

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF CLUBS

# Review Club

VOLUME 38 - Issue 7, 2025



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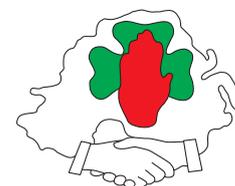
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## N.I. Federation of Clubs Membership Application Form



Name of club: .....

Address: .....

Telephone No: .....

Fax No: .....

### Club Officers

Chairman: .....

Tel: .....

Secretary: .....

Tel: .....

Treasurer: .....

Tel: .....

The annual membership fee is £50.00 payable to:

### The Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs

c/o 9 Henly Park  
Carrickfergus  
Co. Antrim  
BT38 8UH

For telephone queries call:  
**07889 681714**

*(Please include your membership fee or completed standing order form with your application)*

### For administration purposes only

Accepted by: ..... Secretary

Seconded by: ..... Chairman

Date: .....

## STANDING ORDER TO N.I. FEDERATION OF CLUBS

This is to authorise the transfer of £50.00 from the club's account:-

A/C No: .....

Sort Code: .....

Bank: .....

To account no: 627 998 63

Sort code: 95-01-45

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The payment is for the annual membership fee to the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs. The transaction to be effected now and continue annually in January of each year until further notice.

Club Name: .....

Address: .....

Authorised by: (1) .....

(2) .....

Please sign and return to:

**N.I. Federation of Clubs**

c/o 9 Henly Park

Carrickfergus

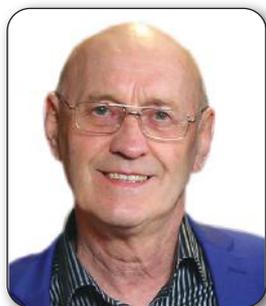
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BT38 8UH

# Facing Challenges, Supporting Members



John Davidson BEM  
Chairman, N.I.F.C.



Harry Beckinsale BEM  
Secretary, N.I.F.C.

We are also deeply grateful to our network of Approved Suppliers, whose partnership and expertise help sustain the work of the Federation itself. By supporting them, you directly help maintain the resources and representation that benefit every member club, ensuring we can continue to advocate effectively on your behalf.

As we look ahead to the festive season, let's continue to champion everything that makes our clubs special - friendship, service and community. Together, we'll ensure that as the nights draw in, our clubs shine brighter than ever across Northern Ireland.

John Davidson BEM - Chairman

Harry Beckinsale BEM - Secretary

Dear colleagues,

As we move from the crisp days of October into the darker evenings of November, clubs across Northern Ireland continue to be the places where warmth, laughter and community spirit thrive. The change in season brings with it renewed activity - members returning indoors for social evenings, entertainment and companionship - all hallmarks of club life at its best.

This time of year is one of planning and preparation. Committees and staff are finalising entertainment calendars, decorating for the festive season and ensuring that Christmas and New Year events are firmly in the diary. These occasions don't just mark the end of the year they remind us why our clubs exist - to bring people together, foster friendships, and support the communities we serve.

Over recent weeks, the Federation has been encouraged to see so many clubs sharing stories of charity events, fundraising nights and community partnerships. These efforts are the backbone of our movement. Every cheque presentation, every quiz night and every festive raffle represents not just generosity, but the enduring value of social clubs as local hubs of goodwill. We love to highlight your efforts through Club Review and our social channels, so please continue to send in your photos and stories - they inspire others and celebrate what makes each club unique.

As colder weather settles in, now is also the right moment to ensure your premises remain safe, comfortable and welcoming. Take time to check heating, lighting and accessibility arrangements. Well-lit entrances, non-slip mats and simple maintenance checks make all the difference to members and visitors alike. A warm welcome, both in atmosphere and in attitude, will ensure people keep returning throughout the winter months.

The Federation remains committed to supporting clubs in every way possible. Our Federation Helplines are available throughout the year to offer advice and assistance on licensing, employment, insurance, energy or general operational matters. Don't hesitate to reach out - no query is too small, and our aim is to provide practical, timely guidance whenever you need it.

## N.I.F.C. HELPLINES

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## Minutes of the Executive Meeting

Hosted by the H&W Welders FSC, Belfast, Wednesday 15th October 2025

### Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Secretary read the minutes of the September meeting. These were proposed by Gerry Gallagher and seconded by Tommy McMinn as a true and accurate record. Agreed.

### Employment of Committee Members

The Committee discussed in detail the position of committee members being employed by their clubs.

It was noted that while such arrangements are legally permitted, they must be handled transparently and in accordance with good governance.

Any appointment should follow a proper recruitment process and be supported by a formal contract of employment, distinct from the individual's elected committee role, which must continue to be confirmed by the membership.

### Staffing Challenges

The Chairman highlighted the ongoing difficulty in securing and retaining suitable staff, a problem currently affecting the wider leisure sector. The Committee acknowledged this as a continuing concern requiring sector-wide engagement.

