



PPUI

February 2019

Ladies & U16 Pitch & Putt Subcommittee Report

Introduction

The following report has been compiled by the Ladies and U16 (L&J) subcommittee which was appointed by the NEC.

Committee members involved in the submission of this report are: Declan Sheedy (Cil na Mona) – Chairperson, Audrey Donnelly (MacBride), Christine Mulvey (Glenville), Lily O'Brien (Lakeside), Darren Keogh (Ryston) and Mark Keohane (Rocklodge).

The subcommittee wishes to acknowledge and pay our sincere respects to Helen McMorrow (RIP) who was a member of our subcommittee and who was a key participant in our first subcommittee meeting in October where many of these ideas, recommendations and proposals were debated, discussed and agreed upon. The very sad passing of Helen is a major loss to our subcommittee, the NEC and the game as a whole. As a subcommittee we hope we can execute the ideas and proposals within for Helen and revive the Ladies and U16 games which Helen was so committed to. May Helen rest in peace. We also wish to pass our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of NEC Vice President Liam Sherry following his very sad passing last week. Another huge loss to the game. May Liam rest in peace.

The following reports focuses in on 3 key areas

1. The decline in L&J registered membership
2. The decline in L&J entries into competitions
3. The lack of Ladies participation at administration levels.

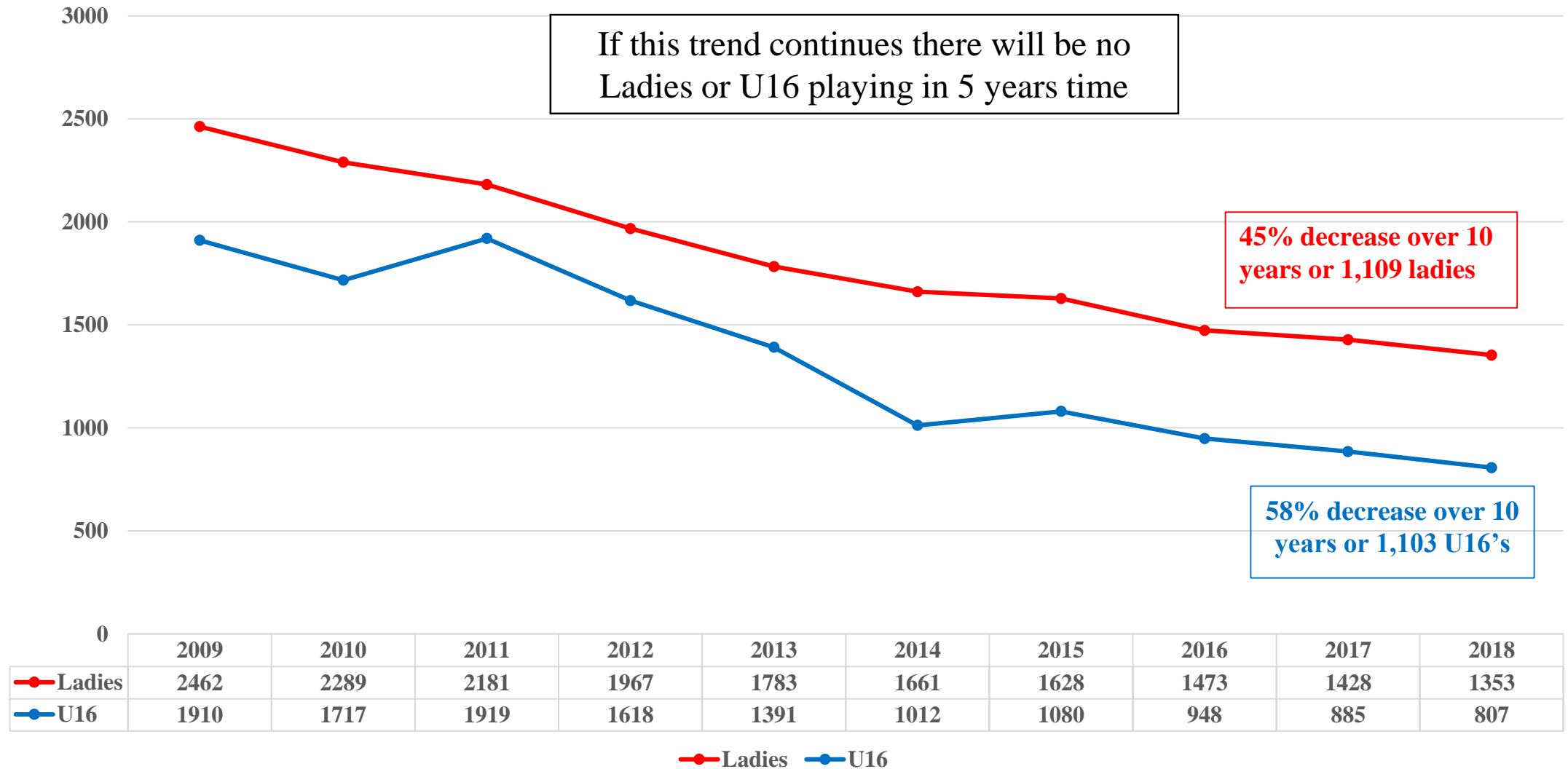
The subcommittee has critically looked at the factors impacting each of these areas and highlight worrying data and statistics followed by recommendations and proposals, we as a subcommittee put forward to the NEC for serious consideration and implementation as soon as possible in 2019. For the various proposals and recommendations the L&J committee members are willing to take the initiatives on executing these subject to NEC approval or work with the NEC members in executing.

