



# *Women's Premiership*

## *2019 Season Review*

October 2019 – Version 1



# Message from the chair

*As the Chair of the NIFL Women's Premiership Management Committee I am delighted to introduce the review of the 2019 season.*

*The Women's Premiership Management Committee is made up of committed individuals from our senior women's clubs and I would like to thank them for their support and passion in driving the improvement within the top female league in Northern Ireland.*

*While the report will focus on 2019 it is clear that important strides have been made since the formation of the NIFL Women's Premiership in 2016 and through the work of our clubs and staff within the NI Football League I am pleased to see increasing interest from the local and national media. We are excited as we believe there is still more to come in women's football.*

*2019 also welcomed the creation of a new Electric Ireland Women's Academy League which will aid the development of our clubs and our talented young players. The support from Electric Ireland will allow us to grow and I would like to thank them alongside our Premiership title sponsors Danske Bank, for investing in our future.*

*I hope you enjoy the review as we are keen celebrate and highlight our progress while also demonstrating the potential future growth in our, leagues, clubs and players.*

*Sue O'Neill (Chair, Women's Premiership Management Committee)*



# 2019 in review

*The 2019 season was arguably the most eventful in the short history of female football in under the NI Football League.*

*Linfield captured the Danske Bank Women's Premiership title for the fourth consecutive season on goal difference from Sion Swifts Ladies on the final night of the season, whilst Comber Rec Ladies only lasted one season as they were relegated on the same night, also on goal difference.*

*Glentoran Women proved to be the cup specialists in domestic football, winning the Women's Premiership League Cup at Seaview against Sion Swifts to go alongside the County Antrim Cup and the Irish Cup in the trophy cabinet. The league launched the first Women's Academy League at Under-19 level for the best young female players in Northern Ireland in partnership with Electric Ireland, with Crusaders Strikers crowned the inaugural winners of the competition.*

*The increase in media attention has been has huge boost to women's football this season. Aided by world-wide coverage of Sion Swifts' Nicole McClure representing Jamaica at the Women's World Cup and Cliftonville's Billie Simpson being shortlisted for the prestigious Puskas Award (FIFA Goal of the Year).*



*Continued overleaf...*

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# 2019 in review (cont.)



*For all the improvements and positives, the league is still not without its challenges – the competitiveness of matches and the increased professionalism of clubs will improve incrementally but continues to be a work in progress.*

*In each the past four seasons, clubs have withdrawn from participation in the Women's Premiership. The impact of this has reduced the competitive balance of matches in the division and on each occasion has left the Women's Premiership with an uneven number of competing teams.*

*As a result and following consultation, the Women's Premiership will reduce to six teams for the 2020 season to support the progression and development of top tier football to challenge the best players and increase competitiveness for all matches.*

*With every season, the Women's Premiership continues to grow and evolve and we're excited for the next steps on the journey!*