### Licensing Legislation Review

It was agreed that a list of suggested amendments to the

Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act 2021 should be formulated.

*Particular attention will be given to:*

- The permitted period (May-September) for young sports participants on club premises, which is viewed as overly restrictive and should be extended to twelve months.
- The rule preventing young persons from being in areas containing a bar, which the Committee considers outdated.

Members agreed that young persons accompanied by a parent or guardian should be permitted in such areas,

and that restrictions on those aged eighteen and under are unnecessarily harsh in 2025.

### Financial Report

The financial report was presented and accepted by acclamation as a true record.

### Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked all present for their contributions, and appreciation was extended to the Chairman's club for the hospitality provided following the meeting.

Harry Beckinsale BEM  
Secretary

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# When WhatsApp Goes Wrong

## Group Chats and Staff Conduct



In today's busy hospitality world, WhatsApp has become a lifeline for managers and staff alike. It's quick, familiar and perfect for organising rotas, arranging shift swaps or sending out last-minute updates. But while these groups can make communication seamless, they can also become a breeding ground for misunderstandings, gossip, or even harassment when boundaries aren't respected. What starts as harmless chat can quickly spiral into something much more serious - and employers are increasingly being held accountable when it does.

### Legal Considerations

In Northern Ireland, messages shared in WhatsApp groups aren't as "private" as some might think. Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, and the Data Protection Act 2018, employers can be drawn into disputes arising from inappropriate group chat behaviour. If offensive, discriminatory or harassing content is shared, and an employer fails to take action, they may be found liable - even if the messages were sent outside of working hours. This means that a casual "off-duty" chat can have very real workplace consequences.

### When Group Chats Go Wrong

Problems often begin subtly. Perhaps one or two staff members are excluded from a group, leading to feelings of isolation. Or maybe the tone shifts - jokes become a bit too sharp, or frustrations about

managers or colleagues start to surface. What might seem like banter to one person could feel like bullying to another. Even something as simple as late-night messages about shift changes can create pressure and blur the line between work and personal time. Over time, this kind of communication can damage morale, create tension, and lead to formal complaints.

### Setting House Rules

Every workplace should establish clear boundaries for digital communication. The simplest way to do this is by introducing a few "house rules" for all work-related group chats. These should be written down, shared with staff and reinforced regularly.

Chats should remain strictly work-related - no politics, memes or off-topic chatter. Respecting personal time is essential, so messages should be limited to appropriate hours unless there's an emergency. Most importantly, everyone must be treated with respect. That means no sarcasm, exclusion or private jokes at someone's expense. Finally, each chat should be moderated by a manager who takes responsibility for keeping the tone professional and inclusive.

### Update Your Handbook

If your staff handbook or social media policy doesn't already cover WhatsApp, Messenger or similar platforms, it's time for an update. These tools are part of everyday working life, and your policies should reflect that reality. Clear written guidance helps set expectations from the

start and gives managers the authority to intervene when behaviour crosses the line.

### When It Starts to Turn Sour

If a group chat starts heading in the wrong direction - perhaps people are complaining about work, excluding others or making sarcastic remarks - don't let it slide. Managers should step in early, pause the chat if necessary, and remind everyone of the agreed standards. It's often better to address problems informally first, but if the issue continues, you'll need to follow your disciplinary process. Always document what's been said, speak privately to anyone involved, and ensure that staff know they can raise concerns confidentially and without fear of backlash.

### A Culture of Respect

Ultimately, workplace communication - whether in person, by email or in a WhatsApp chat - should always reflect the same values: respect, inclusion and professionalism. By setting clear expectations and tackling problems early, you can avoid serious issues down the line. Good

communication is the glue that holds a team together. But it only works when everyone understands the boundaries.



Ronnie McCullough  
Managing Director  
Tel: 07835 255794



Nicola Curry,  
HR Consultant



Alan Hall,  
Health & Safety Specialist

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## Wearing Two Hats in Your Club?

### Here's What You Need to Know

In Northern Ireland, a committee member of a registered club can also be employed as a barman, but the arrangement must be clearly specified in the club's constitution or rules to prevent a conflict of interest.

The club must be run in good faith, and the law has provisions to ensure no one profits improperly from their position.

Here's a breakdown of the specific considerations:

- **Club Rules**

The club's constitution and rules must be clear about any committee member being employed by the club. These

rules must be considered satisfactory and observed as a condition of the club's registration.

- **Good Faith**

The Registration of Clubs (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 mandates that a club be "conducted in good faith."

An undeclared or poorly managed conflict of interest, where an employee also has control over club management, could undermine this principle.

- **Pecuniary Benefit**

The legislation for registered clubs aims to prevent individuals from deriving improper financial gain from the club's operations. Any

employment arrangement must be transparent, with fair remuneration and no undue benefit.