We very strongly feel these recommendations should be implemented in 2019 in order to begin to turn the tide and serious decline in the L&J games before it is too late. We fear the point of no return could be very close.

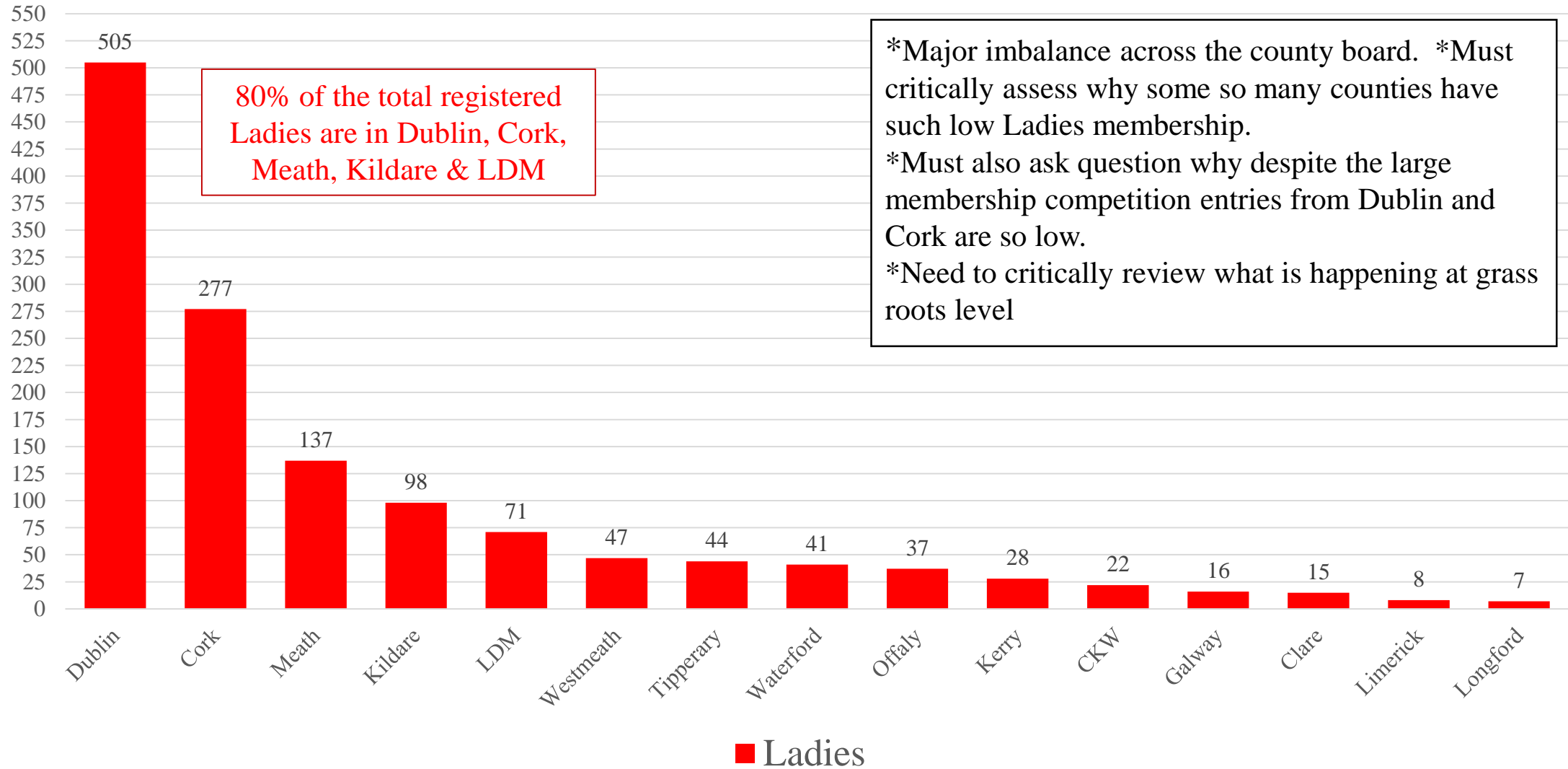
Yours in sport

Declan Sheedy on behalf of the Ladies and U16 Subcommittee

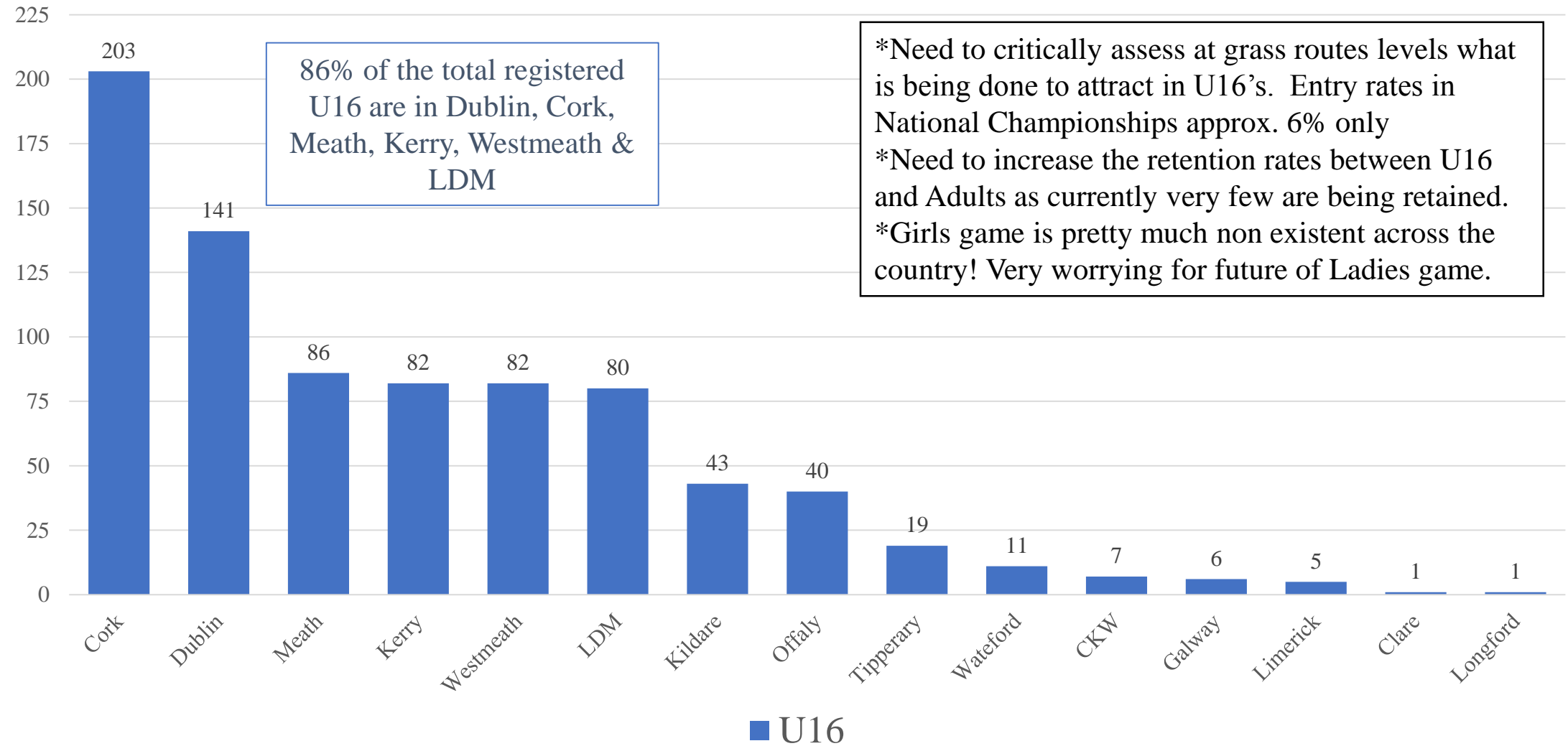
PPUI Registered Membership – Last 10 Years



PPUI Registered Membership by County/Regional Board in 2018



PPUI Registered Membership by County/Regional Board in 2018





Promotion & Advertising – Must address!!

- The subcommittee deems the single biggest issue for why both membership is in decline and why competition entry rates are so poor is the lack of promotion and advertising for both the Ladies and U16 game.
- Very poor recognition and acknowledgement of the achievements within the Ladies and U16 game.
- A huge majority of Ladies and U16's around the country don't have a clue that there are local clubs which they can join or the fact that Ireland has the world's greatest Ladies and U16 players actively playing.
- Most still don't know P&P as a sport event exists!
- The Ladies & U16's games are totally undersold, promoted and advertised which is evident in the declining membership numbers and entrants to competitions.
- NEC must invest financial and human resources into this area in 2019.
- Promotion and advertising needs to be actively followed up by the NEC and the L&J subcommittee to ensure maximum impact is achieved. This will take resources and time but is a must if it is to succeed.
- NEC, board, clubs and players must be willing to embrace change or at least trial ideas to save the game as the status quo will not work other than support the continued downward decline.
- **IMPORTANT:** Promotion and advertising along with the efforts of the NEC and this subcommittee can only do so much. **It is critical that the Ladies & U16 players themselves, the clubs and the county boards buy into the process, ideas and most importantly are open to change for the good of the whole Ladies & U16 game.** Without the support and participation of the players and clubs and those at grassroots levels the initiatives and ideas proposed will be to no avail and the decline will continue. **The time is NOW for everyone to pull together to revive the games as we are very close to the point of no return.**