# *Corporate partners*

**Danske Bank**

*Women's Premiership  
title sponsors  
Since 2016*

**electric  
Ireland**

*Women's Academy  
League title sponsors  
Since 2019*

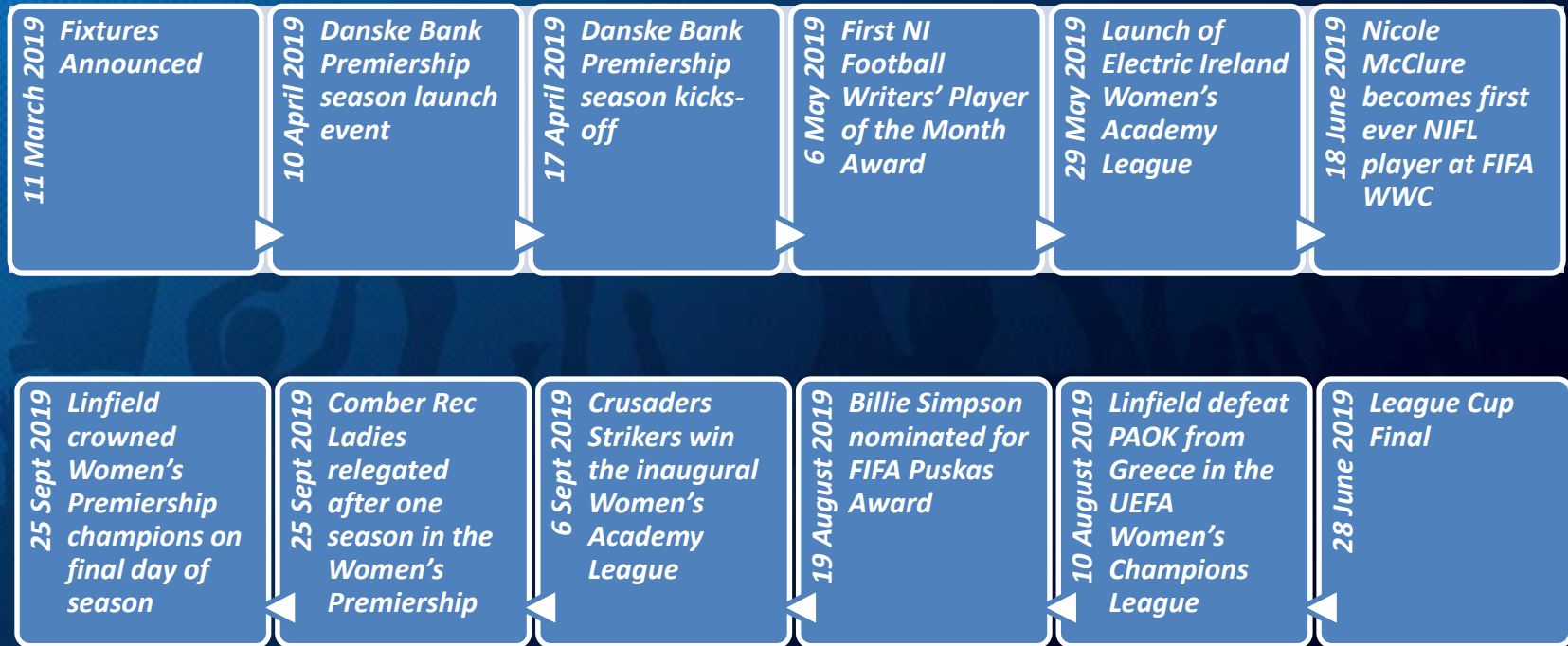
**uhlsport**

*Official match ball  
partners  
Since 2016*



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# Season timeline





# *Competitions*

# Danske Bank Women's Premiership

*Linfield clinched their fourth consecutive Danske Bank Women's Women Premiership on 25 September at the Brandywell Stadium.*

- *The tightest fought title race to date in the Women's Premiership, with goal difference only separating Linfield from second placed Sion Swifts Ladies.*
- *Comber Rec Ladies were also relegated on goal difference, with Derry City Ladies avoiding the drop.*
- *Almost 6,000 supporters attended games in the league over the course of this season.*
- *Linfield's Kirsty McGuinness finished as the league's top goalscorer with 32 goals in 18 games.*
- *Danske Bank continued as title sponsor with one of the only joint top division title sponsorships for both men's and women's football in Europe.*





# The final tables



P	Team	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Linfield	14	3	1	+85	45
2	Sion Swifts Ladies	14	3	3	+81	45
3	Glentoran Women	11	3	4	+48	36
4	Cliftonville Ladies	8	1	9	-14	25
5	Crusaders Strikers	8	0	10	-2	24
6	Derry City	1	1	16	-73	4
7	Comber Rec Ladies	1	1	16	-125	4

## Women's Premiership top scorer



**32 goals**

**Kirsty McGuinness (Linfield)**



P	Team	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1	Crusaders Strikers U19	7	2	1	+17	23
2	Glentoran Women Res	6	2	2	+13	20
3	Cliftonville Corinthians	6	1	3	+14	19
4	Linfield Swifts	4	2	4	+5	14
5	Sion Swifts Ladies U19	3	1	6	-10	10
6	Derry City U19	0	0	10	-39	0

