



SLIGO ROVERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Strategic Plan 2017-2021



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1. FOREWORD

Traditionally, and in line with the practice in League of Ireland clubs generally, Sligo Rovers FC has been managed on a season by season basis. However, because of the level at which the club has been operating in more recent years and with more demands of various types on the Club it is considered vital to draw up a longer term Strategic Plan to make the future of the Club more sustainable. The plan articulates the type of ambition which would have guided the management of the club for some time. However, after broad consultation with all interested parties, it sets down for the first time the overall ambition or vision that we all hold for Sligo Rovers and sets out in a structured way by way of specific objectives how we see that ambition being achieved. Performance indicators with deadlines are set down so we can judge the progress over the five year timeframe of the plan.

The club would like to thank all those who participated in the consultation process.

2. OUR CLUB – ITS DNA

Founded in 1928, Sligo Rovers F.C. is a community based football club with a long and proud history. For extended periods of its existence, success on the football field occurred infrequently but the club was characterised at all times by its resilience and “never say die” attitude as it maintained a soccer stronghold in the north- west. A low population base and distance from many of the main competing teams were disadvantages overcome by the Club and its dedicated volunteers and supporters who were totally committed to ensuring the survival of the “bit of red”.

In more recent years success has seen the club grow both on and off the field. This success has been achieved by a full time professional team. This approach was necessary because the relatively low population base does not readily provide a steady stream of local players capable of competing at a high level or sufficient employment prospects that might attract part-time players of a high calibre.

This plan envisages that this arrangement will continue, subject to more sustainable commercial and financing arrangements and greater reliance on local players as the underage structure is further developed.

Sligo Rovers ownership structure reflects its base in the community; it is owned by a wide range of small shareholders under the format of a cooperative society. The rules of the co-op prevent any single person or entity owning or controlling a significant block of shares in the Club. This is a club owned by the people for the people.

The cost of running the club is now of the order of €1.1m annually, of which employment costs (wages and salaries) is the largest item at almost 65% of annual budget. As well as success on the field, with all the major trophies won in the last five years, there has been considerable investment in the ground and it is now one of the best soccer venues in the country.

All this has been achieved under the direction of a voluntary management committee and huge efforts made on fundraising. The level of funding required is best demonstrated by pointing to the fact that gate receipts are of the order of 20% to 25% of the annual budget leaving a very significant shortfall to be met annually to enable the club to meet its commitments.

The Club relies heavily on volunteers to carry out a range of work behind the scenes and the level of voluntary commitment shown over the years has ensured the clubs survival and success against the odds. As a result, the actual administration costs of the club have remained relatively low but with an increasing burden falling on the management committee and volunteers.

In common with most League of Ireland clubs the emphasis, by necessity, is on surviving from season to season. However, given the level at which the Club is now operating and the funding involved more attention has to be given to making the operation of the club sustainable, to address obvious vulnerabilities and to set out clear objectives to be achieved over the next five years.

Whilst it will continue to be important and necessary to maintain the voluntary efforts and ethos which are fundamental to Sligo Rovers, increasing regulatory demands, application of higher standards and changes necessary to maintain a top class professional club also demand a move to a full time executive.

In the period of this Plan the current FAI National League participation agreement with Clubs will expire. It is anticipated that there may be significant changes in the structure and organisation of the League. Whatever changes may occur it is clear that there will be increased requirements for a more professional approach in administration and management of clubs generally and this Plan takes this into account.

Fundamentally Sligo Rovers will remain a Community based Club, embedded in the Community and operating for the benefit and enjoyment of the Community.



3. SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS & TARGET IMPLEMENTATION DATES

Target Date	Recommendation
December 2016	Strategy agreed and strategy sub-group appointed to drive implementation.
March 2017	Management Committee sub-committees to be in place.
April 2017	Appoint a full-time CEO (subject to funding).
April 2017	Appoint a Director of Underage Football/Community Relations.
June 2017	Have a programme in place to develop deeper links with the community and other stakeholders.
December 2017	Ground development plan to be completed.
2018	Become a Top 4 Club regularly, win trophies and qualify for Europe.
2018	Have improved commercial and sponsorship income by €250K per annum.
2019	Increased the budget from the current €1.1M to €1.4M.
2020	Have successful Under 19, Under 17, Under 15 and Ladies teams competing at national level, feeding players through to the First Team so that 25% of the First Team panel is drawn from these teams.
2020	Develop a hospitality/multi-user/seating area at the Church Hill side.
2021	Increase the budget to €1.6M.



4. ASSESSMENT OF WHERE WE ARE

Strengths

- Community based Club.
- High level of interest and support for the Club including many people willing to give significant voluntary time.
- Well recognised and positive brand image.
- Excellent grounds and training facilities.
- Low to zero borrowings.
- Good environment to foster a close-knit Club including within the First Team.
- Underage teams strengthening.
- Interest in the Club and support from the diaspora.
- Strong sponsorship deals from a small number of key partners.
- Wide ownership structure through co-op ensures stability when compared to others.