- **Managing Conflicts of Interest**

Best practice, as highlighted by organisations like the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), dictates that potential conflicts must be declared at the earliest opportunity and managed appropriately.

For example, the committee member might need to be absent from meetings where staffing or bar operational matters are discussed to ensure impartiality.

- **Transparency**

The club's minutes and accounts must be properly maintained and subject to examination. This ensures that any employment practices are open to scrutiny and that the club is being managed in the best interest of all members.

If a committee member is paid for their work as a barman, their employment contract should be separate from their role on the committee.

The club must ensure that both the position and remuneration are approved through a transparent process to avoid disputes.



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# Seamless Switch to BOIPA UK Saves Carrickfergus Rugby Club

Carrickfergus Rugby Club are already reaping the rewards after switching their card payment services to BOIPA UK. The club has seen its monthly costs fall significantly since the move, thanks to the efficient support and straightforward setup provided by the local BOIPA team.

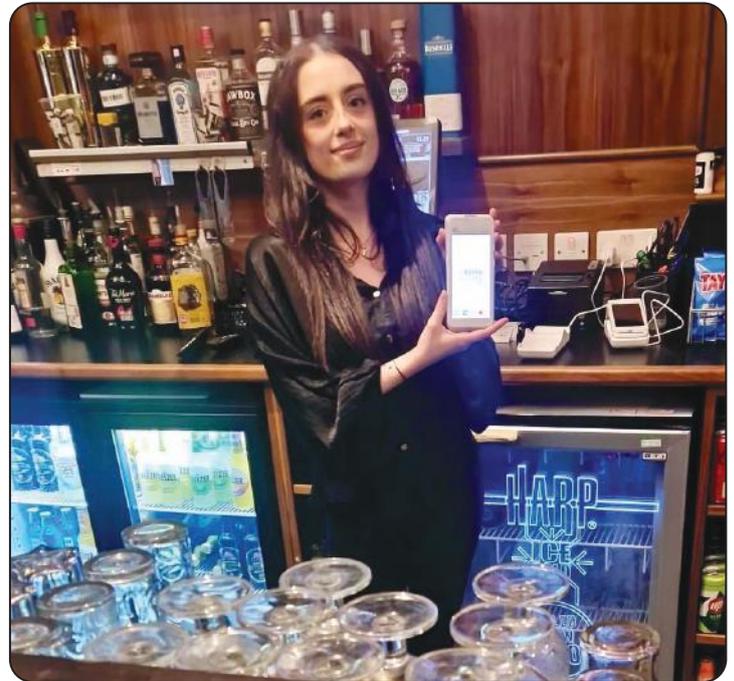
Club representative, Mark Hutchinson, explained that after meeting with Kieran McIlwaine, BOIPA UK's Senior Area Business Manager, the process moved swiftly.

"Within the week we had our new terminals installed," he said. "Engineer Steven

handled everything on-site, and the ongoing support we've received has been first class. It's reassuring to know help is always on hand when we need it."

With competitive rates, local service, and a seamless transition, Carrickfergus Rugby Club's experience shows why more clubs across Northern Ireland are choosing BOIPA UK as their trusted payment partner.

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# Social Clubs at Risk

## Lessons from Across the Water that Matter Here Too

Across the UK, social clubs are disappearing at record speed, and with them, the places where neighbours meet, friendships form and communities thrive. One of the UK's largest place-based charities, Local Trust, has warned that each closure deeply damages already struggling areas, leaving people more isolated and less supported.

Although the report and its findings relate primarily to clubs in mainland Great Britain, the same challenges are being felt here in Northern Ireland. The loss of local social spaces, the struggle to attract funding, and the ongoing need to adapt to changing times are issues that resonate strongly with our own clubs and communities.

Local Trust has noted that the loss of clubs is felt most sharply in doubly disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where few alternative venues exist for people to come together and socialise.

Recently, Local Trust played a key role in the Stronger Local Places: Rebuilding the Social Club Movement conference, which brought together community leaders, charities and politicians to explore how social clubs could adapt and survive.

Discussion also highlighted the barriers clubs face - from lack of formal registration to being overlooked by major funders in favour of schools or GP surgeries.

Speaking at the conference, Madeleine Jennings, Head of Policy and Communications at Local Trust, said, "Face-to-face, in-person interaction is vital to growing trust and familiarity between community members.

Social clubs are among the engines of social capital, serving communities in so many ways by improving outcomes in health, education, employment and wellbeing. They are also the perfect setting for fostering a community identity based on shared interests or occupations. We know there is a loneliness crisis among older people, and in part that's because of the loss of the networks and mutual support that social clubs create."

She also outlined how many Big Local areas in Britain have used social clubs to serve their residents. "Many communities have used clubs to provide informal emotional and mental health support, especially during times of crisis.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pink Ladies of Scotland and Bushbury Hill Big Local pivoted their social clubs to deliver food parcels, check in on isolated neighbours, and provide creative outlets for stress relief."