Promotion & Advertising – Recommendations for 2019

- Subcommittee proposes the below to be executed in 2019 and built on in future years
 1. **Create dedicated sections/pages on the PPUI Website for L&J.**
 - These pages to be a one stop location where L&J can access all information regarding the L&J games to include but not limited to the following: Rules of the games, explanation of competition formats, forum where all L&J competitions are advertised, details of all entry deadline dates, L&J information sharing forum, historic records of all L&J National & Provincial Championship and other details specifically related to the promotion and development of the L&J games. Chair of the L&J subcommittee offers to maintain these pages.
 2. **Create dedicated PPUI L&J Facebook pages**
 - We must use the power of social media to promote the L&J games. This is a majorly important tool to achieve this. PPUI to create a dedicated L&J Facebook page to promote all matters L&J related. This could include interviews with players, reports on L&J competitions and championships, photos and be a forum whereby feedback and questions can be received from players for the continued improvement of the L&J games. Chair of the L&J subcommittee offers to run this page.

Promotion & Advertising – Recommendations for 2019

3. Create dedicated email address for L&J

- Feedback and ideas from players across the country is key to the success of the L&J. Proposed a dedicated email address is released where L&J players can email suggestion and ideas to the L&J subcommittee for consideration. This will allow the subcommittee to hear from all players and increase engagement constructively with them

4. Launch a dedicated Backspin edition for L&J

- Subcommittee in conjunction with NEC PRO to work together to launch a dedicated Backspin edition for L&J. Purpose is to heavily promote the L&J games with interviews with players, look back at 2018 and preview of the year ahead, photos, details of all key dates for entries and championships, all clubs details where new members can contact and other promotional matters. Have this edition then heavily circulated on social media and website. Ideally to be launched in Mar 2019 before the season starts.