## Academy League top scorers



**6 goals**

**Ebony Lecky (Sion Swifts Ladies U19)**

**Leah McEvoy (Cliftonville Corinthians)**

# Electric Ireland Academy League

*The Electric Ireland Women's Academy League has been formed to improve the development of the most talented young players and forge a pathway into the Women's Premiership.*

- *Launched in May 2019, featuring six of the seven Women's Premiership clubs' Under-19 teams – the league forms a key part of the larger #GameChangersNI strategy for Electric Ireland.*
- *The league's first Development Day was held in August focusing on personal development and additional training.*
- *Crusaders Strikers Under-19's were crowned the inaugural winners of the Women's Academy League in September.*





# Women's Premiership League Cup

*The final of the 2019 Women's Premiership League Cup was won by Glentoran Women against Sion Swifts Ladies at Seaview on 28 June.*

- *Glentoran secured the first silverware of the Women's season with a 2-0 win thanks to two goals from Demi Vance.*
- *For the second consecutive season the final was broadcast live on BBC Sport website.*
- *Attendance was 473, the highest attendance of any Women's game played in the NI Football League this season.*



# UEFA Women's Champions League

*It was a memorable season for our representative club in European competition as Linfield became the first club from the NI Football League to win in the UWCL.*

- *Linfield travelled to participate in a four team qualifying group in Belgium consisting of RSC Anderlecht (hosts), PAOK (Greece) and LSK Kvinner (Norway).*
- *A last minute Kirsty McGuinness penalty gave Linfield a memorable 3-2 win against PAOK in August.*
- *The last victory for a Northern Irish side in the competition was in August 2015 when Glentoran Women defeated Macedonian opponents, ŽFK Dragon.*
- *Northern Ireland are currently ranked 43rd from 50 countries in the UEFA Women's co-efficient.*





# *Season Highlights*

# Growing the brand

*During the 2019 season, the NI Football League worked alongside our sponsors and media partners to increase the coverage of the Women's Premiership through new channels.*



*[Above] She Kicks – The league became a regular feature in the UK's leading Women's Football magazine*

*[Right] Cool FM Show – The popular online show provided a platform to preview the new season.*



*League Cup media day – Players from the finalists were made available for local media*



*Belfast Live / Electric Ireland – video content promoting the new Electric Ireland Women's Academy League*



*NIFL promotional launch videos – profiling players from each club*



# BBC Sport NI coverage

*The NI Football League's broadcast partner, BBC Sport NI has offered a new level of media content for both offline and online channels this season. Below are some of the examples of coverage.*



[1] Regular feature videos

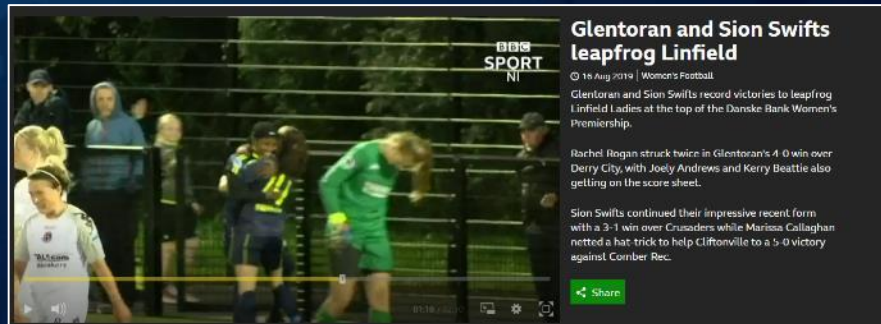


[2] Weekly game-week summaries

[3] BBC Radio Ulster interviews



[5] Regular social media coverage



[4] Game-week highlights footage online & television

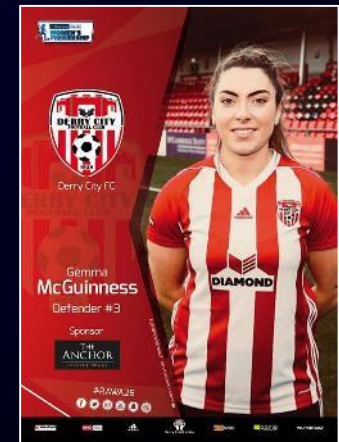


[6] Post match interviews & reaction



# Increased club engagement

Following a club led workshop – the Women's Premiership clubs stepped up this season to be the key drivers of the league with increased volume and quality of media content.