Weaknesses

- Lower population base than competing teams.
- Lower commercial and business base than competing teams.
- Huge voluntary effort required to sustain the Club.
- Constant scramble for cash-flow.
- Constant fundraising.
- Structural issues within the management of the Club including the Management Committee and employees who are inadequate in number and seniority.
- Fluctuating attendances, average attendance varying from 1,500 to 2,000 depending on results which can make it difficult to budget.
- Age demographic of support base, need to attract more 16 to 30 year old supporters to games.
- No scouting structure.
- No Club playing philosophy, varies by manager and should be consistent from Under 15 team right through to senior team.
- Geographical location leads to high travel costs (multiplied now by under-age teams) and lower away support.

Opportunities

- To broaden out the income base from gate receipts and private individual funding into corporate sponsorship and ultimately UEFA prize money.
- To bring underage players through to first team football.
- To continue to be more professional off the pitch by appointing a CEO and thus lessening the reliance on the effectiveness of each year's Management Committee.
- To develop deeper community relations and formalise the underage coaching structure.
- To tap into the wider Sligo Rovers family in a more concerted way.
- To promote and market the Club including Home fixtures, other commercial activities, fundraising and general brand building.
- To develop further income streams from impressive ground and team related facilities.
- To develop a playing philosophy to underage player development and recruitment regionally and nationally.

Threats

- The business model is fragile; one bad season can set the Club back for a number of years.
- Continuing inadequate financial, marketing and other supports of the League by the FAI.
- With the increase in European prize money the League will become a case of 'haves and have-nots' with the UEFA qualified clubs pulling further and further away.
- Wider range of leisure activities available and growth in other sports in a traditional soccer stronghold.
- Population base and local employment opportunities means that we must continue growing our supporter base, the area is one of high natural emigration.
- Continuing difficulty attracting top class players to the northwest of Ireland.
- Short-term 40-week player contracts lead to a lack of continuity.

5. VISION

Our vision is to see Sligo Rovers not alone participating successfully and representing Sligo and surrounding counties in the Premier Division of the League of Ireland but equally continuing to operate as an integral part of the community helping meet societal needs in terms of social inclusion, health and well-being and contributing to an increase in social capital.

The future we envisage is of an inclusive, successful and commercially sustainable football club operating in the Showgrounds as a centre of football excellence, used and frequented by all sections of our community and closely linked with other community and sporting organisations, with the profile and brand image of the Club benefitting Sligo and the north-west region.

To realise this vision this Strategic Plan sets out specific sporting, commercial and community objectives, together with strategic actions and performance indicators for each objective.



6. STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Objective 1

Improve the commercial viability and financial sustainability of the Club.

The Club is largely funded through voluntary donations, fundraising, gate receipts and commercial income in that order. Prize money is inconsequential except when qualifying for European competition. The biggest gap in our funding is in commercial activities, commercial sponsorship and FAI funding, in addition to the base income of €1.1M, which largely excludes significant commercial income, FAI funding and UEFA prize money. The objective is to increase our funding to €1.35M within three years of the plan and having secured UEFA prize money to €1.6m within the five-year term of this strategic plan. This is the level of funding needed to be a top 4 team consistently.

This will be achieved through a range of activities which will include the following:

- 1 Once off events.
- 2 Improved use of the Showgrounds facility for new income streams.
- 3 Improved levels of commercial sponsorship.
- 4 Initiatives in areas such as sports conferences, health and fitness and other areas of public interest.
- 5 Reviewing our current areas of activity in the commercial arena and the use of the Showgrounds to ensure that they are maximised. This includes but is not limited to merchandising, camps, sponsorship, programmes and other publications, astro turf etc.

There are many good ideas at the moment, the inability to harness them in to sustainable long-term income sources is simply down to lack of time. The Club is largely funded through the good offices of a wide range of team related income and a large number of small voluntary donations, sometimes assisted by a reaction to a poor financial situation.

As well as continuing to harness the enormous goodwill towards Sligo Rovers which translates into successful fundraising, to make the jump to the next level we must look to increase our annual income by €250K to €300K initially and then to a total of €1.6M to be competitive. The first jump will come from FAI assistance and commercial activities and the second jump will come from UEFA prize money.

Actions to boost the Club's finances will include the following:

- 1 Good financial governance, including compliance with the financial ground rules specified below, to underpin all aspects of management of club.
- 2 Budget to be prepared and reviewed by MC two months before the end of each season.
- 3 Systematic annual approach to all businesses in region re sponsorship/advertising opportunities.
- 4 To boost gate receipts develop promotion/publicity plan for all matches and the club generally including possible use of bill boards or other match profile raising campaigns.
- 5 Develop plan by end 2017 to maximise income potential of grounds including astro pitches.
- 6 Initiatives to be developed to extend fan base further in surrounding counties (special membership fee for such fans or other promotion measures).
- 7 Maximise returns from retailing in ground.
- 8 Prudent and balanced approach to expenditure in relation to players and ground investment.
- 9 Make sponsorship available to category sponsors: official IT sponsor, official drink; car sponsor etc.
- 10 Season ticket for international/Dublin supporters or another way for them to contribute.
- 11 Form an alliance of five major benefactors who will input financially into the Club each year.
- 12 Sell naming rights to Showgrounds in an appropriate format (to include Showgrounds in name) at an appropriate price.
- 13 Have a transfer policy of concentrating on selling on fees, appearances and International caps to help fund our underage programme.
- 14 Drive the 500 Club up by 50 incremental new members each year and assist the current committee by introducing new blood with a younger age profile.