5. Seek sponsorships specifically targeted at L&J

- We acknowledge the challenges of obtaining sponsorship but the subcommittee proposes members of the committee are tasked to actively pursue and target sponsorship specifically for the L&J game. Any sponsorship received would be put back into L&J game.

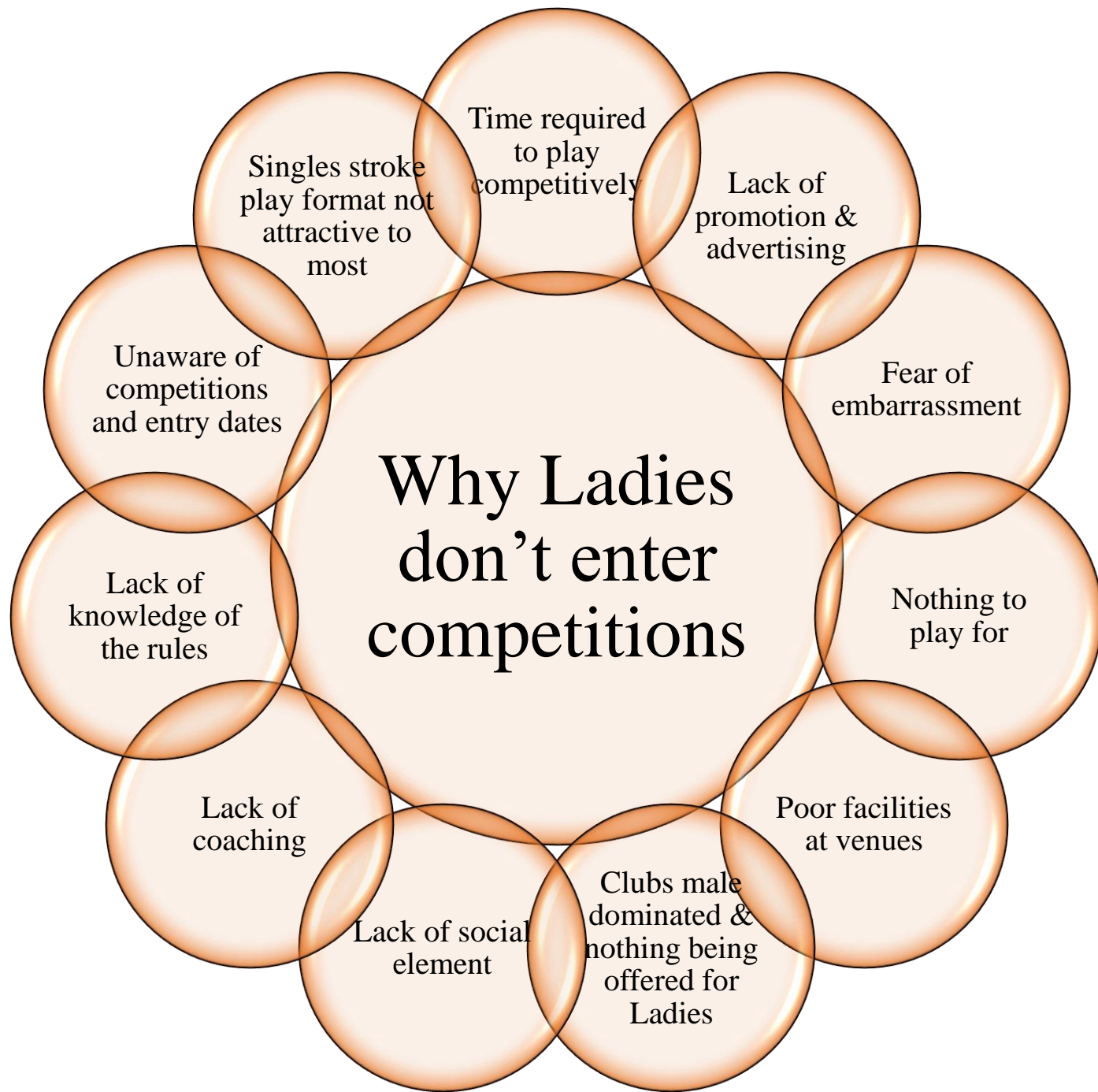
Promotion & Advertising – Recommendations for 2019

6. Use Ladies Social Day as platform to heavily advertise and promote the game

- The Ladies Social Day has received large numbers in recent years. It is seen however that the Ladies who do play that day do not for the high majority enter any other competitions during the year. Proposal is that the NEC with members of the L&J subcommittee have a stand at each venue and someone attend it with promotional materials, deadlines of all competitions for 2019, all entry forms available on the day where Ladies can enter on the day of the Ladies Social Day and advertise this stand where Ladies can ask questions and give feedback on their view of the game. Suggest we hold a 15-20 mins open floor Q&A session when all players finished playing and in the club house. Must capitalise on this forum and large group of players at both Munster & Leinster venues.

7. Continue the International Challenges only for L&J

- The Ireland v Catalonia challenge in Seapoint in 2018 showcased the L&J talent in Ireland. It severely lacked promotion coming into it and other aspects could be improved on. However the most important element was the promotion of the L&J game on the International scene. The enthusiasm shown by the U16 on the day was a highlight and this is what drives them to play. NEC must consider this as an annual event with greater promotion and planning surrounding it. Playing for Ireland is a major attraction and honour for players and we believe would encourage more players to play during a year if this was an honour they could achieve. Costs involved in such challenges will be outweighed by the benefits derived in the L&J game.