# Internationally recognised

*Once again the Danske Bank Women's Premiership has been the domestic base for a large number elite international players.*

- The 2019 season seen 15 players from the Women's Premiership capped at senior international level (13 for Northern Ireland, 1 for Republic of Ireland & 1 for Jamaica).*
- In June 2019 – Nicole McClure became the first ever player from the Women's Premiership to feature in the FIFA Women's World Cup in France when she played for Jamaica against Australia.*



# *Providing a pathway*



**Megan Bell**  
Linfield to  
Durham Ladies



**Tyler Toland**  
Sion Swifts to  
Manchester City



**Lauren Perry**  
Linfield to  
Blackburn Rovers



**Louise McDaniel**  
Linfield to  
Blackburn Rovers



**Kelsie Burrows**  
Linfield to  
Blackburn Rovers

*The Women's Premiership has now become an established league offering players the opportunity to progress their careers in the professional game like never before. Whilst disappointing to lose some of the league's best young talent, the competitiveness of the league has become the ideal platform for ambitious players to avail of the new opportunities available within professional female football.*



# NIFWA Player of the Month



April  
**Rachel Rogan**  
(Glentoran)



May  
**Demi Vance**  
(Glentoran)



June  
**Kirsty McGuinness**  
(Linfield)



July  
**Donna Kay Henry**  
(Sion Swifts)



August  
**Kirsty McGuinness**  
(Linfield)

*The NI Football Writers' Association continued their support of women's football during the 2019 season with the landmark first Women's Player of the Month awards. The awards selected by their membership within the media honour the standout player each month from the Women's Premiership and the new awards were welcomed by the NI Football League.*



# New initiatives this season

1



1. The Danske Bank Women's Premiership clubs came together to promote the start of the new season in celebration of the 2019 International Women's Day.

2



2. Linfield were presented with the first ever commissioned Women's Premiership 'Champions Flag' on the eve of the new season to commemorate winning the 2018 title win.

3



3. NIFL partnered with She Kicks Magazine and Panini to provide free FIFA Women's World Cup sticker books and stickers to everyone who attended the Women's League Cup final in June.

4



## SION SWIFTS LADIES FIXTURES

<p><b>APRIL</b></p> <p>WED 17. LINFIELD (A)</p> <p>WED 24. CRUSADERS STRIKERS (H)</p> <p>MON 29. LEAGUE CUP QF</p> <p><b>MAY</b></p> <p>WED 01. GLENTORAN WOMEN (H)</p> <p>WED 08. CLIFTONVILLE LADIES (H)</p> <p>WED 15. COMBER REC LADIES (A)</p> <p>WED 22. DERRY CITY (A)</p> <p>MON 27. LEAGUE CUP SF</p> <p>WED 29. FREE</p>	<p><b>JUNE</b></p> <p>WED 05. LINFIELD (H)</p> <p>WED 19. CRUSADERS STRIKERS (A)</p> <p>WED 26. GLENTORAN WOMEN (A)</p> <p>FRI 28. LEAGUE CUP FINAL</p> <p><b>JULY</b></p> <p>WED 03. CLIFTONVILLE LADIES (A)</p> <p>WED 17. COMBER REC LADIES (H)</p> <p>WED 24. DERRY CITY (H)</p> <p>WED 31. FREE</p>	<p><b>AUGUST</b></p> <p>WED 07. LINFIELD (A)</p> <p>WED 14. CRUSADERS STRIKERS (H)</p> <p>WED 21. GLENTORAN WOMEN (H)</p> <p><b>SEPTEMBER</b></p> <p>WED 04. CLIFTONVILLE LADIES (H)</p> <p>WED 11. COMBER REC LADIES (A)</p> <p>WED 18. DERRY CITY (A)</p> <p>WED 25. FREE</p>
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**@OFFICIALNIFL**  
**#DANSKEWOMENSPREM**



