



NEW CHAIN OF OFFICE: Paddy McGrath, President FAI Junior Council, along with Secretary Dennis Cruise show off the new inaugurated chain of office for the President



WATERFORD ON DUTY: the officials for the forthcoming Oscar Traynor Trophy final with FAI CEO John Delaney, from left: Tony Walsh, Jim McGrath, Tony Walsh, Noel Purcell.

PLATINI PRAISES FUTSAL PROJECT

UEFA President Michel Platini was in Dublin this week for the Europa League Final and found time in his busy schedule to recognise a unique cooperation between two UEFA member Football Associations.

PROJECT FUTSAL is a joint initiative between the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) with the core aim of utilising football as a social inclusion tool in order to facilitate innovative community regeneration. FUTSAL is the official FIFA version of five-a-side football and the term is used as an acronym for Football Used Towards Social Advancement and Learning.

The project has been designed through the cooperation of the FAI and the WFT and recently secured funding from the Ireland Wales Inter Reg IV Programme 2007-2013 under its theme for the Sustainable Regeneration of Communities.

The overall aim of the project is to provide education and work opportunities for young people in disadvantaged areas and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism.

EXPERIENCE

In an innovative move, the FAI and the WFT will cooperate and share knowledge, experience and best practise in relation to specific grassroots programmes.

The FAI will tap into the vast experience of the Welsh Football Trust in providing Pan Disability Football while the Welsh will look to draw on the FAI experience of producing a National Strategy for the development of Futsal.

UEFA President Platini praised the initiative saying:

"The Ireland Wales Inter Reg project is to be applauded because it is facilitating knowledge sharing between two UEFA member Associations. UEFA also recognises the importance of football as a tool to promote



UEFA President Michel Platini with, from left, Derek O'Neill, John Ryan, chair of the Southern and Eastern regional Assembly, FAI CEO John Delaney and Trevor Lloyd Hughes, President of the Welsh Football Trust at the 2011 UEFA Europa League Final Grassroots Tournament. The tournament involved clubs and community groups from all across Dublin

Derek O'Neill to head up joint FAI - WFT initiative using football as a 'social tool'

social inclusion and looks forward in this regard to the results of the Research which will be carried out as an integral part of this important project."

The project is three years in duration and will see resources being invested in twelve communities by the Ireland Wales Programme, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT). It has three main aspects:

Firstly, the rollout of twelve Hubs (seven in Ireland and five in Wales): a Hub is an education centre that will be coordinated by FAI/WFT staff.

An academic year of adult education, personal development, football coaching education and work/volunteer placements will be offered to thirty participants from the local community at each Hub. The

ratio of male to female participants will be 50:50.

The main objectives are to increase participant's employability and/or enhance their prospects of going onto further education.

ENCOURAGE

The second element of the project involves setting up pan-disability football teams attached to each Hub. The project will encourage and assist local communities around the Hubs to support the delivery of football to a wider range of players with disabilities in their communities.

The third aspect of the project will be to conduct longitudinal research on the effectiveness of football as a tool towards social inclusion and learning within disadvantaged communities.

Project Manager, Derek O'Neill commented:

"It's a unique cooperation and I believe the project will demonstrate that football and sport in general can advance social inclusion. We expect that this project will further demonstrate the power of football to influence community regeneration and we hope this will be highlighted in the results of our in depth research to be conducted over the course of the project."

The project will affect Southern and Eastern coastal communities in Ireland with the following areas qualifying as candidates to host a hub: Dublin, Waterford, Kilkenny, Meath, Kildare, Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow, South Tipperary, Cork and Kerry.

The first hubs will be rolled out in Ireland and Wales in September 2011.



Pike deserve their cup win

I'M DELIGHTED to see Pike Rovers finally get their hands on the Umbro FAI Junior Cup at last.

Just over 12 months ago there was doom and gloom within the LDMC club after they lost out in the protest room to yesterday's opponents St Michael's of Tipperary.

At last Thursday's pre-match meal for club officials, Pike Rovers personnel were at pains to point out that they had moved on and there was no 'bad blood' and that it served no good to dwell on the past.

It was diplomatic prose of the highest order but in many ways it was only right and fitting that Pike's elevation into the pantheon of FAI Junior winners should be against their old Munster rivals.

And the only other club that would have brought as much satisfaction would have been multi-winners Fairview Rangers - but of course Declan Considine's (pictured) side had already accounted for the 'View in Round 2 of this year's marathon cup competition on a 4-2 scoreline.

While Considine and skipper Keith Hartnett were writing their names into the Pike folklore, you would have to feel for the likes of James 'Chalkey' Walsh who is Ireland's record Amateur Cup holder, but has missed out once again on the big one.

Chalkey will just have to suffice with wrapping his arms around the UEFA Regions Cup when he leads Gerry Smith's side in the latest assault on the tournament in the Braga region in Portugal next month.

NDSL move is so welcome

IT'S a long overdue move but it's great to see the NDSL AGM opt to bring in the non-competitive 'five-a-side' format for next season.

Already FAI CEO John Delaney has embraced the move as has Wim Koervermans, the FAI's High Performance Director.

It's a no brainer and as Mitch Whitty, the league's Academy Director pointed out: "Why bring a kid 30 or 40 kilometers to maybe get 15 or 20 touches on a ball when you can localise it and the kid gets three or four hundred touches."

The thrust of thinking is that more touches will make for players more comfortable on the ball and while the concept is hardly new, it's been difficult to bring into mainstream Irish schoolboy soccer.

Said Tony Gains, NDSL Honorary Secretary: "This is about development and giving the game back to the kids. We hope that other leagues will follow our example but UEFA will introduce it for all member affiliates in a couple of years and we're delighted to once again set the pace in terms of developing the game here in this country."

One other area of course that is addressed is to emasculate pushy parents. This is about development, scores will not be recorded or logged and the 'need to win' will be replaced by a desire to improve and that has to be welcomed by all. Well done the NDSL.

Ajax are here to coach

ARNOLD MURHEN, Eddie van Schaick, Jan Splinter and Ronald Joorse are the Ajax coaches who will staff a two day workshop at Johnstown House hotel in Enfield, Co Meath on May 27 and 28.

The weekend is open to coaches of all levels and Ajax has been voted the best youth academy in Europe for 2010. The Ajax youth development philosophy will be the basis of all the weekend teachings and you can book your place by contacting colin@thefcai.com or phone 00447702823700.

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