Financial Ground Rules

- 1 The Club will not borrow for current expenditure; each season attempts to at least break-even within itself.
- 2 This will entail not accumulating bank borrowings, revenue or creditor borrowings or issuing bonds to fund current expenditure that will be repayable in a future year.
- 3 Grant funding and long-term borrowing and potentially bonds issues will be sought for capital and infrastructure projects only i.e. matching long-term revenue generating assets with long-term funding.
- 4 We set aside 20% of UEFA prize money on receipt as a 'rainy day' fund or for structural improvements.

Performance Indicators

- 1 Recurring income to be increased from current level of approx. 33% to 60%.
- 2 Club managed within budget.
- 3 Number of businesses involved in sponsoring and advertising increased.
Sponsorship values increased.
- 4 % increase in income from astro pitches and commercial activities increased.

Strategic Objective 2

Sligo Rovers to achieve qualification for European competition on a regular basis whilst maintaining an attractive and high standard of football.

This is the ultimate football ambition of the Club which not alone will benefit the club but will raise the profile of the entire region providing indirect tourism and economic benefits. Without significant changes to the funding of League participation, European qualification will be critical in terms of enabling the club to compete at the top of the Premier division as well as fulfilling its other developmental plans. However, it will not be the sole measurement of success. Success will be adjudged on progress made in achieving the full range of objectives set out in this Strategy.

Actions

- 1 Maintenance of a full-time professional set-up to include a first team squad and appropriate management and back-up personnel.
- 2 Annual review of Team Management/Coaching arrangements two months before the end of each season.
- 3 System of formalised reviews during season between Club officers and Manager
- 4 Full time professional players of requisite standard to be recruited to the extent that it is necessary to supplement players emerging from the underage structure.
- 5 Team Management to drive adoption of attacking/skilful brand of football at all levels of the club.
- 6 Key players to be signed on two year contracts.
- 7 To have stability in the management of the First Team, continuity with the right manager makes a huge difference.
- 8 Club to recruit management and players who share the same vision, passion and commitment as the Club supporters and volunteers.

Performance Indicators

- 1 Over period of the Strategy first team to finish in top three of League or win FAI Cup.
- 2 Over period of Strategy first team to record at least one win in European competition.
- 3 Attendance at home matches to remain above average of 2000 per game.

Strategic Objective 3

Cultivate and develop football talent through a structure designed to identify and support emerging and potential players in Sligo and surrounding counties.

Sligo Rovers have introduced Under 19 and Under 17 teams in the past number of seasons, with the introduction of an Under 15 team scheduled for August 2017. This initiative has been highly successful with the Club attracting very talented individuals. The key now is to develop and retain those individuals and to have young players feeding through to the First Team through a stepped process – (see player development model at Appendix I).

We also have to recognise that there is a big jump in standard between Under 19 and the First Team football, and in some situations putting a player out on loan to a standard between the two may make sense for both player and Club. The development of the under-age structure provides a career pathway for local football talent. It does however involve attendant additional costs for the club over what was required to run the club up until recent years.

Actions

- 1 Appointment of full-time Director of Under Age Football/Community Activities.
- 2 Management and coaching arrangements to be reviewed for under 19 and under 17 teams.
- 3 Preparations to be made for completion of underage structure.
- 4 Team Management to proactively identify emerging talent focusing in particular but not exclusively on the West
- 5 Particular effort to attract players with linkages to the West to join the Club.
- 6 Club to encourage the FAI to develop a 'Centre of Excellence' in Sligo.
- 7 Club to maintain and develop linkages with schools and educational institutions as well as with the Sligo Leitrim league.
- 8 Club to focus on bringing through coaches each year.
- 9 Director of Under Age Football/Community Activities to concentrate on developing League base players from local, regional and national teams in partnership with local clubs and underage leagues.
- 10 With the running of the three under age teams within the Sligo Rovers Academy expecting to cost €70K per annum, attract a main sponsor for €25K per annum and other sponsors to help cover at least the majority of the cost. Travel grants from the FAI are a must to alleviate disadvantage for regionally based teams.
- 11 Form an alliance with other clubs to facilitate loan options for developing talent.
- 12 Restart scholarships with Sligo IT and have a placement facility with Summerhill College.
- 13 Develop scouting network.
- 14 Form an academy from junior teams upwards.
- 15 Form a ladies Senior Team followed by ladies underage teams.