Ladies Competitions – Recommendations for 2019

With the key goal to increase entries in Ladies & U16 National & Provincial Championships in 2019 we propose the below for execution:

1. Heavy promotion and reminders of upcoming Championship and Deadlines

- We identified that one big reason as to why L&J are not entering competitions is in many case they are unaware of deadlines dates. Due to the fact there is currently little activity at club levels for L&J many L&J don't go into clubhouses where entry forms are up on notice board or many clubs don't notify their members. L&J are less likely to actively review upcoming deadlines dates. Adopting new dedicated website page and Facebook page will greatly improve this awareness. NEC, clubs and county board must all together work on this. The subcommittee particularly recommends heavily advance promotion of the National Handicap Matchplay to ensure its survival and increased support in its 2nd year.

2. Nett Prize to be introduced per grade in National & Provincial Strokeplay Championships.

- A nett prize per grade over the first 36 holes is recommended to give players an additional opportunity to compete for a prize. It is viewed that many ladies are not entering a scratch championship as they have nothing to play for against other players. Adding in at least 1, ideally 2, nett prizes per grade we strongly believe will attract more players to enter. The main prizes to remain the best gross scores with the nett prizes to follow as next prizes. The additional costs we believe are merited and could easily be covered by a small number of additional entrants. We propose this is brought in for all provincial and national stroke play championships in 2019 and other competitions to be considered in future years.

Ladies Competitions – Recommendations for 2019 (Cont'd)

3. National Ladies Strokeplay to return as 54 Hole Championship in 2019.

- A trial to run it as 36 holes was done in 2018 and record low entries were achieved. The 54 Championship should be reintroduced to retain the history and prestige of such a championship. This is the only Championship, other than those who progress in the National Matchplay, to play final 18's and more than 36 holes. The Ladies National Stroke should be ran similar to the Gents so as to hold it in the same prestige and honour for a National title and not have the Ladies National Strokeplay Championship perceived as secondary level competition compared to Gents.

4. Same prizes for all grades and championships:

- The same prizes (medals and glass) must be awarded across all grades to prize winners in championships regardless of grade, number of competitors in a grade or province. As an example in 2018 the winner of the Leinster Junior Matchplay received glass prize but no medal and the winner of the Senior Ladies Matchplay received a medal and no glass. Not doing this has negative effect on future entries and perception of the Championships

5. National Intercounties:

- NEC in conjunction with L&J subcommittee need to proactively discuss with county board before end of May about counties fielding intercounty teams. In 2009 10 Ladies teams of 6 were fielded all playing single format. In 2018 only 5 county teams entered, lowest ever. The sub committee has debated the merits of different formats such as introducing a Division B. However a Division B is only justifiable if counties return and commit to play in it. We have seen the Gents Division B start promisingly but was in 2018 reduced to 4 person team and only 3 counties entered questioning the viability of this format. Recommendation at this time is to engaged with all county board in April to discuss them fielding a Ladies team and what would be a preferred format. A decision on the format then to be decided by end of May to allow all counties time to organise. We are conscious not to change the format to the determinant of the counties who year on year do filed teams.

Ladies Competitions – Recommendations for 2019 (Cont'd)

6. Provincial Intercounties:

- Recommendation is that in both Munster and Leinster the Inter and Junior Ladies Intercounty Championships are played under stableford format

7. National Scotch Foursomes

- We understand the NEC is replacing the National and Provincial Mixed Foursome Championships with a National Scotch Foursomes. We believe this is very likely to have a detrimental effect on Ladies entering this competition given the attraction of the Mixed Foursomes. The NEC must carefully ensure the competition remains attractive for Mixed Pairing. We would recommend for 2019 that the provincials are retained as Mixed Foursome Championship and not to eliminate all mixed foursomes championships from the calendar

8. Introduce a social event at the conclusion of the National Ladies Strokeplay Finals

- Very common feedback we hear from Ladies is that the social aspect of the games is gone. The importance of the social element for players has been identified by the sub committee as to a reason why Ladies are not registering with the NEC nor entering competitions. We recommend the NEC in conjunction with St. Bridget's (the host club of the National Ladies Strokeplay) arrange a social event on the night of the National Ladies Strokeplay. As this is a Saturday it would be hoped this would attract many players and supporters to attend the event. We would propose that a specific group would be tasked with organising this event at a suitable location near St. Bridget's. Proposed idea would be a dinner dance open to everyone and would be a ticketed event. Advanced organisation and promotion of this will be key but we would strongly recommend efforts are made in 2019 to reintroduce such an event. With such an event arranged around the National Ladies Strokeplay it would encourage more players to enter the Championship itself and attend the event after. It could increase the number of supporters to the Championship itself.

Ladies & U16 Competitions & Venue – General Matters

Aswell as specific recommendations for 2019 the subcommittee recommends the following related to general areas which the NEC need invest in and take serious consideration of

1. Coaching and Centres of Excellence:

- We acknowledge schools coaching and summer camps exist which is positive but there is insufficient links between these and the local clubs. NEC and locals clubs must in advance coordinate a recruitment plan of how to have participants and their parents join the clubs. Venues should be selected only on the basis local clubs will be involved otherwise what coaching and resources are spent gets lost once children walk out the gate. Subcommittee recommends greater focus on creating Centres of Excellence for U16 players. These centres should be strategically selected around the country to ensure maximum participation and engagement across multiple clubs.
- Coaching for Ladies to be introduced. It was identified many Ladies don't enter competitions because they don't know the rules, they don't understand the different formats, the fear of embarrassing themselves or being intimidated by the competitive environment. The NEC should hold dedicated Ladies only coaching sessions around the country at specific clubs. As earlier noted this needs to be heavily promoted in advanced. Providing these coaching sessions would give more confidence to Ladies in their playing ability and ability to enter competitions in the future. We see this a very important new initiative to be implemented in 2019

2. Courses:

- Courses must be fair to all competitors. While it is applicable to the Gents games we feel it is more important when it comes to Ladies and U16 given the different standard of play across the grades. Courses can be challenging but need to be fair. Can't have players come off a course with huge scores because of the difficulty of the course and never want to play in it again. We must protect against this as it is a very important factor. Given the age demographics across the Ladies and U16 games the physical challenges of walking courses must be considered.

