League Rules also attest to the authority of the FAI (and its Rules) as the Governing Body for association football in this country.

Each club appoints a representative on the League’s Management Committee, which meets regularly to review operations and make policy decisions.

A Board of Control elected from the body of the Management Committee (and including the Chairman and Honorary Treasurer elected at the League’s AGM) oversees the ongoing management, control and administration of the League’s business, finances and football affairs.

Executive support to these committees, the daily administration of the Premier League, 1st Division and U 21 competitions are driven by the Acting League Director and his staff.

Entry fees in 2006 are €10,000 for Premiership and €5,000 for 1st Division.

Prize funds in 2006 will be €355,000 - €233,500 for Premiership and €81,000 for 1st Division with prize funds also offered for League Cup and Fair Play competitions. (Total National League Prize funds in 2004 was €88,000).

Key points re proposals on future strategic direction of the National League 2007-2012:

1 Governance / Structure

- League in its present state as an unincorporated association to be wound up.
- FAI is owner / promoter of “the League” for next 5 years
- League will be managed through the work of FAI National League Committee
- An Annual Convention involving all Premiership and 1st Division clubs will select Chairman & Vice Chair of FAI National League Committee.
- FAI National League Committee will be established under FAI Rule as a fully recognised standing committee of the Association.
- The Chairman shall continue to be an Honorary Officer of the FAI (Rule 24)
- 22 seats on FAI Council will be retained for League Clubs
- League Director will head up League Administration Unit, which will be a fully integrated Unit of FAI and will enjoy cross-unit support and access to expertise of Media, Finance, Commercial and Marketing specialists within those Units.
- Full review of new structure @ end of year 3

2 Competitions

- 12 clubs in Tier 1 (Premiership) for 2007 and 2008 seasons.
- 10 clubs Tier 1 (Premiership) by 2009.
- Prize fund for Premiership in 2007 = €450,000 with winner getting €225,000.
- 1st Division Prize fund 2007 = €100,000.
- 2008 will be a 'transitional' season when 3 clubs will be relegated & 1 promoted
- 2008 will also see the introduction of an 'A' Championship – non-league participants will require a 'developmental licence' to participate (to be modelled on existing Club Licensing Scheme).
- 'Trapdoor' relegation (as a feature of 1st Division) will become live on the initiation of 'A' Championship in 2008.
- U 21 League will be strictly confined to U 20 age grade from 2008.
- From 2009, movement between Premiership & 1st Division will be 1 relegated & 1 promoted.
- And 4 additional clubs (8/9 Premiership & 2/3 1st Division) will be involved in a play off series.
- Play-off series to be generated with commercial and sporting possibilities fully exploited in terms of rewards / exposure etc.
- Movement between 'A' Championship and 1st Division will be by way of play off between last in 1st Division and 'A' qualifier.
- Total FAI investment in League re prize funds etc = €803,000 in 2007 (from €450,000 in 2006).

3 Participation Agreement – contract between promoter and competitors

- Participation Agreement to be clearly defined with appropriate support structure
- Participation in each league is at all times dependent on adherence to terms of Agreement
- Full package of support services, benefits, potential rewards/ incentives etc is to be generated and linked to on-pitch and off-pitch performances, e.g. in 2007 FAI will make €120,000 available to Premiership clubs to deploy Club Promotion Officers to market the club and all its activities at local level to boost revenue, attendances, interest in the game, links with other local clubs and organisations promoting soccer, in the club's catchment area.

4 Independent Assessment Process

- An Independent Assessment Group (IAG), chaired by Des Casey, UEFA Life Member and former FAI President, will work with set criteria to rank clubs 1 to 22 by end of November 2006.
- Subject to ratification by FAI Board, Clubs ranked 1 to 12 as an outcome of the Independent Assessment Process will compete in the *eircom* Premiership and those ranked 13 – 22 will compete in the 1st Division for 2007 season
- The FAI / *eircom* League Implementation Committee has agreed the criteria to be used by the IAG and on-pitch and off-pitch performances are given equal weighting.
- The IAG will allocate points against criteria such as licensing compliance, infrastructure, youth development and target markets / attendance figures.
- In addition a scoring system based on FIFA templates is in place to allow for clubs to be ranked according to their performances from 01-05 seasons in League, European, FAI & League Cups.
- Using the same system clubs will be ranked at the end of the 2006 season.
- Clubs will have the opportunity to present their plans for strategic development to the IAG and each will be given time to meet and discuss those plans with the IAG.
- In the event that clubs finish equal on all points allocated against the criteria then their league standing at the end of 2006 season will decide their final ranking under the IAG process.
- At the completion of its deliberations the IAG will present its recommendations to FAI Board.