These insights are highly relevant to Northern Ireland, where clubs often serve as the beating heart of local life - providing companionship, recreation and a sense of belonging.

The conference also identified key priorities that apply just as strongly here:

- Social infrastructure and social capital play a vital role in improving outcomes for deprived communities.
- Many social clubs are not formally registered, which makes it difficult for them to access funding or formal support.
- There is a growing need to design and sustain club

spaces and programmes that specifically engage younger people - through after-school activities, weekend programmes or interest-based youth groups.

While the conversation may have started in Britain, the message is clear: **we cannot afford to lose the social clubs that bind our communities together - on either side of the Irish Sea.**

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The festive season is just around the corner, and now is the perfect time for clubs to prepare for their Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations. Early planning ensures your events run smoothly and look professional, without the stress of last-minute organising.

Printed materials are key to creating the right atmosphere. From tickets that build excitement to posters and banners that spread festive cheer, professional printing helps your club stand out and draw in a crowd.

Whether you're hosting a Christmas dinner, festive quiz or New Year's Eve party to welcome 2026 in style, Media Design and Print @ Northside has everything you need to make your event shine. Their experienced team offers high-quality tickets, posters, banners, menus, flyers and more, all tailored to suit your club's theme and style.

As a NIFC Approved Supplier, Media Design and Print @ Northside is proud to support member clubs of the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs with an exclusive **10% discount on all orders** - giving you great value for money while ensuring a professional finish.

Planning early also allows time to explore creative ideas, from festive fonts and colours to layouts that capture the warmth and joy of the season.

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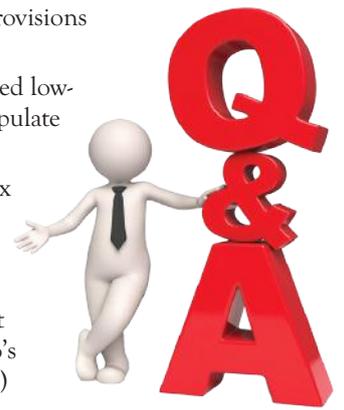


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Q. What are the minimum first aid provisions required for our club?

A. For most clubs, which are considered low-risk environments, UK regulations stipulate the following minimum provisions:

- A suitably stocked first aid kit or box
- An appointed person responsible for first aid arrangements (no formal training required)
- Information for all employees about the first aid arrangements (e.g., who's responsible, where the kit is located)



Q. Do we need a fully trained First Aider or just an appointed person?

A. In most small, low-risk clubs (e.g., under 25 employees), an appointed person is sufficient. However, if your risk assessment indicates greater hazards (machinery, large crowds, events etc.), you may need one or more trained first aiders. The risk assessment must drive this decision.

Q. Our club president recently died and the member who came second for this office at our last election in May has contacted me to say that he is now entitled to become club president. Is this correct?

A. This person has absolutely no automatic right to be appointed to the vacant president's position. The vacancy caused by the president's death is deemed to be a casual vacancy and as such can be filled by any person appointed by the committee. It may well be that the committee decide to appoint the member who was the unsuccessful candidate, but they have no obligation to do so.

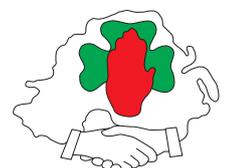
Q. The club has three new trustees who are taking a much more active part in the club's management than the previous trustees had done. In fact, they want to change everything so far as the management procedures are concerned and continuously remind the committee that they 'own the club'. What are the club trustees' duties?

A. You will find the main reference to the club trustees' duties within the club's rules. The trustees are officers of the club and as such may attend and vote at committee meetings. However, the club is managed by the elective committee acting as a whole and each member's vote has the same value.

If the trustees are required to sign any document on behalf of the club, then they can only do so on the instruction of the committee. Whilst the property of the club is vested in the names of the trustees, this does not in any way mean that they 'own' the club. They simply hold it on behalf of the club.

You will appreciate that the club is an unincorporated association and as such has no legal identity. The club cannot hold property in the name of the club but must do so in the names of trustees acting on behalf of the club. Ultimately, the club is managed by the club's management committee, which is elected by the members. No single officer, or officers, has the authority under the rules to overturn decisions of the committee, or to amend club policy without the committee's agreement.

If you have any questions you need answered for your club, then please send them to us at: [info@nifederationofclubs.com](mailto:info@nifederationofclubs.com)





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# From Football to Formula 1

A Feast of Sport Awaits



There are some massive matches coming up in the Premier League. Among the mouthwatering fixtures, Liverpool host fierce rivals Manchester United, Spurs and Chelsea go head-to-head, and Manchester City and Liverpool clash at the Etihad Stadium.

There's also the best of the action from the EFL, the Scottish Premiership, the fourth round of the Carabao Cup, the Women's Super League and the Bundesliga.