Ladies & U16 Competitions & Venue – General Matters

3. Venue facilities:

- Specifically important to the Ladies. Too many host clubs and venues have sub standard facilities such as toilet, clubhouses, parking, shelter and catering facilities. This is a major issues we feel for Ladies in particular. Venues should be selected only if they provide all these at high standard. A major issue identified why ladies don't participate is they have family and other commitments. Venues should be selected which can accommodate families to attend. Basic facilities should be sufficient club house space where parents, grandparents and children could go. Bad experiences of such matters

4. World & European Teams

- Referenced earlier in the report we recommend that the NEC continue to promote annual international challenges with teams of L&J. In addition to this we propose that the NEC assign one place on the Irish World Cup team for a Lady player and for the large Irish European teams one place is assigned for a Lady player and another place for an U16 player. Currently the NEC invites the top 10 ranked Ladies to the qualifiers alongside the Gents with places on the teams awarded to top scorers over weekend and wild cards where applicable. With no disrespect to Ladies who play in such qualifiers but it is fair to say that under this process the chances of a Lady player qualifying in one of the automatic places is very slim, the reality is that only maybe 2-3 ladies have any chance at all, despite Ireland boasting the best Lady and U16 players in the world. It would be a huge positive for the development and promotion of the L&J game both at national level and international level to have Irish team represented with a mix of Gents, Ladies and U16. Not only would it be very positive for the development and promotion of the games but recognition of the contributions for the Ladies and U16 players in Ireland who receive little International recognition. We would strongly encourage the NEC to continue to work with FIPPA on the development of the International Ladies and U16 game.

Ladies – Breakdown by Grades & Handicaps

Grade	# players in each grade	% of overall registered players
Senior	42	3%
Inter	233	17%
Junior	1078	80%
<i>Data as of Oct 2018</i>		

Specific Issues to note:

Seniors – 22 of the 42 are on handicaps of -5. With the 47 SSS applied for all players on the handicap system ladies handicaps will continue to increase and the Seniors grade will become non existent in 2019/2020 unless SSS for ladies is changed or grade expanded. Of the 42 registered ladies approx. 50% have not entered a national championship in the last 3 years (registered but not active anymore?).

Juniors – 587 players have a handicap of -18 or more!! 245 players have exactly a handicap of 245 suggesting they were registered but never play in a competition to have their handicap adjusted. Despite 1078 Junior ladies registered entry level into competitions is terrible, less than 2% entry rates.

Entry rates for Ladies in National Championships is approx. 4%. At Senior level it is approx. 25% entry rates but real issues residing at Inter and Junior level which need to be looked at.

Ladies – Handicaps, Grades & SSS – Recommendation for 2019

Based on the breakdown analysis of the Ladies Grade and Handicaps the subcommittee recommend the following to be changed at the 2019 AGM. This is proposed to rebalance the handicap grade particularly the Senior grade which will not exist in 2 years time under the current formats and systems. The current SSS of 47 for Ladies simply doesn't work. In the National Strokeplay Senior Grade in Collins every Senior player received a 0.1 back which reflects how wrong it is. Below is a recommendation of how to address this.