Introduction

The need for change was agreed by all stakeholders on the adoption of the 'White Paper' on the future strategic direction of the League (Genesis II) published in September 2005. The figures produced on analysing the clubs audited returns to the 2006 Club Licensing Scheme unequivocally support this contention - Total costs ran at €18,644,042, with turnover totalling €15,422,696 meaning the League as a whole posted an operating loss of €3,221,346 for 2005. This is clearly unsustainable. These figures along with factors listed in Genesis II like UEFA League ranking, poor attendances, inadequate facilities, sponsorship share and so on means the time is ripe for change.

A joint committee of FAI and *eircom*League representatives (referred to as the Implementation Committee) was appointed to work from the 'Genesis II' blueprint and bring forward proposals that would seek to secure a new and vibrant future for the National League.

At a special general meeting of the League in February 2006, the League clubs approved in principle the merger of FAI and the *eircom*League. In addition, an undertaking was given that all proposals in relation to the merger process and the future of the National League would be referred back to the clubs.

This document honours that undertaking and covers four major areas;

1. Governance
The proposed governance structure, to run National League competitions for the next 5 seasons.
2. Competitions
The competitions structure which would be put in place to provide player and club pathways to enshrine the National League as the pinnacle of the game in Ireland
3. Participation Agreement
An outline of the Participation Agreement to clearly establish obligations and expectations of those promoting and competing in the Premiership and the 1st Division
4. Independent Assessment Process
A description of the Independent Assessment Process, which would see clubs ranked from 1-22 against a set of agreed criteria by an independent group. Those ranked 1-12 would participate in the Premiership and 13-22 would play in the 1st Division next season subject to ratification of FAI Board and terms and conditions of the Participation Agreement as described in section 3.

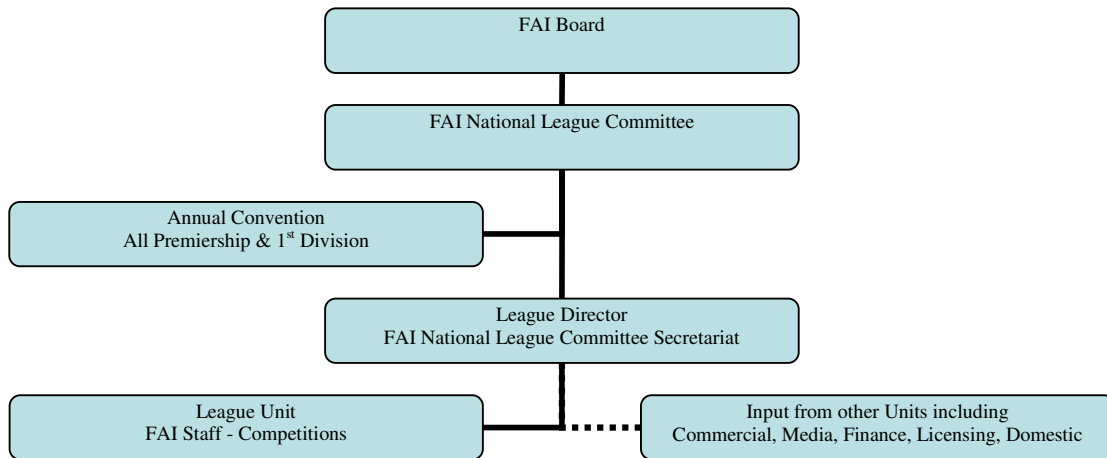
In producing these proposals, the Implementation Committee focussed on the design parameters as demanded by the Genesis II on the future strategic direction of the League:

- Provide high quality football
- Represent a new beginning for the league
- More attractive for private investment
- More attractive for public investment
- Improve the competitiveness of clubs in Europe
- Support the strengthening of the international team
- Provide a pinnacle for the development pathway (players and organisations)
- Optimise the commercial potential of the league
- Minimise costs of participation for clubs
- Provide an adequate geographic spread of clubs

It is suggested that the proposals to follow capture those key recommendations.