The stars of darts will be going toe-to-toe in the Grand Slam in November, which is the final Major before December's World Championship. Teenage star Luke Littler, fresh from his victory in October's World Grand Prix, is the defending champion.

The Formula 1 season is roaring towards the final straight, with the drivers in action in the United States, Mexico and Brazil Grands Prix. McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris are neck and neck in the race for the Drivers' Championship title.



Picture courtesy of Getty Images

There's also all the action from the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, plus there's a packed golf schedule, with coverage from the DP World Tour, PGA Tour and LPGA Tour.

Tennis fans can catch all the drama from the ATP and WTA finals, plus there's live NFL, NBA basketball, Women's Big Bash League cricket and much more.



## October & November Highlights

- Sunday 26th October.....Hearts v Celtic - 12pm (SPL)  
Arsenal v Crystal Palace - 2.00pm (PL)
- Wednesday 29th October.....Hibernian v Rangers - 7.45pm (SPL)  
Liverpool v Crystal Palace - 7.45pm (Carabao Cup)  
Newcastle Utd v Spurs - 8.00pm (Carabao Cup)
- Saturday 1st November.....Spurs v Chelsea - 5.30pm (PL)
- Sunday 2nd November.....West Ham v Newcastle - 2.00pm (PL)  
Manchester City v Bournemouth - 4.30pm (PL)
- Saturday 8th November .....Sunderland v Arsenal - 5.30pm (PL)  
Chelsea v Wolves - 8.00pm (PL)  
Grand Slam of Darts
- Sunday 9th November.....Brentford v Newcastle - 2.00pm (PL)  
Dundee v Rangers - 3.00pm (SPL)  
Manchester City v Liverpool - 4.30pm (PL)  
Grand Slam of Darts  
Formula 1 - Brazilian Grand Prix
- Saturday 15th November.....Grand Slam of Darts - Quarter-Finals
- Sunday 16th November .....Grand Slam of Darts - Semi- Finals & Final

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## Slips, Trips and Winter Hazards

### Keeping Your Club Safe and Secure this Winter

As the seasons turn and winter draws closer, every club committee should take a moment to review how well their premises are prepared for the challenges that come with cold, wet and darker days. Slips, trips and falls remain one of the most common causes of accidents in clubs, bars and social venues across Northern Ireland - and while most are thankfully minor, some can result in serious injury, lost income and costly claims.

The causes are rarely dramatic. A wet floor by the door, a loose entrance mat, a cracked step or a poorly lit pathway can easily catch someone off guard. Add in frosty conditions, rainwater trailed inside, or leaves brought in on shoes, and even the most well-run club can find itself facing an incident that could have been prevented with a little extra care and attention.

#### A Seasonal Increase in Risk

During the winter months, entrances and cloakrooms tend to see more footfall as members shake off umbrellas, remove coats and wipe their feet. This means more moisture around doorways and tiled areas. Clubs should ensure mats are properly absorbent, regularly cleaned, and large enough to allow people to dry their footwear before walking further in. Regular checks throughout the evening can prevent the build-up of water that might not be immediately obvious under artificial lighting.

Outside, lighting is another key factor. Many accidents occur not because of neglect, but because paths, car parks and steps are

poorly illuminated. Check that all bulbs are working, motion sensors are correctly set, and that key routes are clear of debris. It's also worth applying salt or grit to external surfaces during icy spells - a simple measure that can make a significant difference to safety.

#### Good Housekeeping and Staff Awareness

Inside the club, a culture of awareness goes a long way. Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to report hazards immediately and to deal with spillages or obstructions as soon as they arise. Use of warning cones or signage is advisable whenever cleaning takes place or when a surface remains damp.

Keep walkways clear from clutter, cables and boxes, and ensure that any changes in floor levels are clearly marked. Regular inspections, particularly before busy functions or events, can identify risks early. Many clubs now keep a short "premises check sheet" by the bar or in the steward's office to record these visual checks, providing both peace of mind and a paper trail should an accident occur.

#### Insurance and Peace of Mind

While prevention is always the best policy, it's essential to ensure your club is properly insured in the event that something does happen. Rollins Club Insurance, an Approved Supplier to the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs, has decades of experience in protecting clubs just like yours. Their team understands the specific risks associated with running members' premises



- from public liability to employers' and buildings cover - and can offer tailored advice to ensure your committee and members are well safeguarded.

As with all aspects of good governance, risk management should be seen as an ongoing process rather than a once-a-year check. A few small steps now - whether it's tightening a loose

handrail, improving lighting, or reviewing your insurance - can prevent serious accidents later.

With a bit of vigilance and support from trusted specialists such as Rollins Club Insurance, your club can continue to provide a safe, welcoming environment for members and guests right through the winter season.

#### Top Tips to Prevent Slips and Trips This Winter

##### Keep entrances dry

Use large absorbent mats and check them regularly.

##### Light it right

Make sure all outdoor areas, paths and steps are well lit.