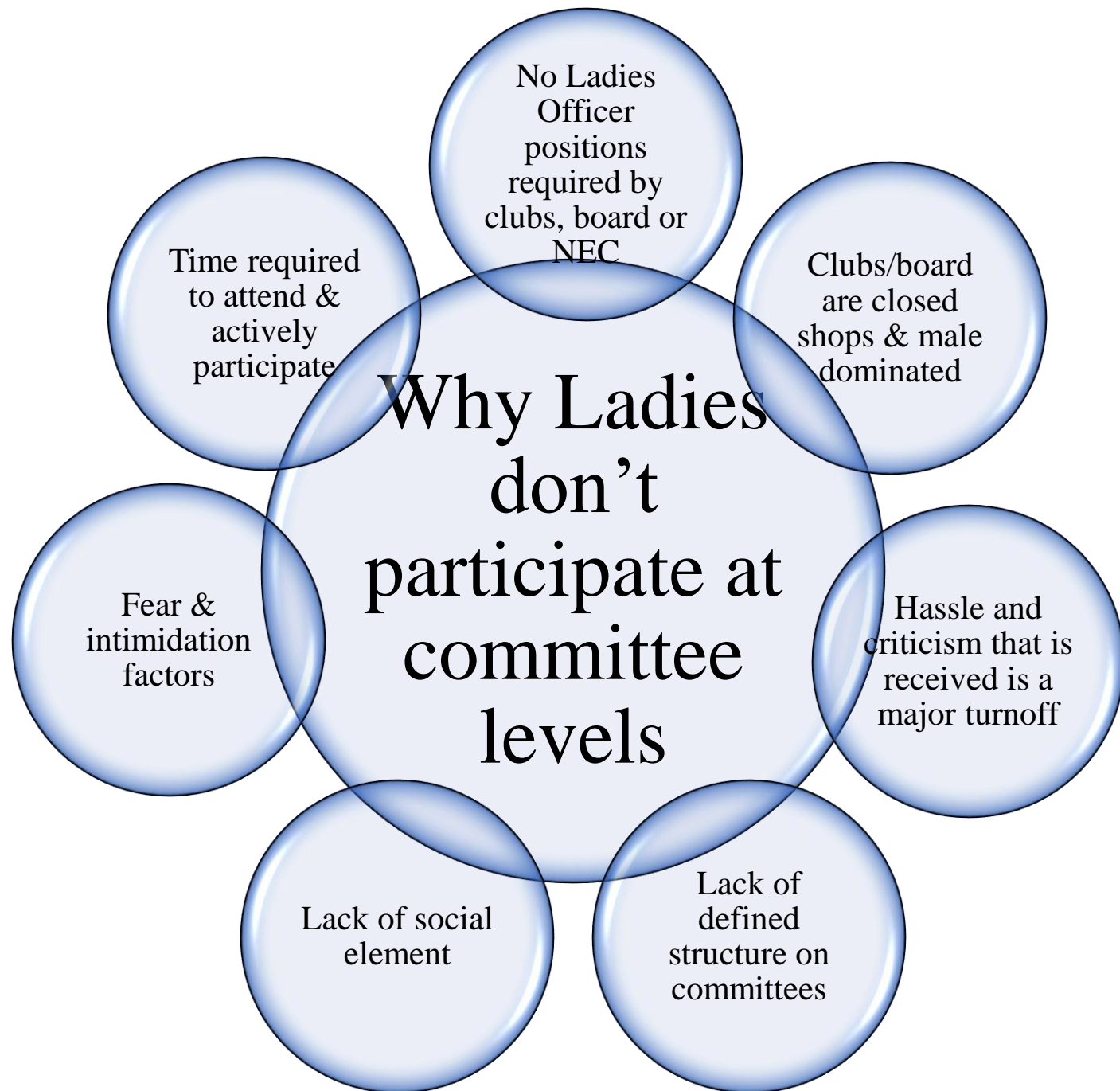
Current handicap grades

Senior Grade:	+1 to -5
Inter Grade:	-6 to -11
Junior Grade:	-12 to -21

Proposed for change at 2019 Convention

Senior Grade:	+1 to -7 (based on Oct 2018 data this brings approx. 55 players back into Senior Grade)
Inter Grade:	-8 to -14 (based on Oct 2018 data this brings approx. nett 186 players back into Inter Grade)
Junior Grade:	-15 to -21

SSS – We are of the view the SSS of 47 for Ladies needs a critical review during 2019 as we are of the opinion this is too low and having a damaging effect with more and more senior players moving to inter grade. Rather than change it at the start of the season we recommend the NEC very closely look at what is happening in the Ladies games in terms of handicap movements in particular for singles competitions. It would appear in many cases when playing foursome, scramble and fourball formats ladies are getting cut but in singles are getting shots back. We ask to NEC to provide the subcommittee with a summary of all the handicap movements by format by the end of July 2019 to understand what exactly is happening. At this time we propose the changes in handicap grades at Convention per above to correctly realign the grades and then very closely monitor the SSS in 2019 but be ready to adjust if needed in 2019 should we see negative impacts occurring.



Increasing Ladies participation at administrative level

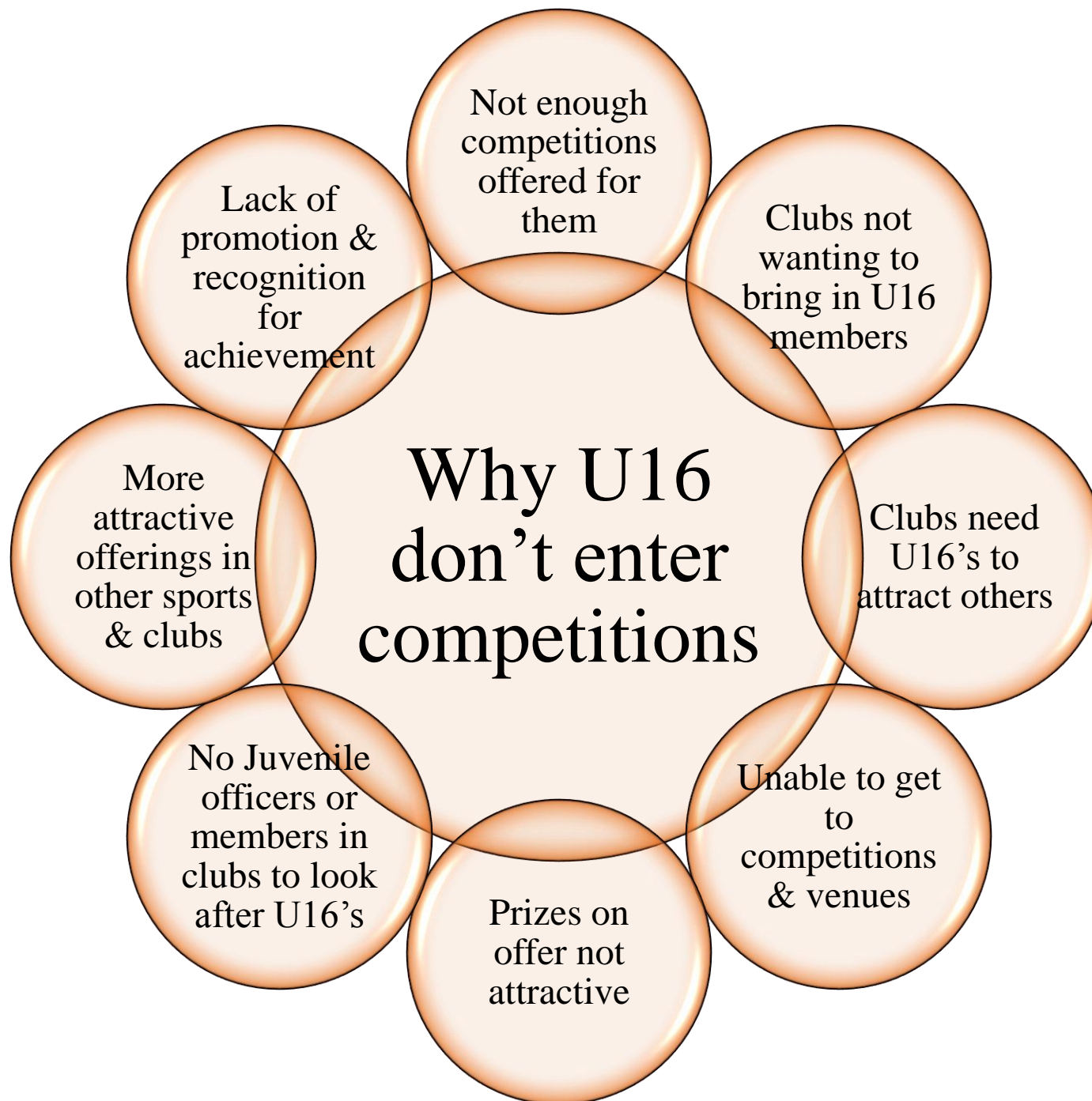
The subcommittee recommends the following to be executed in 2019 to address this