1. Governance

It is proposed that the following structure will be applied:



Proposed governance structure

1.1 Annual Convention

An Annual Convention of clubs is proposed so that clubs can select the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the new FAI National League Committee.

The Chairman shall be an independent chairman who shall not while holding the position of Chairman, be a director or other officer of any participant club or of a holding company of any such club and who shall not, either by himself or with one or more associates, either directly or indirectly have any interest in the management or administration of any participant club.

The Vice Chairman must be similarly independent.

Convention is the forum at which clubs would nominate their representatives to FAI standing committees

The Convention would act as a formal opportunity for exchanging ideas etc with FAI and colleague clubs. FAI will continue to encourage information exchange, promote best practice etc by hosting clubs workgroups on focussed topics (which would be nominated by clubs and / or National League Committee. Such meetings might be scheduled on a quarterly basis on focused topics like marketing, media, technical issues etc)

The procedures to run the Annual Convention will mirror existing standing orders governing the running of General Meetings. These standing orders will be generated by the FAI Rules Workgroup. Individuals / clubs will be encouraged to bring proposals to the Convention on such matters as effect the League Competition.

1.2 FAI National League Committee

The FAI National League Committee will assume responsibility for all contractual matters on behalf of FAI (subject to approval at FAI EGM provisionally scheduled for September). Issues arising between clubs / competitors and FAI / promoters will be dealt with under the terms of the Participation Agreements entered into.

In keeping with other FAI standing committees, the composition of the FAI National League Committee is to be written into and regulated by FAI Rule (Rule 23).

The FAI National League Committee will assume many of the responsibilities currently carried out by Management Committee & Board of Control.

The FAI National League Committee will comprise; Chairman & Vice Chair (appointed from Clubs' Convention), FAI Council nominee (Affiliates' representative), FAI CEO, Marketing Specialist and Legal / Financial specialist.

The League Director will act as Secretary to this Committee.

The FAI National League Committee will uphold the Rules as described in the terms, conditions and schedules of the Participation Agreement and be bound by their provisions.

1.3 FAI National League Committee subcommittees – proposed – (others may be added)

The FAI National League Committee will have the authority to appoint its own sub-groups and to access other expertise as it sees fit. This authority will be included in its standing orders.

- Registrations sub-group
- Rules Workgroup
- Security Committee

FAI Board will continue to appoint Chairman and members of FAI Disciplinary Commission. The FAI National League Committee will work closely with the Disciplinary Commission. The League Director and Secretariat will provide all required support to ensure the FAI Disciplinary Commission can carry out its functions effectively and efficiently.

1.4 Pre v Post merger structure

Structure / Area of activity / Rules	Structure currently in place supporting those levels of operation	2007-2012 Proposed Structure to support levels of operation post merger
Structure / membership	The League holds AGM – Each member club can attend	Annual Convention for participants in FAI National League Premiership and 1 st Division.
Management / Organisation	Management Committee - Each club can nominate a member.	FAI National League Committee with Chair & Vice Chair elected @ Convention.
Playing / competition	Board of Control - Nominated by Mgt Cttee Sub-Committees – Appointed (as per relevant rules)	Sub-Committees – Appointed as required
Executive support / Administration	League Office – Acting Director & his staff	FAI League Director & League staff (re competitions) in conjunction with Licensing / Compliance Unit; Media Unit, Commercial & Finance Units.

2. Competitions

2.1 2007

In 2007 the following competitions will be promoted and run by the FAI National League Committee on behalf of clubs which have entered into a Participation Agreement with the FAI –

- Premiership - 12 teams
- Division 1 – 10 teams
- U-21 – number of entrants to be confirmed

The exact make up of the Premiership and 1st Division for the start of the 2007 season will be decided as a consequence of the Independent Assessment Process, which is detailed in section 4 of this document.