##### Stay alert to spills

Deal with any spillages or obstructions immediately.

##### Mark hazards clearly

Use warning signs for wet floors or uneven surfaces.

##### Check external areas

Apply salt or grit during icy spells and clear debris.

##### Inspect regularly

Keep a record of safety checks for peace of mind.

##### Review your cover

Speak to your insurance provider for expert advice on protecting your club.

# Rollins Insurance Brokers Strengthens Global Backing While Keeping Local Club Focus

Rollins Insurance Brokers - one of the most respected names in the Northern Ireland insurance sector - has entered an exciting new chapter in its long history of serving local clubs and businesses.

Since June 2024, T. Oscar Rollins & Co. Ltd has proudly become part of Brown & Brown, Inc., one of the world's largest insurance brokers with global revenues exceeding \$4 billion. This partnership combines international strength and expertise with Rollins' long-standing commitment to local service, ensuring that clubs across Northern Ireland continue to receive trusted, personal

support backed by global resources.

As part of an internal reorganisation within Brown & Brown, the business of T. Oscar Rollins & Co. Ltd (FCA Firm Reference Number 116678) will transfer into Brown & Brown Insurance Brokers (UK) Limited (FCA Firm Reference Number 745618). From 13th October 2025, Rollins Insurance Brokers will trade as a name under Brown & Brown Insurance Brokers (UK) Limited.

While the name behind the business may be changing, the people, management structure, and the high standard of service remain exactly the

same. Clubs can rest assured that it's very much business as usual for the Rollins team. The change simply means even greater access to international insurance markets and enhanced capability when sourcing the most competitive and comprehensive protection for clients.

As an Approved Supplier to the Northern Ireland Federation of Clubs, Rollins Insurance Brokers continues to play an important role in helping registered clubs safeguard their premises, staff and members. The company has a proud track record of understanding the specific risks and responsibilities that come

with running a club and offers practical, reliable advice tailored to each client's needs.

Managing Director Dermot Rollins commented, "We're proud of our long-standing relationship with the Federation and the trust that so many clubs have placed in us over the years. Joining Brown & Brown allows us to strengthen our position, ensuring that we can continue to deliver the best possible service, combining global expertise with local knowledge."

Full details of Rollins' updated Terms of Business Agreement and Privacy Notice are available at [bbrown.com/uk/privacy-statement/](http://bbrown.com/uk/privacy-statement/)

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## How Music Can Make Your Business Even More Magical this Christmas

As the temperature starts to drop and the days start to get shorter, for a lot of people there's one thing on their mind...

**Christmas!** For many, this means making time for the people they love, whether that be meals with family, drinks with friends or parties with colleagues. So, what can hospitality venues do to make this time of year even more magical for both staff and customers?

According to a 2022 survey, although 16.9% say they could listen to Christmas music all year round, for many, introducing Christmas songs gradually is a large part of the overall experience. By gradually increasing your festive playlists, you can deliver a build-up of anticipation for the big day whilst also keeping in touch with staff and customer wants and needs. Creating a festive environment can attract more foot traffic as people may be more drawn to your venue. Christmas music can help create a cosy, holiday theme, making your bar feel warm and inviting. After all, decorating your business in time for Christmas is important, but the right soundtrack can take the festive spirit to the next level.

When planning your Christmas music, it can be very tempting to press shuffle and let the likes of Mariah and Wham! do the rest. However, you could spend a little extra time this year and think about the ambience and tone you want to set within your venue.

When thinking about the right music to play, you should not only consider your customers, but also your staff. Constant

repeats of the same Christmas songs can cause your employees to become disengaged, so try involving your team in the playlist curation and allow their input on which style of music they would prefer to listen to when setting up and closing for the day. Some upbeat, feel-good music could help to motivate your staff when energy is ebbing.

Don't be afraid to ask your customers for feedback too! Asking your customers what they think of your selected music, or whether they feel like it's too early or repetitive, will make them feel valued and that their opinion matters. As well as this, getting your customers' feedback on your seasonal tunes will allow you to make changes to your playlists, which in turn, can continue to benefit the overall customer experience.

Not every business is keen to have sleigh bells ringing throughout the festive season though. Our survey results also show that 45.2% of UK adults surveyed said they'd also like to listen to pop music as well as Christmas music, so you could intersperse your festive music with some non-seasonal tracks. Playing your normal music with every 3rd or 4th song giving a nod to halls decked with holly and frosty snowmen could be the answer.

Offering a variety of genres during Christmas could also help ease into the festivities. Perhaps your customers would like to create a relaxing, quirky ambience; maybe some relaxing festive jazz or classical music instead? A 2021 survey revealed that 31% of diners feel more inclined to order more



expensive dishes when hearing classical music in a restaurant. So, what is it about festive tracks that lifts our spirits? According to our survey, almost 70% of people said Christmas music makes them feel festive, while over 50% said Christmas music helps to boost their mood.

