



# Consultation Paper for the appointment of industry directors to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland

## **Introduction**

Horse Sport Ireland is the national governing body for equestrian sport in Ireland. We are committed to promoting excellence in all aspects of equestrian sport, from breeding, production, coaching to competition and welfare. Our organisation's board of directors plays a critical role in guiding our strategy and ensuring our success. The current Board of Directors has recently undertaken a review of the processes currently in place in respect of the appointments to the Board of Directors. The board have considered whether such processes serve the organisation in the best possible manner. Recognising that the sport horse industry is a wide and diverse community, we are considering changing the appointment method to the board of directors to ensure that we have access to the best talent available and to create a more diverse and inclusive board.

## **Background**

Currently, the Chairperson of Horse Sport Ireland and four independent non-executive directors are appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in consultation with the Minister for Sport. As Horse Sport Ireland is a 32-country body, one industry director is nominated by Sport Northern Ireland in consultation with Department of Environment, Agriculture and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland) and appointed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine and Department of Sport.

Thereafter, the remaining four industry directors are elected from within the defined nominees from the Horse Sport Ireland Advisory Councils structure, being the following:

- Sport & Recreation Advisory Council
- Breeding and Production Advisory Council
- High Performance Advisory Council
- Coaching and Education Advisory Council

The number of nominees are finite within these Councils who are nominated from the current affiliate family connected with Horse Sport Ireland. However, the equestrian community has a broad reach, and in that context, the current process could be considered as exclusionary and may discourage potential candidates from participating through the affiliate structure, but who may have skills and

competencies within specific disciplines to offer. With an ever growing community, there is a demand for a wider and more diverse approach to ensuring the Board of Directors is reflective of both the breeding and sport elements of the industry. Further to this consideration, is the level of stewardship required for an organisation such as Horse Sport Ireland, where the application and high level of governance are increasingly demanding.

### **Proposed Changes**

To address these issues, the current Board of Directors propose changing the appointment method for the four industry appointees to the board of directors to an “open call process” which is linked to the affiliate structure, industry stakeholder groups and the broader equestrian community. This process will involve inviting individuals from a broad range of backgrounds and with a diverse set of skills to submit their expression of interest in joining the board of Horse Sport Ireland.

The Expression of Interest Guide [Appendix 1] sets out the skills and experience we are looking for in Directors to help guide potential candidates. The Guide contains information on the responsibilities and expectations of Directors, including time commitments and ethical standards.

Candidates will be asked to select their area of industry competency from the list below combined with professional skills they may offer. The following will be the defined areas:

- Sport & Recreation (capturing the leisure and recreation sport)
- Breeding and Production (capturing the production of the Irish Bred horse)
- High Performance (Olympic and Paralympic Disciplines or non-equestrian discipline experience but able to demonstrate experience in high performance teams and culture)
- Coaching and Education (both equestrian and non-equestrian relevancy in respect of skills that are rooted in the education field)

The candidate will be further required to submit a letter of support/endorsement or membership details for the preceding year from a current affiliate body or industry stakeholder group or society, for example a Breeders Group, that is active within the equestrian community.

Candidates will be required to submit to Chairperson of the Selection Panel, the following documents, cover letter, résumé, and references, which will be reviewed by an independent three person selection panel, who are currently being recruited.

Candidates will be required to consider any conflicts of interest or loyalty that they may have that would affect their ability to act as a director and fulfil their fiduciary duties. Further, candidates who have previously served as director of Horse Sport Ireland will be ineligible to ensure that board directors are refreshed and to avoid lengthy tenures.

The selection panel will be composed of external experts in the area of governance, and a Sport Ireland nominee. The panel will evaluate the candidates' qualifications, experience, and alignment with our organisation's values and goals.

### **Benefits of Proposed Changes**

The proposed changes to the appointment process for the Board of Directors offer several benefits. By opening up the process, we can increase the pool of potential candidates, ensuring that we have access to the best talent available, again reflective of an industry that is innovating and changing considerably. The recruitment will have cognisance of the gender quota requirements as set out in the National

Sports Policy as part of ongoing exchequer investment. The four industry appointees will be balanced in respect of gender.

This will help us to create a more diverse and inclusive board, which will bring a broader range of perspectives and skills to the table. A more diverse board can also help our organisation to better serve its stakeholders by ensuring that all voices are heard and considered.

## **Conclusion**

Horse Sport Ireland is committed to ensuring that we have a Board of Directors that is effective, diverse, and inclusive. We believe that the proposed changes to the appointment process will help us achieve this goal. We invite all interested parties to provide feedback on these proposed changes and any other suggestions they may have to improve the process. Your input is valuable to us, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Please submit your feedback by 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 to Avalon Everett, Head of Sport, Legal and Governance, [aeverett@horsesportireland.ie](mailto:aeverett@horsesportireland.ie) or by post Avalon Everett, Head of Sport, Legal & Governance , Horse Sport Ireland, 1st Floor, Beech House, Millennium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 TK7N

# Appendix 1

## Expression of Interest guide for prospective industry applicants

**Entity:** Horse Sport Ireland

**Board Meeting Location:** Beech House, Millennium Park, Naas, Co. Kildare and virtually by way of MS Teams Platform.

**Number of Vacancies:** 4 Industry Directors

**Remuneration:** Board Fees: Directors - €8,100. Travel and subsistence allowances will be paid in respect of journeys undertaken to attend meetings of the Board or to transact its business, in accordance with the Horse Sport Ireland mileage and subsistence policy.