In addition each club will need to have secured the licence required to compete in the competition as provided for in the terms of the Participation Agreement, which is outlined below in section 3.

2007 will see a substantial increase in the level of prize monies being made available to the competitors. An increase in fees Premiership (€17,000) and 1st Division (€8,000) is also proposed.

At the end of the 2007 regular season, there will be one automatic promotion (Division 1 winners) and one club automatically relegated (last place in Premiership).

In addition, Winner Division 1 to have once-off play off with Winners League Cup for Setanta Cup place (worth €15,000 in 2006).

A play off series as outlined below will decide the final place in 2008 Premiership:

- 2nd Div 1 vs. 3rd Div 1 in once-off play off match.
- Club finishing 2nd gets home advantage.
- Winner of 2nd vs. 3rd plays 11th place finisher in Premiership home and away. (1st Division side to have choice of home advantage in 1st or 2nd game of the series).
- The exact details of this play off series may be subject to change as directed by amendments to League Rules
- Winner of Play off series gains final Premiership place for 2008 season.

Prize money 2006 (€355,000) v Proposed prize money 2007 (€603,000)

Prize fund	Premier League 06	<i>eircom</i> Premiership 07	1 st Division 06	<i>eircom</i> 1 st Division 07	League Cup 06	League Cup 07	Fair Play 06 & 07	Total
1	100,000	225,000	25,000	50,000	15,000	10,000	4500 x2	
2	45,000	100,000	12,500	30,000	7,500	5,000	2,000 x2	
3	25,000	50,000	7,500	10,000	2,500	2,500		
4	15,000	25,000	6,000	6,000	2,500	2,500		
5	10,000	15,000	5,000	4,000				
6	7,500	12,000	5,000					
7	6,000	9,500	5,000					
8	5,000	7,500	5,000					
9	5,000	6,000	5,000					
10	5,000		5,000					
11	5,000							
12	5,000							
Totals	233,500	450,000	81,000	100,000	27,500	20,000	13,000	583,000

2.2 2008

This is a 'transitional' season, which should see the following 3 major developments take shape:

- 2.2.1 Premiership to be reduced from 12 to 10 clubs for 2009 season
- 2.2.2 Proposed inaugural running of 'A' Championship (see below).

2.2.3 Age grade National Competition currently run as U 21 League is to change to U 20 grade.

In 2008 the following competitions will be promoted and run by the FAI National League Committee on behalf of clubs which have entered into a Participation Agreement with the FAI –

- Premiership - 12 teams
- Division 1 – 10 teams
- ‘A Championship’ - entry for non-League entities by application only => number of entrants to be confirmed
- U-20 – number of non-League entrants to be confirmed (all League clubs must have team)

2.2.1 Premiership & 1st Division (2008)

At the beginning of the season the Premiership will comprise 12 teams and the 1st Division will have 10 teams. At the end of the season, 3 clubs will be automatically relegated and 1 promoted.

No play off series is required because automatic relegation and promotion will apply.

Clubs finishing 12th, 11th & 10th in the Premiership will be relegated to compete in 1st Division 2009.

1st Division Winners will be promoted and compete in Premiership in 2009 season.

2.2.2 Inaugural Running of ‘A’ Championship

The ‘A’ Championship outlined here, for initiation in 2008 season, developed from the accepted need to link underage competition, national league standard competition and other structures operating at non-professional level, builds on the need to ‘enliven’ the prospect of relegation from 1st Division and the objectives of the FAI to provide player and organisational pathways to the highest level of the game in Ireland.

Participation of non-league organisations / entities / clubs will be by application. Applicants will be expected to meet certain criteria as part of their developmental pathway towards full licensing compliance. Such criteria will be set out in a ‘developmental’ licence to be generated in conjunction with the Licensing Scheme.

The ‘Developmental Licence’ process for participants in ‘A’ Championship will provide guidance and act as a stepping stone for clubs with ambitions to progress to National League Status.