Performance Indicators

- 1 Under 19, Under 17 teams and imminently Under 15 team to participate successfully in national Leagues.
- 2 Players from underage teams being recognised nationally with call-ups to national squads.
- 3 At least three players from the under 19s to be brought through to the senior squad each year.
- 4 The First Team to contain at least three players from Sligo or the West of Ireland by year two of the plan and six by year five.
- 5 Form ladies team by year three of this plan and underage teams by year five.
- 6 Showgrounds established as a centre of football excellence.

Strategic Objective 4

Improve continuously the infrastructure and facilities of the Showgrounds making it a landmark development in Sligo and of the highest standard for supporters and team alike.

Sligo Rovers have invested heavily in the Showgrounds facility over the years and now have one of the, if not the best, grounds in the country.

The investment, which tops €1M in the past 10 years has been financed entirely without FAI support, includes the following:

- 1 A 3,873 seater stadium to UEFA standards.
- 2 Full size Astro 'Mondoturf' facility
- 3 A full size grass pitch.
- 4 An all-weather training area.

For the first time ever the current site is well developed in terms of football needs and provides the teams with the appropriate facilities, irrespective of weather.

The stadium is adequate for the current level of attendances and for improved attendances, except in exceptional circumstances. Future development plans must be revenue generating and justified on a cost benefit basis i.e. must generate income to cover their cost other than in exceptional circumstances.

Actions

- 1 Construction of a multi-purpose facility at the Church Hill road end to include a large multi use room at ground level which can be used as an indoor function room, bar and gym and incorporating dressing room and showers and fully equipped first aid room to UEFA standards and storage.
- 2 First floor of Church Hill Road facility to be designed to have approximately 200 seats overlooking the pitch with facilities for a TV control room, players lounge and some corporate/sponsored space in balcony seating.
- 3 Museum section and a family section to be incorporated into the first floor space also. Achievement of this project listed under actions 3, 4 and 5 will be dependent on grant financing.
- 4 Ground development plan which will prioritise works to be undertaken taking account of essential works and developments likely to generate revenue. The plan will provide for facilities as as indicated in this strategy and will outline indicative funding requirements as well as funding opportunities.
- 5 Upgrade floodlighting system to UEFA standards to facilitate games from the 4th qualifying round of European competition.
- 6 The Club to engage with the Trustees of the Showgrounds to update the Trust.
- 7 Redevelopment of Jinks Avenue stand to follow.
- 8 Specific fund raising/allocation to be reserved annually for ground improvements.
- 9 Regular survey of supporters to ascertain views on ground development.
- 10 Potential replacement of current Astro facility in year four of this five-year plan (2020).
- 11 Rentals of new club building to community groups - scouts, mother and babies groups, yoga, badminton, karate (tag on to Astro) Gym open to membership to develop facility for early morning and evening users (fly fit style - card access).
- 12 Investigate the possibility of having corporate boxes along the pitch rather than at one end.

Performance Indicators

- 1 Ground development plan to be prepared and published by end 2017
- 2 Church Hill Road project completed.
- 3 Annual investment in maintenance/ improvement of existing supporter facilities.
- 4 Revenues from the ground increased through well planned development for which there is a need and a market.
- 5 Corporate boxes bringing in Revenues of €75K to €100K per annum.

Strategic Objective 5

Continue to develop linkages with community and relevant commercial entities in Sligo and surrounding counties.

Sligo Rovers is embedded in the community but there is a need to significantly develop its community activities. The facilities in the Showgrounds can be used to a much greater extent in terms of providing, for example, health and fitness programmes for the community in general and youth training and educational programmes. With a much greater population diversity in the area nowadays opportunities also exist for developing social inclusion programmes. Linkages with other sporting organisations can also be developed for mutual benefit particularly having regard to the central location of the showgrounds. Greater engagement with commercial entities is important to highlight the general economic and profile raising benefits of a successful Sligo Rovers. The development of links with Sligo tourism can also be pursued in regard to tourism advertising opportunities especially given the potential European involvement as well as the possible development of sporting tourist packages. The development and implementation of such initiatives cannot be achieved on an ad hoc basis and requires full time attention. The appointment of a CEO and a Director with responsibility for underage football and community activities will enable the Club to address these opportunities which are critical for the future.