# *Metrics*

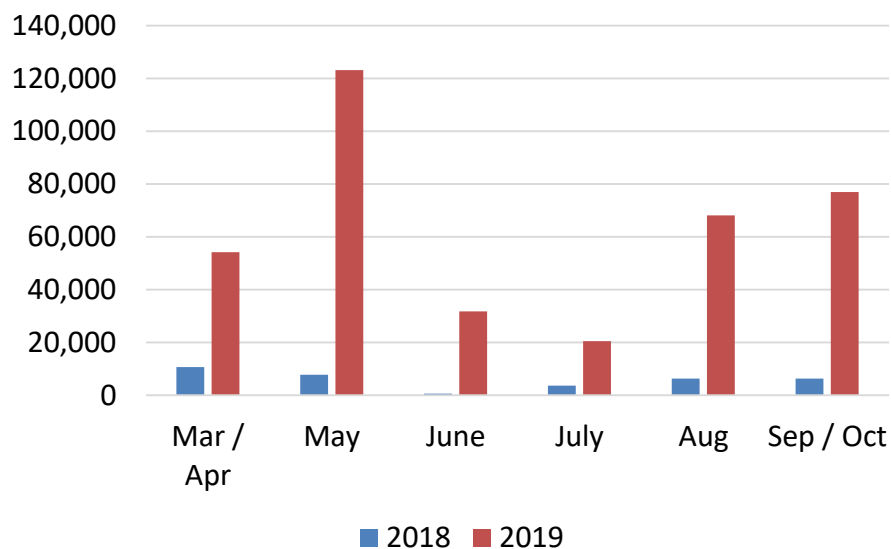
# Media Value

*Media value has increased dramatically during the 2019 season and has been supported by the appointment of an internal women's media coordinator for NI Football League.*

- *Virtually all recognised major media had multiple stories from NIFL competitions this season.*
- *Key drivers for high volume media included Nicole McClure at WWC and Billie Simpson's Puskas Award.*

**Total Media Value: €374k**

**2018 value = €35.2k (increase of 962%)**



*\* Media value sourced from NIMMS covering all print media covering all NIFL women's competitions. Recorded on 8 October 2019.*



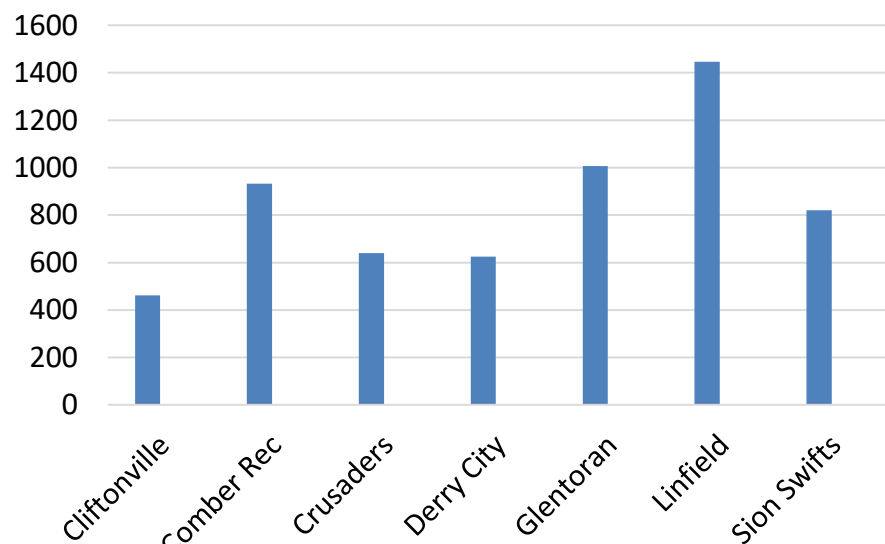
# Attendances

*For the first season in the Danske Bank Women's Premiership attendances were recorded at all league games with almost 6,000 spectators attended Women's Premiership games this season.*

- *Average attendance; 94*
- *Highest match attendance; 295 (Linfield v Sion Swifts, 25 Aug)*
- *Lowest match attendance; 25 (Derry City v Glentoran, 14 Aug)*
- *Highest club attendance (total); 1,447 - Linfield*
- *Lowest club attendance (total); 462 – Cliftonville*