The ‘A’ Championship will comprise 20-30 teams depending on take-up from Div 1 clubs and strategic needs of FAI. The cost of entry to the A Championship will be €5,000 per team.

Proposals for A Championship require further work. It is proposed that a Project Group would be established as a sub-group of the FAI National League Committee to fully develop issues such as the developmental licence, registrations, integration with other competitions and so on. Such proposals would be finalised in early 2007 to allow non-League clubs / entities to prepare fully for 2008 season.

A forum for those entities to contribute to the deliberations of the National League Committee and to clubs’ deliberations at Convention should also be looked at by this Group.

Entrants

How the ‘A’ Championship might work, depending on no of entries, is outlined below. The list includes reserve teams from Premiership (compulsory for Premiership clubs to have reserve / ‘A’ team). Groups could also include reserve teams from 1st Division clubs (it will be optional for 1st Division clubs to enter ‘A’ Championship).

The list below is based on entries to 2006 U21 League, produced here for modelling purposes only:

In this set-up, 2 groups of 10 are established. (If more applicants are accepted then a third and fourth group can be added e.g. x3 groups of 8). Groups will be based on the twin imperatives of keeping costs to a minimum while providing meaningful competition for the players involved.

Group 1	Group 2	
Bohemians	Bray	P
Drogheda	Cork	P
Derry	Waterford	P
Longford	UCD	P
Sligo	Shelbourne	P
St Patrick's	Dublin City	P
Inisowen	Kerry League	
Mayo League	Garda	
Belgrove	Dublin University	
Mullingar Athletic	Tullamore	

Playing season for example given above = home & away series run in tandem with National League Season. Most games to be played on Saturdays.

Top sides in each group will compete to win 'A Championship' outright.

If no. of entrants is as above then Winners Group 1 vs. Winners Group 2 in 'A Championship' Final.

If more groups, then play off series (3 groups) or semi-finals and final (4 groups) will be staged.

In the event that Group winners compete for existing League clubs, the A Championship Qualifier series will be staged between top non-League sides in each Group, which finish no lower than 4th in the group. The play off for the Qualifier spot will mirror the championship play offs (in terms of no. groups, no. games etc).

In the event that only one non-League side finishes 4th or higher in its group it will be deemed to be the 'A Qualifier' and will proceed directly to the promotion / relegation play off with last place finisher in 1st Division.

'A Qualifier' to meet last in Div 1 to decide final spot in subsequent season's 1st Division.

In the event that no non-League side secures 4th place or higher in its group and thus no A Championship Qualifier emerges, the decision to reinstate the last place finisher in 1st Division will rest with the FAI National League Committee and be contingent on that club retaining its licence / adhering to Participation Agreement.

As per the overarching principles governing these competitions, a club new to National League is eligible to take up its place only if meeting Club Licensing requirements in order to enter into a Participation Agreement with the FAI.

Building the capacity of the Licensing Compliance Unit should also provide for support to be made available to organisations competing in A League, which harbour ambitions to compete at National League level. Likewise, clubs competing in the 1st Division will be encouraged and assisted in their efforts to meet conditions of 'A' licence so that promotion gained on the pitch is matched by progress off-the-pitch.

2.2.3 U 20 League (from U 21) to compete for the Tony O'Neill Memorial Cup
This competition will operate strictly as an Under 20 competition. Sanctions will be imposed for breaches of the age grading.

Entrants (non-league entities are listed here for modelling purposes only)

10 U 20 teams from Premiership (compulsory for Premiership clubs to have U 20 team)

10-12 teams from 1st Division (compulsory for 1st Division clubs to have U 20 team)

6 non-National League clubs (e.g. Inisowen, Mayo league, Belgrove, Mullingar)

3rd Level Institutions (e.g. UCD, DU, UCC, UL, LIT, IT Blanchardstown, IT Tallaght)

Academies (e.g. FÁS Academy Castlebar)

League groups and set up will depend on number of entries. It may be played on home & away basis in large group or round robin matches in smaller groups leading to play off series v other group etc.

Based on 2006 U21 League there would be 2 groups of 10.

Organisers would look to provide a playing season of 18 matches.

This League will run September – April and initially matches would take place at weekends but progressing to midweek games.