Actions

- 1 Initiatives covering such areas as inter culture, health and education to be developed by the Club.
- 2 MC sub-group to be established chaired by the CEO to drive these "Sligo Rovers in the Community" initiatives.
- 3 Summer camps to be reviewed
- 4 Linkages with schools and local teams in the region to continue to be developed.
- 5 Linkages with other sporting organisations to be maintained and developed.
- 6 All businesses in the region to be approached annually to explain the relevance of the club in maintaining a national profile for Sligo and to point out sponsorship/advertising opportunities.
- 7 With all matches now being live streamed world- wide, promote advertising opportunities for export oriented industries.
- 8 Tourism linkage to be developed.
- 9 Charity partner to be sought annually which club will promote.
- 10 The Club to continue to foster links with Sligo County Council, the Sligo Leitrim League and the Mayo and Roscommon Leagues.
- 11 The Club to support the Sligo Leitrim School Boys League in terms of participation in the annual Kennedy Cup and also another similar tournament like the Foyle Cup, the Mill Cup, Galway Cup etc. The club will make the showgrounds facility available, as well as providing whatever support it can to Sligo Leitrim to bring an Elite underage tournament to Sligo each year.
- 12 Host annual barbecue/kids fun days on one match day per year/Christmas party for kids.
- 13 Annual open day to allow players meet supporters, especially young supporters and invite celebrities to attend too.

Performance Indicators

- 1 Number of new "Sligo Rovers in the Community" initiatives developed
- 2 Number of schools, local teams, sporting and other organisations associated with the club.
- 3 Number of businesses supporting or advertising through the club.

Strategic Objective 6

To have the highest standard management structures in place off the pitch to include those in voluntary roles and paid employees.

Sligo Rovers is run by a voluntary 16 person Management Committee, elected by the members each year, with one-third of the Committee members having to offer themselves for re-election each year to ensure rotation of the Committee. Four Officers are elected by the 16 person Management Committee on a year by year basis, a Chairman, a Club Secretary, an Honorary Treasurer and a Vice Chairman and in practice much of the day to day running of the Club is delegated by the Management Committee to the Board of Officers. In addition the Club employs a General Manager, a Lotto administrator, a second administrator and a secretary/bookkeeper who form the administration back-bone of the Club. All of this is supported by very significant voluntary contributions, both by the Committee members themselves and by other volunteers, to supplement what would be in the ordinary course of events, a large salary cost. An organisational chart is included at Appendix II.

The current level of commitment needed by the volunteers, particularly of the four Officers of the Management Committee, is unsustainable. This leads to burn-out at the end of each season and constant turn-over in the Officer positions. When this happens new people take up the roles and spend much of the early part of the season learning, which is not the optimum way to run the club. Continuity at Officer level and at Management Committee level is important to ensure stability.

The current unsustainable level of commitment would be eased by the appointment of a full-time CEO. The full time CEO would (under the direction of the officers) be responsible for driving the implementation of the actions under this Strategy and would prepare regular reports for the MC on progress.

Actions

- 1 Appointment of a full time CEO for the Club who will be assigned responsibility for implementing the strategy actions, in particular responsibility for enhancing the Club's commercial and community initiatives.
- 2 Continue the role of the Management Committee and the Board of Officers (currently four Officers) so that there is a Board consisting of the full-time CEO and the four Officers to whom the full-time CEO reports. The current Management Committee to continue to consist of 16 members.
- 3 Each Management Committee member to have a role on a sub-committee responsible for a particular function within the Club. Maintenance of the voluntary ethos within the Club will be critical.
- 4 Having appropriate employees in place to match the needs and affordability of the club while maintaining the space for voluntary input.
- 5 The Club to form links with three other parties, not necessarily in soccer, for annual brain-storming swopping of ideas sessions. Examples might include Connacht Rugby etc. The objective is to see how others are doing things and the assistance of external eyes.

Strategic Objective 7

Maintain standards on and off the pitch to enhance, nationally and internationally, the profile of the club and the brand impact of the club for the benefit of Sligo and the North West generally.

Sligo Rovers has a very positive "brand image". This image has been built up over many years by the commitment and support of the people of the region many of whom dedicated their lives to building the club to what it is today. It is a brand and reputation which is valued by the club and must not be neglected as it can so easily be tarnished. It is a priority therefore for the Club to continue to protect and enhance the Sligo Rovers brand.

Actions

- 1 Take all necessary steps to protect the trade name, brand and logo of the club.
- 2 Promote values of fairness, friendliness and respect as overriding values of the club.
- 3 Review and enforce Player Code of Conduct to include professionalism, courtesy, conduct and discipline.
- 4 Management Committee members to sign a code of conduct each year to cover confidentiality, courtesy and conduct.
- 5 Promote "fair play" as ethos of club
- 6 Welcome visiting supporters.
- 7 Promote the Club as a family friendly venue with good spectator facilities.
- 8 Introduce financial governance rules for all entities raising funds in the name of Sligo Rovers.
- 9 Ensure that the match day experience for the supporter visiting the ground (home supporter or away supporter) is one of comfort, safety and respect so the Club creates a good impression which leads to repeat customers (fans).

Performance indicators

- 1 Good behaviour of players and management both on and off the pitch.
- 2 Family friendly and non-abusive atmosphere at all matches.
- 3 Experience of interaction with management team, administration staff and players for the general public is a positive and well-mannered interaction.



Strategic Objective 8

To keep the Club close to its fan base and encourage younger people to develop a lifetime passion for Sligo Rovers.

