



## Social Media Policy

## 1. Introduction

Social media gives individuals, groups, organisations and businesses the opportunity to instantly share information with online communities. Blogs, forums, social networking and video sharing sites are the most popular types of social media sites, however, any forum which allows a user to upload and share information is considered part of the social media space. It is also important to note that information that is shared need not be written; it could take the form of an image or audio visual material.

Horse Sport Ireland supports the use of social media as a timely and effective method of communication. In addition to engaging with stakeholders in the equestrian community, social media can help the organisation reach members of the broader public and traditional media. Horse Sport Ireland proactively seeks positive media coverage and does so for the benefit of all its stakeholders. Traditionally this media coverage has been through TV, radio and print media outlets however the rise of social media has widened this landscape.

Whilst social media provides Horse Sport Ireland with a great opportunity to raise equestrian's profile and reach new audiences, it also has the potential to harm the reputation of the organisation and its stakeholders. It is crucial therefore that all Horse Sport Ireland *'persons bound'* are aware of the implications of using social media.

The purpose of this document is to provide *'persons bound'* with guiding principles for using social media. Horse Sport Ireland encourages anyone bound by this policy (refer to section 2 – Policy Application) to use social media within the parameters outlined in this policy. Please note, this policy should be read in conjunction with the Horse Sport Ireland General Rules.

## 2. Policy Application

This policy applies to licensed Athletes, High Performance Directors, High Performance Team Managers, High Performance Coaches, IRL National Federation Officials, (including Veterinarian Officials), Board Directors, Committee Members, HSI Service Providers, Parents of underage licensed Athletes, Volunteers, and associated interested persons who have some form of 'duty' on behalf of Horse Sport Ireland, hereinafter referred to as *'persons bound'*.

Horse Sport Ireland *'persons bound'* have the opportunity to act as ambassadors for the organisation, simply by maintaining an online presence.

All forms of social media activity are covered under this policy, including, but not limited to:

- Creating and maintaining social or business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn;
- Sharing audio-visual content on sites including Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest (photo sharing) and YouTube and Vimeo (video sharing) and Snapchat;
- Authoring, Administrating and commenting on blogs or forums

## 3. Core Principles

Persons bound by this policy should be mindful that information shared on social media appears in public so careful consideration should be given to content before it is posted. Never forget that information shared within online communities could have implications for the sport and those associated with it. Information which is shared online can be difficult to retract. A representative might be able to remove his/her original comments however the very nature of social media encourages a person to share

information which makes it difficult to know where the information they post finishes up. Persons bound by this policy should assume that all posts and information they share via social media can be traced back to them. Adhering to this Policy, Horse Sport Ireland will ensure its reputation is protected.

- Persons bound by this policy should ensure that comments made on social media should
  - a. *Respect the rights, dignity and worth of others;*
  - b. *Refrain from any form of harassment of others;*
  - c. *Refrain from any behaviour that may bring Horse Sport Ireland into disrepute;*
- Persons are advised to view the applicable Horse Sport Ireland Codes of Conduct in conjunction with this Policy;
- Comments which are contrary to the spirit and integrity of sport will not be tolerated. Persons bound by this policy who share information online should consider themselves representative of the organisation and must never reveal confidential or sensitive information that could jeopardise Horse Sport Ireland's relationships with its commercial or government funding partners;
- Personal sites, blogs and accounts that have a Horse Sport Ireland 'look and feel' and could be perceived as being Horse Sport Ireland is strictly prohibited;
- Please note: athletes, coaches, officials and other representatives that are selected on other teams and participate in major events such as the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games should also adhere to the guidelines imposed by the governing bodies of those organisations.

#### **4. Horse Sport Ireland Social Media Platforms**

Horse Sport Ireland recognises that members of the public are entitled to voice their opinion and welcome engagement through the Horse Sport Ireland social media platforms. These social media platforms include but are not limited to: *Team Ireland Equestrian - Facebook, TIE Twitter, TIE Instagram, the Irish Sport Ireland Facebook, the Irish Horse Gateway Facebook/IHG website and the Horse Sport Ireland Facebook.*

However, Horse Sport Ireland will not tolerate any of the following on its social media pages and comments, images, videos and other material which are posted on these platforms will be removed if found to be:

- a. *Defamatory material*
- b. *Material infringing copyright or intellectual property rights*
- c. *Material in breach of privacy or confidentiality obligation*
- d. *Offensive, obscene or sexual material*
- e. *Threatening, abusive or insulting statements likely to stir up hatred*

#### **5. Breach**

Where it is alleged that a 'person bound' by this policy violates any of the core principles as stated above, the Horse Sport Ireland CEO has the right to

issue this individual with take-down notice with immediate effect. An individual who refuses to comply with a take-down notice may be referred by the CEO to the HSI Disciplinary Officer for further investigation and possible referral to the Horse Sport Ireland Disciplinary Committee pursuant to the HSI General Rules. Further, Horse Sport Ireland reserves all rights to take direct legal action where appropriate.

#### **6. Legislation**

As with any form of public communication, online communication can also be subject to legislation including but not limited to the Defamation Act 2009 and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989. Persons bound by this policy should be mindful that unsubstantiated claims, false statements, defamatory, offensive and threatening comments could lead to litigation and or prosecution.

#### **7. Amendments/Interpretation**

This Policy may be amended by Horse Sport Ireland as it deems appropriate. The Board of Horse Sport Ireland will be the ultimate authority with respect to the interpretation and implementation of this Policy.

#### **8. Disclaimer**

Horse Sport Ireland believes all material produced for this publication is correctly and accurately researched. However, we give no warranty in relation thereto and disclaim liability for all claims against the organisation its employees or any person associated, which may arise from any material contained within its pages that may be challenged by any persons.

#### **9. Conclusion**

Horse Sport Ireland understands that social media is a new method of communication and as such encourages all persons bound by this policy to seek clarification from the Horse Sport Ireland Marketing Department if they are unsure what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate content.

Approved by the Board of Horse Sport Ireland on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017

Ends