Incentive package (including prize money) 2008 (proposed)

The Prize funds / incentive package for 2008 will be €823,000 including €20,000 for winners of 'A' Championship, Clubs Promotions Officers subsidies and TV fees.

2.3 2009

In 2009 the following competitions will be promoted and run by the FAI National League Committee on behalf of clubs which have entered into a Participation Agreement with the FAI –

- Premiership - 10 teams
- Division 1 – 12 teams
- A Championship – entry for non-League entities by application only => number of entrants to be confirmed
- U-20 – number of entrants to be confirmed

Movement between Premiership & 1st Division will be via one automatic promotion and one automatic relegation place (subject to licence) and a play off series.

Premiership – Last place (10th) will be relegated.

9th place finisher will enter into a play off to retain its place in Premiership.

1st Division Winners will gain promotion.

2nd and 3rd in 1st Division will play off.

Winners of that once-off match will play 9th place in Premiership home and away to decide on final Premiership place.

Movement between 1st Division and 'A' Championship will be via a promotion / relegation play off between last place (12th in 1st Division) and 'A' Championship Qualifier (non-League entity) seeking promotion to 1st Division.

As part of its ongoing work in overseeing the continuing development of the League, the FAI National League Committee will be charged with reviewing upwards the amount of prize money on offer by the start of the 2009 season.

3. Participation Agreement

From 2007 onwards, each club wishing to participate in the Premiership or the 1st Division must be in a position to secure the requisite licence in order to comply with the terms and conditions of the Participation Agreement. Therefore, the outcomes of all promotion / relegation fixtures are conditional on the licence the club is eligible for.

In the event that a club gaining promotion is not in a position to secure the appropriate licence (e.g. 'A' licence to compete at Premiership level), the club 'relegated' in regular season or as a result of a play offs, will retain its existing league status (provided it retains its licence).

Clubs currently holding 'B' licences (e.g. Division 1 clubs) are to be encouraged to plan and build towards securing 'A' licences so that progress on the pitch resulting in promotion is supported and consolidated by off-pitch developments.

The following are the founding principles on which the Agreements are drafted:

- 🔑 Based on the principle of a contract
- 🔑 Club invited to participate in the League – to do so they must sign the Participation Agreement
- 🔑 The contract and following schedules are binding.
- 🔑 The schedules covered by the contract will be comprehensive and specific. The schedules will act as the Clubs' handbook (similar to the FA Premier League and The Football League handbooks) and will be published and given to each club.
- 🔑 The Participation Agreement is linked strongly to the Club Licensing Scheme and participants must hold the required licence to compete in the FAI National League.
- 🔑 Distinctions between the tiers of the national league will be made within the schedules.
- 🔑 Commitments to good behaviour, compliance with the letter and spirit of the laws of the game, etc. are universal.

The Participation Agreement – structure & management

The Participation Agreement comprises a Contract and 4 Schedules. The schedules are detailed Rules and Regulations governing the operation of such matters as 1, League Rules, 2, Club Licensing, 3, Commercial Rules and 4, Anti-Doping.

Each rule/condition is supported by a governing / quasi-legal infrastructure allowing for critical aspects of the management of this agreement to be discharged consistently and fairly. The disciplinary infrastructure is sketched below. This structure allows for charges to be proffered / complaints made, sanctions imposed, appeals heard and disputes resolved.

In the event that a dispute arises, the process to be followed will be clear and in accordance with FAI Rules 28 & 29, which covers Appeals and Arbitration.

The FAI National League Committee will be directed under its terms of reference to seek to mediate and come to an agreed solution as soon as possible in the event of a dispute. However, certain matters such as fixtures will not be subject to appeals. There will also be a number of strict liability offences, which will carry fixed penalties.

These matters will be clearly listed as part of the relevant schedules attaching to the Participation Contract.