Maintaining a close bond with the existing fan base and nurturing new fans is a key objective for the Club. The way that the Club engages with supporters and getting young children supporting the Club as they grow up are very important to the future sustainability of the Club. Most supporters hold fond memories of a particular event that got them interested in a more sustained support for the Club for life. It is important that the support base of the Club is constantly targeting renewal, if we lose younger people we will struggle to attract consistent attendances.

Actions

- 1 Supporters Liaison Person to actively engage with supporters groups including setting up supporters forums/working groups.
- 2 Attempt to relaunch supporters clubs around the county/country.
- 3 More targeted focus on students from the IT.
- 4 Further school visits throughout the region at primary and secondary level to promote games and camps with player involvement to help build them as "local heroes" to younger fans as well as greater use of "Benny the Bull" mascot.
- 5 Completion of a database of supporters providing for a club mailing list to e-mail news to fans directly and regularly.

Performance Indicators

- 1 The percentage of home attendances comprising children, students and young adults.
- 2 At least five vibrant supporters clubs in operation.
- 3 At least five branches of the supporters trust in operation.
- 4 Increased attendance from Sligo IT students at matches



Strategic Objective 9

Improve the marketing and promotion of the club.

The Club can grow revenue and the fanbase with the improved promotion of matches and other events such as summer camps, astro league and fundraisers as well as merchandising. A greater emphasis can be put on increasing awareness and attractiveness of such occasions. The club is competing against a plethora of events that go on throughout the north-west particularly in the summer months such as concerts, festivals and other sporting activities. Matches must be promoted as the must-see event in Sligo every matchnight for all sectors of society. Sligo Rovers have a large following across social media (Facebook 25k, Twitter 17.5k, Instagram 5k) putting the club in the top four in the country in each. This must be used to better effect to attract new fans and increase attendance and participation at events.

Actions

- 1 Greater focus on marketing of games through the use of specific themes or events to go with various games. E.g. Ladies day, Kids day, Mayo day, Charity day, Appreciation night for former/current players.
- 2 Major pushes on certain 'marquee matches' against top teams or local rivals which are more attractive to fans.
- 3 Development of a club YouTube account or Sligo Rovers TV which currently has very minimal content. This can feature promotional videos and behind-the-scenes content.
- 4 Increase regularity of updates and original content on primary social media channels (Twitter, Facebook).
- 5 Revive the club's dormant Snapchat account which is one of the fastest growing Social Media formats.
- 6 Work more with sponsors with high profiles who can assist with promotional activities which will also promote their association with the club.
- 7 Have social media operated by someone based at The Showgrounds to enable more live content, ideally with marketing knowledge.
- 8 Use of alternative methods of promotion such a billboards, bus shelter ads etc.

Performance indicators

- 1 Growth in attendance at home games as well as greater participation in activities such as kids camps and the astro league.
- 2 Increase in social media followers in particular for YouTube and Snapchat which is currently negligible. Also raise the number of website hits.
- 3 Higher sales for online merchandise and support for fundraisers like Annual Draw and lotto through the club website.



7. CONCLUSIONS

The objectives and actions to achieve those objectives are all interrelated and essential to realise the vision we have set for our club. The success of the strategy will be adjudged by progress each year in meeting the performance indicators.

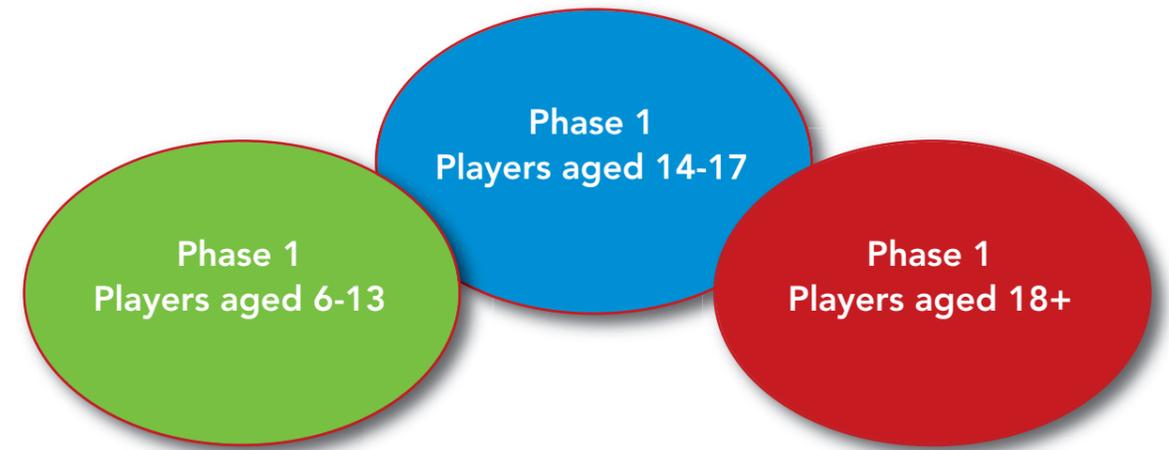
Maintaining the voluntary ethos of and voluntary commitment to the Club will be an absolute prerequisite to the continued development of Sligo Rovers. Without our volunteers and supporters there would be no Sligo Rovers. Taking account of changes likely over the period of this Strategy, the appointment of a fulltime CEO and director of underage football and community activities (resources permitting) is considered necessary to allow the voluntary effort to be built on and to achieve the ambition we all have for the Club, which is the basis of this Strategy. These appointments in themselves will not guarantee success without the continued resilience and "never say die attitude" characteristic of our club and all associated with it. As we all know football is unpredictable, with fortunes often changed by the bounce of a ball. However, working together and following our Strategy, even when knocked off course, we can ensure that Sligo Rovers moves into the next decade towards its Centenary competing at the top of the League of Ireland and an integral part of our community.