1. The NEC to formally introduce a new position of Ladies Officer at the NEC level.

This needs to be adopted and led at NEC level first and then applied down through County Board and Club levels. While the L&J sub committee is a move forward we believe there should be a Ladies Officer position opened at NEC level. Given the decline in the Ladies game there needs to be a voice at the NEC table ,with this position being given the key role of developing the Ladies game, similar to the existing Juvenile Officer position at NEC level. This Ladies Officer position would act as the formal point of contact for all Lady players for feedback and ideas. Currently we feel this is a significant gap at NEC level. Ideally these officers would be female but best candidate should be elected.

2. NEC to require County Boards and Clubs to have a Ladies Officer positions.

Once the NEC creates this officer position we would propose that the NEC require all County Board initially to have a dedicated position of Ladies Officer filled at County Board level. This should become a standard requirement to fill any committee. We would recommend this is introduced at County Board level in 2019 or 2020 latest given many committees are filled already for 2019. Thereafter this requirement should be pushed down to clubs but NEC should encourage all clubs and boards to seek to fill this position in 2019 regardless. Ideally these officers would be female but best candidate should be elected.



U16 Competitions – Recommendations for 2019

The consensus in the subcommittee is that the key thing U16 want to do is play! Play, play and play. The more they can play the better and the more chances they can play the better! The NEC, Board and clubs must provide maximum opportunities for the U16's to play and compete against each other.

The subcommittee recommends the following to be executed in 2019 to address this

1. Maximum play provincial and national championships

NEC to ensure at provincial and national championships formats are designed to allow for the maximum amounts of play to be held on the day. This should include having Cup, Plate and Shield formats and avoid having any cuts for final 18's etc. Allow everyone to play all rounds regardless of scores. We recommend the introduction of playoff in the provincial and national strokeplay championships.

2. Combination & increase number of teams at intercounties

Allow combination intercounty teams at provincial and national championships if there are players who want to play but there is not enough at their county level. Again this is to strong encourage participation as opposed to reject them. Given the low number of teams playing intercounty championship the NEC should allow up to 2 teams per county to be entered. This will again allow players greater chance in the larger U16 counties get to play on championship days. The more getting the chance to play the greater the chances they will continue playing.

U16 Competitions – Recommendations for 2019 (Cont'd)

3. Regional Scratch Cups for U16

We need to encourage clubs at a regional basis to hold scratch cup for U16's during the years. We would recommend 2 U16 scratch cups in both Munster and Leinster to be established whereby these will become major competitions for U16's during the year. Aim would then to encourage U16's and their guardians to calendar these dates and have a major competition to aim for. Currently there is very little on offer for U16's and most clubs don't allow or hold an U16 open competitions.

4. Ability to play alongside adults

We need to look at ways we can allow U16's to participate alongside adults in competition whilst of course adhering to all protections policies, rules and regulations. U16 want to compete against and learn from adult membership. We need to find ways to encourage and allow this and not turn U16 off playing when they want to. In professional golf players as young as 13 and 14 are competing against adults in major championships. We propose this is critically reviewed to try increase participation.

Next steps for the L&J Committee before 30 April 2019

1. Present and discuss this report in person to the NEC
2. L&J subcommittee to meet in person once feedback received from NEC.
3. Based on a number of recommendations within the L&J subcommittee members would be specifically tasked with executing these ideas in early 2019 in conjunction with the NEC. Subject to approval of the NEC on these recommendations actions plans will be created which will dictate timelines and goals.
4. Members of the L&J subcommittee to attend the Ladies Social Day in April as part of the promotion push but also talk to the Lady players and received feedback on their views of the game.
5. Introducing dedicated email and social media pages for the L&J the subcommittee aim to gain access to the players and engaged with them on their views and ideas.
6. Engagement with the players and county boards is key. Action plan in conjunction with the NEC to be created for the L&J subcommittee to have engaged with and/or met all County Board on L&J matters before 30 April 2019.