Participation Agreement (Contract + 4 Schedules) support structure

Schedule	Area covered	'Court' of First Instance	Appeals Process (see notes)	Arbitration (see notes)
1	League Rules 07, setting out the rules relating to the format and playing of the league and including Disciplinary Procedures, establishing a disciplinary process and sanctioning authority with respect to disciplinary matters arising	FAI Disciplinary Commission	FAI Appeals Board pursuant to FAI Rule 28 (though certain strict liability offences and fixed penalties will apply for example re fixtures)	Arbitration pursuant to FAI Rule 29
2	Licensing Scheme – guidelines, assessment process, timeline, sanctions	First Instance Committee	Licensing Appeals Board	
3	Commercial Rules, regulating the exploitation of commercial rights, central sponsorship/TV revenues	League Director & FAI National League Committee	Strict liability offences and fixed penalties to apply	
4	2007 Anti-Doping programme, setting out the full programme governing sample collection, analysis, disciplinary processes	ISC	As per ISC Appeals system	CAS

4. Independent Assessment Process

Clubs wishing to participate in the National League next season (07) will be invited to take part in an independent assessment process, which will be overseen by an Independent Assessment Group (IAG).

This application and assessment process will determine eligibility for membership of the National League and which tier each organisation should participate in for the 07 playing season (*eircom*Premiership or 1st Division)

On completion of its deliberations IAG will provide a list of those applicants who should, in the opinion of the IAG be offered Participation Agreements for the 07 season.

The recommendations of the IAG will be subject to the final approval of the FAI Board.

Successful applicants will be subject to 'terms and conditions of participation' as defined in the Participation Agreements when competing in the National League next season. These conditions complement and build on the work of the existing UEFA Club Licensing Scheme.

The Independent Assessment Group (IAG) will act in accordance with the authority vested in it by the FAI.

As a sub-committee of FAI, the IAG will be bound by the rules governing the work of all such committees, including the expectation of confidentiality, behaviour consistent with the position aims and image of the Association and so on.

In the course of the independent assessment process, IAG members will be obliged to:

- Apply in rigorous and diligent fashion the criteria for eligibility as approved by the FAI and the League.
- Consider only material provided by the applicants in response to FAI invitations to apply to participate in the *eircom*League 07.
- Disregard unsolicited applications, approaches and / or material from any source. Any breach of this condition should be reported in a timely fashion to the IAG membership, which can forward its concerns / recommended course of action (including disqualification?) to FAI for its consideration of further action (if required).
- Ensure each applicant club is provided with every opportunity within the agreed timeframe to match the criteria laid down for successful applicants.
- Maintain the independence and integrity of the assessment process while being prepared to work to the timeline required for the inauguration of the new *eircom*League season 07.
- Incorporating the statistical analysis of the historical on-pitch criteria, the outcomes of the licensing process and the findings of the IAG against the criteria and the meetings with clubs, the IAG will present a review of its work, a rationale for its findings including a list of recommendations to FAI Board at the conclusion of the 06 playing season to form the *eircom*Premiership and 1st Division for the 07 season.

The Independent Assessment Group comprises:

Des Casey, Life Member UEFA, Chairman;

Pat O'Neill, Group Managing Director, Glanbia (retired), former Chairman Irish Sports Council;

John Fitzgerald, Dublin City Manager;

Niall Quinn, former International, member of Irish Sports Council;

Helen Raftery – Project Manager, FAI

4.1 Criteria for use by IAG

There is a 50-50 sporting v non sporting breakdown to reinforce the FAI position that on and off pitch standards are of equal importance.

The overall scoring breakdown is:

Criteria	Scoring / 1000	Comment
2006 season League Finish + Cups + Europe	200	FIFA system is used as a template. Total points gained across all competitions are used to rank clubs from 1 – 22. Scoring points are assigned against rank from 200 for the club ranked no. 1 to 60 to the club ranked no. 22 after points accumulated across all competitions are tallied. League: Premier Division League winners receive 22 points, runners-up 21 points to 1 point for bottom place in the 1st Division. FAI Cup: Winners - 10 points Runners-up - 8 points Semi-Finalists - 6 points Quarter-Finalists - 3 points 3 rd round losers - 2 points 2 nd round losers - 1 point. (Note <i>circum</i> League clubs enter at the Second Round stage). League Cup: Winners - 8 points Runners-up - 6 points Semi-Finalists - 4 points Quarter-Finalists - 2 points 1 st & 2 nd round losers - 1 point Europe - 1 point for a win. 0.5 points for a draw (single leg results)
01/02 - 2005 seasons League Finish + Cups + Europe	300	Performances across League, Cups and European competition in 01/02; 02/03; 2003; 2004 and 2005 playing seasons are scored in accordance with the system approved. Tallied points will equate to rankings 1-22 and scoring points will be allocated (300-90).
Infrastructure	100	Considerations here to include Safe-holding (min. 3,000) Unencumbered access – Ownership / long term lessee / no. covered seats / plans re infrastructure development etc
Club licensing: Including governance, youth development etc	150	Only those applicants eligible to apply for an ‘A’ licence will be considered for assessment process.
Sustainability / Benchmarking Strategic Planning	150	Benchmarking will be based on licensing compliance record (i.e. 3year trends) and will provide the IAG with a clear picture of the applicant’s performance against the licensing requirements, provide a good indication as to progress made and the future sustainability / governance infrastructure of applicants. The benchmarking process will be carried out by the Licensing Unit and monitored by the Licensing Committee. Each applicant will be asked to submit its strategy for the continuing development of its organisation. Club representatives will be invited to meet with IAG and IAG members may choose to visit the clubs. The outcomes of the one-to-one meetings and the comprehensive analysis of the material provided will allow IAG to form an opinion and allocate a score.
Target Markets / population densities / attendance figures (04 & 05 figures already available)	100	Using population data to highlight densities against existing clubs and the trends in their attendance rates. Those applicants, which stand alone in areas of large target markets and which have established a solid base of support as indicated by their consolidated attendance figures will be allocated high scores in this category.

4.2 2006 *eircom*League and the Independent Assessment Process

For the purposes of the Independent Assessment Process, the performances of the clubs in League, FAI & League Cups and European competitions in 2006 will be allocated 'competition points' as outlined below.

At the end of 2006 playing season, clubs will be allocated 'competition points' on the basis of their League standings and performances in FAI & League Cups and Europe. When the total 'competition points' accrued by each club is tallied, they will be ranked accordingly – the club with the highest number of competition points is ranked 1, with the club with the lowest number of competition points ranked 22 for the purposes of the IAG process.

League: Premier Division League winners receive 22 points, runners-up 21 points reducing on a point per position down to 1 point for bottom place in the 1st Division.

Last place finisher in Premiership in regular season will be 'relegated' => ranked #14 in league standings and allocated 9pts

1st Division winner will be 'Promoted' => ranked #11 in league standings and allocated 12pts

Club finishing 11th in Premier will play off against 1st Division runners up.

Winners of the play off will be finish #12 in League standings and gain 11pts

Losers of the play off will be ranked 13th and allocated 10pts.

These 'competition points' will be added to those accumulated for performances in European, League and FAI cups as detailed below:

FAI Cup: Winners - 10 points Runners-up - 8 points Semi-Finalists - 6 points Quarter-Finalists - 3 points 3rd round losers - 2 points 2nd round losers - 1 point. (Note *eircom*League clubs enter at the Second Round stage).

League Cup: Winners - 8 points Runners-up - 6 points Semi-Finalists - 4 points Quarter-Finalists - 2 points 1st & 2nd round losers - 1 point

Europe - 1 point for a win. 0.5 points for a draw (single leg results)

A score of 200 will be given to the highest ranked club and 60 for club ranked 22 as a result of their total competition points accumulated across the 4 competitions.

Please note:

- (a) In the event that two or more clubs finish equal on points at the conclusion of the Assessment Process, their order on the rankings list to be presented to the FAI Board will be determined by their League standing at the end of the 2006 playing season.
- (b) The same principles will be applied to establish a ranking of clubs against 'competition points' for the same competitions from season 2001-2002 to season 2005. The ranking of 1 – 22 for this accumulation of competition points will gain scores of 200 for the club ranked 1 and 60 for the club ranked 22 (least amount of competition points).

Similarly, competition points will be allocated to clubs' performances over the seasons from 2001/2002 – 2005 leading to rankings and the allocation of point from 200-60.