8. APPENDIX I PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MODEL/COACH EDUCATION

Sligo Rovers Football Club
Player Development Model Outline-Sept 2016

The Player Development Model can be divided into three main parts. Part I is the Foundation phase, which relates to players aged 6-13, the Intermediate phase relates to players aged 14-17. Part 3, Professional phase relates to players aged 18+.



The Foundation Phase;

Working in association with the Sligo/Leitrim Schoolboys/Girls/Youths League and their affiliated clubs, Sligo Rovers will assist with the development of young footballers aged 6-13 in the following ways:

- Provision of facilities for the League Emerging Talent Programme
- Provision of facilities for Inter League matches
- Provision of facilities for club matches
- Provision of soccer camps at Halloween, Easter and Summer
- Provision of coaching education seminars in line with the FAI philosophy

The Intermediate Phase;

In this phase, the emphasis is on the club culture and a more challenging level of training and match competition. The objective here is to enhance the process of developing players for Sligo Rovers first team. The training sessions will now incorporate the details of tactics, team formations and game strategies. The selected players will now move from their local schoolboy club and become registered players with Sligo Rovers FC. The players will now move forward from local schoolboy football to play National under 15 and under 17 competitions. While continuing to develop as young footballers the players will also continue their academic education. The club will strongly encourage and, if possible, assist all players to successfully complete their secondary education.

The Foundation Phase;

Working in association with the Sligo/Leitrim Schoolboys/Girls/Youths League and their affiliated clubs, Sligo Rovers will assist with the development of young footballers aged 6-13 in the following ways:

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- Provision of coach education seminars in line with the FAI philosophy

The Professional Phase;

This phase takes the player towards professional player development. This age will focus on the outcome of the match as well as the quality of performance. The long-term objective here is to further develop future players for the club first team. Within this phase the players will continue to play in National competitions at Under 19 level and may also move into adult football with no age restrictions. While continuing to develop as young professional footballers the players will also continue their academic education. The club will strongly encourage and, if possible assist all players to successfully complete their secondary education.

Training/Match schedules;

The club must take into account other activities in which the player is engaged. These include school and extracurricular activities, other sports in school, National team representation, family and social functions, etc. These activities are a vital part in any player's holistic development. There must be a positive balance between the number of matches played, training sessions per season, time off each season and social activity for each player at the club. See below the Sligo Rovers training schedule for each phase which will allow for all of the above to be incorporated.

Training Session schedules;

U6-13 (External)	2-3 days per week	45 to 60 minutes
U14-17 (Internal)	3-4 days per week	75 to 90 minutes
U18+ (Internal)	4-5 days per week	90-120 minutes