PPL PRS' Music Therapist, Marianne Rizkallah, says, "Hearing familiar music takes us back to points in our childhood and as we're growing up - hopefully happy memories of quality time with our families, and a reminder of childlike wonder and excitement, a sense of looking forward to time with our loved ones and looking forward to the new year. So, shops can tap into that emotion when playing Christmas music, which may increase the time spent in store by a customer during the festive period."

Research also found that over two-fifths (41%) love Christmas tunes because they are catchy, while another four in ten (39%) said the atmosphere the songs create is what wins them over, followed by the tune (38%). Other qualities that are appreciated in festive tunes are nostalgia (33%), the level of

festivity of the song itself (31%), the lyrics (31%) and how easy they are to sing along to (29%).

Marianne goes on to say, "If we have good associations of the Christmas season, then Christmas music can act as a helpful psychological cue to get us into the festive spirit. Music's effect on our limbic system (which deals with our emotions) means that, if our associations are good, we are prompted to feel warmer, more relaxed, and lighter in mood, which is always good in the darker and colder months."

The more relaxed and comfortable your customers feel, the better experience they will have. This may also encourage them to spend more. The cheerfulness created by Christmas music has the ability to put customers in a buying mood, prompting them to make more purchases than they might have otherwise.

By incorporating Christmas music into your business this Christmas, you can create a memorable and pleasant experience that encourages customers to return and recommend your business to others.

# THE 12 BENEFITS OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Like most businesses, you want yours to stand out this festive season. Whether it's through the atmosphere you create, or the way you make guests feel, every detail counts.

One detail that makes a big difference? Christmas music.

Want to make your business shine this Christmas? Here's how:

**01**

**Include a few popular Christmas songs into your current playlist:**

Slowly add them as the weeks go by to avoid overwhelming your staff

**02**

**Involve your staff with curating the Christmas playlist:**

Employees are more likely to feel connected to the festive experience you're creating

**03**

**Analyse your customers response to Christmas music:**

Getting your audiences feedback will allow you to optimise their experience

**04**

**Choose a variety of songs:**

Mix classic carols with modern holiday hits to cater to a wide range of tastes

**05**

**Consider your audience:**

Tailor your playlist to suit your target customer base, whilst reinforcing your brand

**06**

**Stay mindful of repetition:**

Avoid playing the same songs on repeat. Keep the music fresh!

**07**

**Keep the volume moderate:**

Ensure the music is loud enough to be heard but not so loud that it becomes too much for customers and staff

**08**

**Schedule songs for different parts of the day:**

Adjust the atmosphere of your venue by increasing the tempo as the day goes on

**09**

**Consider live entertainment:**

Host a live band to play different renditions of Christmas classics!

**10**

**Use music to set zones:**

Different areas can have tailored playlists to suit the mood and purpose of each space

**11**

**Enhance promotions:**

Sync music with seasonal offers or events to create a cohesive and immersive experience

**12**

**Support the artists:**

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### So what exactly do they do?

Think of MJ Utilities as the experts working quietly behind the scenes to secure you the best value. Just as comparison sites hunt down the most competitive insurance deals, MJ Utilities does the same for commercial electricity and gas - comparing rates from all major suppliers and ensuring you never overpay.

### Why choose MJ Utilities?

- **Expert Market Insight:** They continuously monitor wholesale energy trends so you don't have to - giving you timely, informed advice on renewals and contract options.

- **Independent Guidance:** As an impartial broker, they're not tied to any one supplier, ensuring total transparency.
- **Negotiating Power:** Representing multiple clients each month allows them to drive suppliers to compete for your business, often resulting in better rates and reduced margins.

If you're ready to take control of your club's energy costs, **MJ Utilities** can make the process refreshingly straightforward - and *probably* more rewarding than you'd expect.



### Testimonials

*The Royal Naval Association, Belfast, began a great partnership with MJ Utilities in 2017. We can recommend their highly professional services in the complicated negotiating of business gas and electricity contracts.*  
Royal Naval Association Club, Belfast

*I would certainly recommend MJ Utilities. We found Mark to be professional and very helpful. We had never contemplated an energy broker previously. However, we will most certainly use their services again. With their help our club will now benefit from significant savings on both our electricity and gas bills.*  
Falls Bowling and Lawn Tennis Club, Belfast

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# Barry McGuigan - "The Clones Cyclone"

## The Quiet Champion Who United a Divided Land

On a June night in 1985, 27,000 fans packed London's Loftus Road as Pat McGuigan sang Danny Boy for his son Barry - the "Clones Cyclone." Moments later, the young fighter from County Monaghan would dethrone Panama's Eusebio Pedroza to become World Featherweight Champion. Across Ireland, north and south, communities divided by conflict celebrated together. For one unforgettable night, sport triumphed over politics.