**Total Premiership attendees: 5,932**



*\* Attendances supplied by home clubs following matches.*

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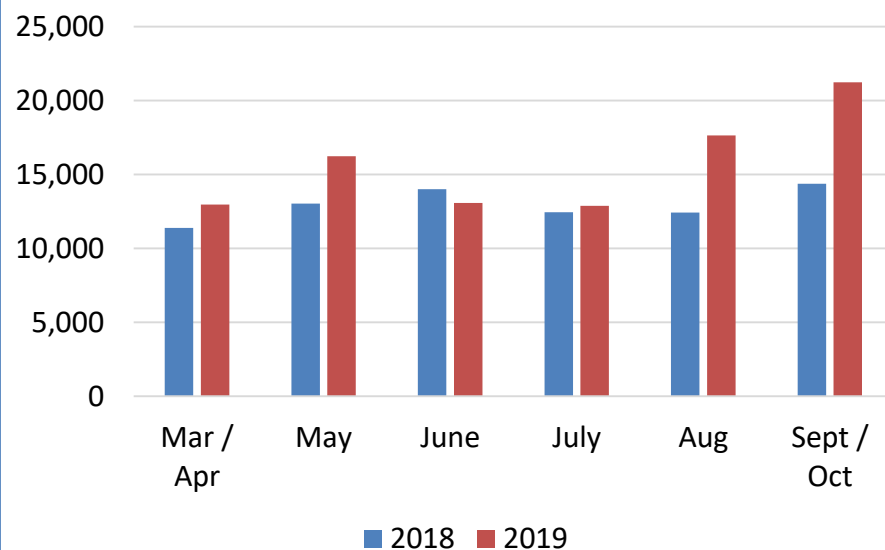
# NI Football League digital

*The NI Football League committed to producing regular and consistent digital content to keep stakeholders updated with competitions and assist promotion of the clubs and players.*

- *This includes:*
  - *Match reports from all senior games*
  - *Two player interviews from all senior clubs*
  - *Updated fixtures, results, tables (and social media graphics) from all games*
  - *Gameweek previews, news pieces, transfer news and international call up stories.*
  - *Up-to-date imagery and video highlights across website & social*



**Total NIFL website page views: 94,471**  
**2018 views = 71,653 (increase of 31.8%)**



*\* NIFL Website page views sourced from Google Analytics. Covers all women's competitions included in the NIFL website ([www.nifootballleague.com](http://www.nifootballleague.com)), recorded on 8 October 2019.*

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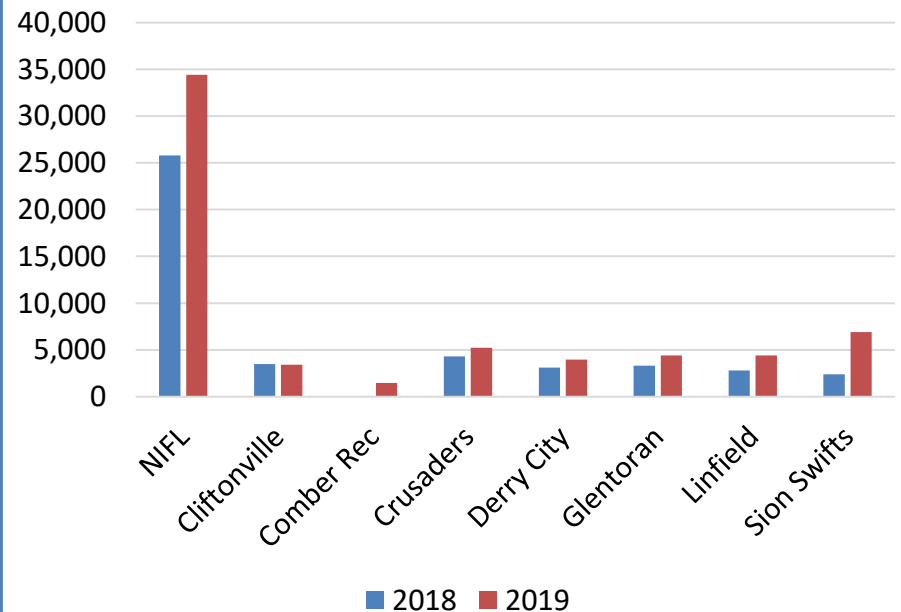