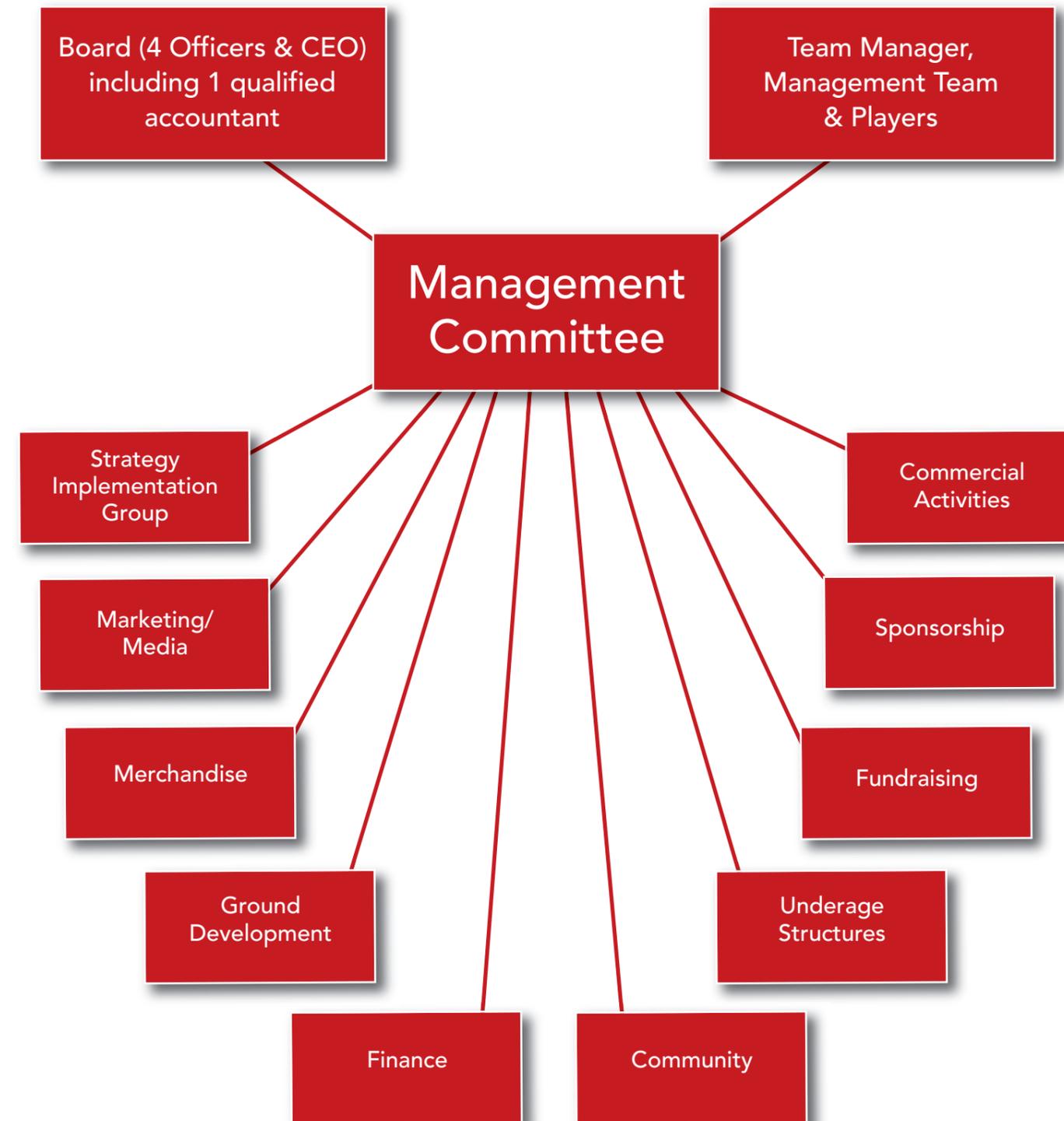
Coach Education Model- Sept 2016

In view of the current evolution of the game and of the ever increasing demands on players, it is important that today's coaches become the architects of the individual and team of players so those players can be better equipped to face all the demands of the game.

The art of the dedicated, enthusiastic and proficient coach consists of being able to select training targets that are suited to the players, to plan worthwhile learning activities, to run their games and practices with passion, to encourage the players to correct their mistakes by themselves, to praise their success, as well as being able to promote creativity and discovery by using varying methodologies.

It is the intention of Sligo Rovers Football Club to fully embrace the FAI and UEFA Coach Education pathway and to meet the coaching qualifications criteria required for each of our teams.

9. APPENDIX II MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



10. APPENDIX III

SLIGO ROVERS STRATEGIC PLAN

MAIN EXTERNAL FACTORS

- **Local Authority** - The Club enjoys a positive relationship with the Local Authority. They have worked in Partnership on various elements of the Showgrounds Development Programme, with the Council directly funding the provision of a car-park and boundary wall and offering planning, advice and guidance to the Development Committee. Sligo County Council is a key continuing partner.
- **Recreational Strategy for Sligo** - The Showgrounds is an important amenity area in a busy urban setting, and is a major resource in the context of Sligo's recreational and amenity spaces. There is potential for engaging with the Local Authority in relation to promoting this resource and maximising its potential.
- **Planning/Forward Planning** – the Club acknowledges that the strategic plan is written in the context of medium and long-term planning development issues referenced for the Showgrounds and the Knappaghmore area.
- **BIDS** - The Sligo Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) company is an entity the Club wish to work with to assist in the development of tourism, artistic, culture, sport, recreational and leisure activities and to help the Club and local area capitalise on the Club's profile and popularity.
- **Local Enterprise** - The newly established Local Enterprise Office is a specific important resource the Club will tie in with when considering any enterprise/commercial proposal.
- **Tourism** – Sligo Rovers is an important attraction to the region filling hotel beds, restaurants and helping local retailers and other businesses.
- **Community role** – the Club's location is a 'RAPID Designated Area' and this is a critical factor in maximising funding opportunities at the Showgrounds. The Club's role in the community is difficult to quantify but extends to social/recreational, youth engagement, community, charity and other facets, all under community owned/operated entity.
- **Population and demographics** – the recently published CSO statistics showing a fall in population in Sligo Town and County are a concern.
- **Summary** – the above are the highlights of the most important external factors in compiling the strategic plan, other issues will arise and the Club is aware that the issues listed above will have an important impact on the Club's strategic plan.





SLIGO ROVERS FC

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