**Time Requirements for Directors:** Approx. 9 full day Board meetings per annum and possibly some committee commitment.

### 1. Background

Horse Sport Ireland was incorporated on 20 December 2006 under the Companies Acts as a Company Limited by Guarantee without share capital. On January 1, 2008, the organisation became the Governing Body for equestrian sport in Ireland (32 counties) as recognised by the International Governing Body (FEI), Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland and the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI). Following an eTender competition in 2022, Horse Sport Ireland, was awarded the service delivery contract for Breeding Services within the Irish sport horse industry and Studbook Services for the Irish Sport Horse, Irish Draught, Irish Sport Pony and Irish Cob.

Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) as the governing body is responsible for devising and implementing strategies for the development and promotion of an internationally competitive sport horse industry, covering breeding and production, high performance equestrian sport, coaching and education and sport and recreation activities.

Horse Sport Ireland provides supports and services for the wider equine industry in Ireland including:

- Interface with the Government and government agencies on behalf of the sector
- Acts as the National Governing Body for Equestrian Sport as recognised by FEI, Sport Ireland, Sport NI, OFI
- Acts as an umbrella body for the sector with recognised Affiliates (breeding and sport)
- Licences & regulates athletes & horses for international competition (FEI and Olympics)
- Manages High Performance Equestrian Programmes for Olympic & Paralympic Programmes (youth and senior)
- Coordinates the National Equine Anti-Doping Programme
- Acts as a centralised Safeguarding hub for recognised affiliates, and is a Relevant Organisation pursuant to the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012
- Maintains the Irish Sport Horse and Irish Draught Horse Studbooks, Irish Sport Pony, and Irish Cob under approval from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Provide support tools to breeders to facilitate them reach their objectives for producing horses capable of competing at the highest levels in equestrian sport or providing horses for the leisure and recreation industry in Ireland and abroad.

## **2. Functions of the Board**

The Board of Horse Sport Ireland are ultimately responsible for the operation, oversight, management and strategic direction of the organisation as a whole.

## **3. Functions of a Director**

A Horse Sport Ireland Director is responsible for steering the company forward and is collectively responsible for its long-term sustainability. The Industry Director should bring independent judgement to bear on issues of sector across breeding and sport and organisational strategy, performance, resources, key appointments and standards of conduct. Industry Directors are appointed to the Board because their specific skills, knowledge and experience.

The role of Director require high standards of corporate governance. Individuals who are appointed must to act, first in foremost in the best interests of Horse Sport Ireland. Horse Sport Ireland is a publicly funded organisation and must serve the interests of the taxpayer, pursue value for money in their endeavours (including managing risk appropriately), and act transparently. As such, members of the Board, and the relevant management team, are accountable for the proper management of the organisation.

Horse Sport Ireland is benchmarked against the Circular: 13/2014 Management of and Accountability for Grants From Exchequer Funds, and the Sport Ireland Governance Code.

In order to be an effective contributor on the Board it is recommended that prospective Industry Directors have the following attributes:

- bring independent and objective scrutiny to the oversight of the organisation;
- be prepared to be challenging when necessary while being supportive to the delivery of organisational strategy and objectives;
- be equipped to offer considered advice on the basis of sound judgement and experience;
- be prepared to make a time commitment to their work commensurate with their role.
- hold a full understanding and awareness as to the meaning of fiduciary duty in the context of the companies act 2014

## **5. Person Specification for Industry Director**

Four Industry Directors are required for the Board of Horse Sport Ireland, the position to take effect in the Autumn 2023.

### **Experience**

Candidates must demonstrate in their application the following:

## **Essential**

1. Professional experience at an appropriately senior level in one or more of the following areas:
  - Finance, Business, Economics
  - Accountancy and Auditing
  - Public Administration
  - Corporate Governance
  - Project Management & Investment
  - Media, Public Relations
  - Law

Combined with experience in the sport horse sector in the areas of the following:

- Sport & Recreation (capturing the leisure and recreation sport)
  - Breeding and Production (capturing the production of the Irish Bred horse)
  - High Performance (Olympic and Paralympic Disciplines or non-equestrian discipline experience but able to demonstrate experience in high performance teams and culture)
  - Coaching and Education (both equestrian and non-equestrian relevancy in respect of skills that are rooted in the education field)
2. Experience in developing business models in organisations comparable to Horse Sport Ireland.
  3. Prior Board level experience required with an excellent understanding of Governance.

## **Desirable**

1. Demonstrable expertise in one or more of the following key areas:
  - Strategic Planning
  - Risk management
  - Organisational change management
2. Experience in a comparable sector such as agriculture and/or equine and/or sport sector desirable.
3. Ability to understand and interrogate financial reports.
4. Ability to operate as part of a team.

The selection panel will have regard to the desirability for gender balance on the Board.

## **6. Terms of Appointment**

Appointments to Industry Director of Horse Sport Ireland is for a 3 year term. With eligibility for a further term.

## **7. Assessment Process**

The Independent Selection Panel (the “Panel”) will be convened by the Board of Horse Sport Ireland to consider and review the expressions of interest received.

The Panel will:

- Review and discuss the expressions of interest received against the specific appointment criteria for the role;
- Assess potential appointees further, once they meet the specified appointment criteria, by undertaking any or all of the following steps:
  - Consideration of the written applications; and/or
  - Meeting/conference call; and/or
  - Referee checks;
  - Any other selection method deemed appropriate.
- Compile a list of people deemed suitable for appointment for interview.
- Conduct interview of prospective candidates
- Make recommendations as to suitable candidates to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland for appointment.

**Ends/**