# Social media reach

*Social media has become one of the key platforms for the NI Football League and it's clubs to interact with existing and new supporters.*

- *Across the three platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – NIFL and it's clubs have a total reach (potential audience) of over 64,000 people.*
- *Sion Swifts have the largest social following over 6.9k (187% increase on last year)*
- *The total reach of the NI Football League accounts (@OfficialNIFL) accounts has risen 33.3% since last season.*

**Total Women's social media reach: 64,184**  
**2018 reach = 45,230 (increase of 41.9%)**



All data recorded on 8 October 2019

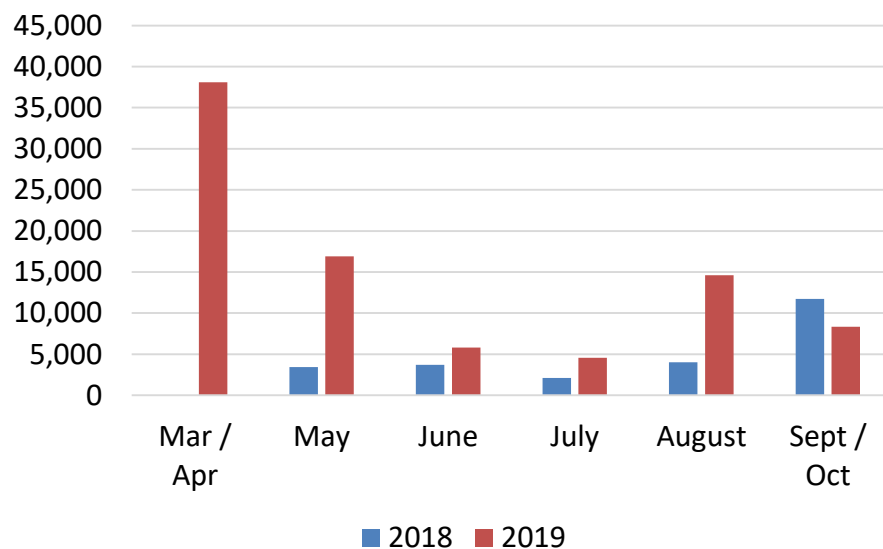
# Online video views

*Visibility of the Women's Premiership has been key to the increase in awareness and*

- *Video highlights of all matches & post match interviews procured by NI Football League and posted online on Facebook and YouTube each week.*
- *Highlights also broadcast on BBC Sport website each week. Belfast Live also carried footage on Facebook.*
- *Highest cumulative online video views for female football coverage in Northern Ireland.*



**Total online video views: 88,299**  
**2018 views = 24,966 (increase of 254%)**



*\* Video highlights figures are Facebook views only. Not including YouTube or external BBC Sport website views. All data recorded on 8 October 2019.*

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# The numbers

	March / April		May		June		July		August		September / October		Total		% Diff
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	
Media Value	€10.7k	€54.1k	€7.7k	€123k	€0.5k	€31.8k	€3.7k	€20.5k	€6.3k	€68.1k	€6.3k	€77k	€35.2k	€374k	+962%
Video Views	0	38,104	3,440	16,918	3,689	5,791	2,089	4,556	4,015	14,611	11,733	8,319	24,966	88,299	+254%
Website hits	11,390	12,957	13,027	16,234	13,990	13,077	12,443	12,882	12,426	17,634	14,377	21,492	71,653	94,471	+31.8%
Attendances	-	657	-	1,318	-	653	-	1,062	-	995	-	1189	-	5,932	
Website articles (not reports)	1	15	7	13	12	11	10	11	5	11	9	13	44	74	+68%
External media pieces	4	37	14	56	24	41	7	24	13	40	4	37	66	235	+265%
Newsletter emails	0	2,434	0	1,162	1,322	1,318	2,480	1,334	1,333	1,338	1,738	2,688	10,306	11,273	+9.38%

All figures recorded from 1 March – 10 October

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