Born in 1961 in the border town of Clones, Barry grew up amid the Troubles but refused to be defined by them. He won Commonwealth gold in 1978 for Northern Ireland, then represented Ireland at the 1980 Moscow Olympics - a symbol of unity even before fame found him. Turning professional in 1981, he packed Belfast's King's Hall, where both Catholic and Protestant supporters cheered him on. His father's song became his anthem; his courage, their shared pride.

Tragedy struck early. In 1982, opponent Young Ali collapsed and died days after their fight,

leaving McGuigan distraught. He considered quitting, but fought on, claiming the British featherweight title in 1983 and the European title later that year with a knockout of Italy's Valerio Nati. Six consecutive wins in 1984 made him the top contender for the world crown.

Then came 8 June 1985 - the night Ireland held its breath. Pedroza, unbeaten for seven years, was a formidable champion. McGuigan fought with relentless energy, flooring him in the seventh round and outboxing him over fifteen. When the judges announced a unanimous decision, the crowd erupted. More than 20 million watched on television, making it one of the most viewed fights in British boxing history. His victory parade drew tens of thousands through Belfast and Dublin; later that year, he was named BBC Sports Personality of the Year, the first non-Briton to receive the award.



### Warrior and Peacemaker

McGuigan's reign, though brief, was glorious. He defended his title twice against Bernard Taylor and Danilo Cabrera before facing Steve Cruz in Las Vegas, June 1986. Fighting outdoors in desert heat above 40°C, he tired badly and lost a close fifteen-round decision, collapsing from dehydration soon after. A year later, the death of his father, Pat, drained the joy from the sport. McGuigan retired in 1989 with a record of 32 wins (28 by knockout) and 3 defeats.

Yet it was never just about boxing. McGuigan became a beacon of peace during an era of mistrust. A Catholic who married a Protestant, he refused to wear political colours, instead choosing neutral blue trunks with a white dove of peace. He entered the ring to Danny Boy rather than a national anthem and avoided taking sides. "Both sides would say, 'Leave the fighting to McGuigan,'" he once recalled. "I wouldn't choose sides. People appreciated that."

That stance - simple, brave and authentic - made him a unifying symbol when few existed. His bouts were rare moments when people stood together, cheering the same name. As he later said, "There was so much sadness, and people were fed up. Boxing gave them a bit of light."

Since retirement, McGuigan has remained deeply involved in the sport - as commentator, trainer, and founder of the McGuigan Gym, mentoring champions like Carl Frampton. In 2005, his contribution was recognised with his induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Barry McGuigan's story endures not only for his titles, but for his integrity. He proved that sport could transcend division, that courage could coexist with compassion, and that sometimes the greatest victories are fought outside the ring. The dove on his shorts said it all - a fighter by trade, a peacemaker by choice.

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## NI Football Writers' Association Awards



Interim Larne boss, Gary Haveron (right), collects his Manager of the Month trophy from NIFWA Chair, Gareth McCullough.

Larne Football Club's interim boss Gary Haveron has been named the NIFWA Manager of the Month for September after steering the Invermen to an impeccable run of form - five wins from five games without conceding a single goal.

Taking charge following the departure of Tiernan Lynch, Haveron has quickly steadied the ship, overseeing victories against Bangor, Glenavon, Crusaders and Carrick Rangers, along with a County Antrim Shield win over Queen's University.

In accepting the award, Haveron was quick to credit the wider team effort: "September was a fantastic month for us with five wins from five games. It was particularly pleasing not to concede a goal.

"Unfortunately, October got off to a rocky start with a poor performance against Dungannon Swifts, but I'm confident we will learn from that experience."

Paul Heatley, the Sports Direct NIFWA Player of the Month for August, has expressed his gratitude for the many messages of support following a frightening collision during Carrick Rangers' game against Bangor. The 38-year-old forward suffered concussion and a head wound after striking the perimeter wall, with the match abandoned as a result. Now recovering at home, Heatley says he's "humbled" by the award and proud of Carrick's unbeaten start to the season.



Paul Heatley (left) receives his Premiership Player of the Month Award for August from Michael Clarke.



Larne captain, Tomas Cosgrove, with his September Player of the Month trophy.

Larne captain, Tomas Cosgrove, has been named Premiership Player of the Month for September, after a flawless run of form that saw the Invermen notch five wins and five clean sheets.

As skipper, Cosgrove marshalled the defence with composure and leadership, helping Larne keep their entire backline unbreached throughout the month. His consistency and influence were central to the club's perfect September.

His performance doesn't just reflect individual quality - it underlines Larne's wider defensive solidity and collective resilience. September's string of results reaffirms that this squad thrives when its leaders step up.



Cliftonville's Teegan Lynch has been named the NIFL Women's Premiership Player of the Month for September, after an outstanding spell that saw her score four goals in six games. The Reds forward has been in superb form, leading by example and providing a consistent attacking threat throughout the month.

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