

**Subject:** ECVOA response to HSI proposal

**Date:** Thursday 17 August 2023 at 13:36:43 Irish Standard Time

**From:** Patrick McCartan

**To:** Avalon Everett

**CC:** niamh.brennan@ucd.ie, Zoë Kavanagh, Kevin Smyth1892@gmail.com, Michael Dowling33@gmail.com, charlie.mcconologue@oireachtas.ie, martin.heydon@oireachtas.ie, jackie.cahill@oireachtas.ie, Joe Flaherty, paul.daly@oireachtas.ie, michael ring, robert.troy@oireachtas.ie, peter.burke@oireachtas.ie, Isabel Hurley

Dear Ms Everett,  
ECVOA represents the owners of the equestrian sport competition venues.

I write to you in reference to the proposed changes to the method of selecting Directors to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland, specifically regarding the "*Consultation Paper for the appointment of industry directors to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland*", which is currently available on your website.

The proposals, as outlined in this document, are ill-considered, divisive, exclusionary and reveal a total lack of understanding of the current needs of the sport horse industry in Ireland.

The "*Consultation Paper for the appointment of industry directors to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland*" purports to aim to address a lack of diversity in the representation of the equine industry on the board of Horse Sport Ireland. In reality its effect would be to dismantle the safeguards which were put in place 20 years ago to ensure that such diversity, as well as industry expertise, are always present on the HSI Board. Should the proposed changes be implemented, the lack of industry expertise which currently characterises both the Board and the Executive of HSI, will become even more entrenched. This would be catastrophic for an industry and a sport which already experiences a gulf between its governing body and its grassroots.

Under your proposed guidelines, as set out in Appendix 1, the skill set required of applicants would be so restrictive and exclusionary as to eliminate most of those people who would have so much to contribute through a lifetime's experience in the horse industry. Equine knowledge is glaringly lacking amongst the current ministerial appointees to the HSI Board, so it seems curious that these appointees are seeking to further water down the knowledge base and industry expertise of future Directors. It will be a case of the blind leading the blind.

The current directors, as appointed by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), along with the professional staff on the Executive of HSI, yourself included, already have all the required expertise in the areas of Finance, Business, Economics, Accountancy, Auditing, Public Administration, Corporate Governance, Project Management, Investment, Media, Public Relations and Law.

What the current Board, in its current truncated form, severely lacks is any real knowledge of the sport horse industry. There is virtually no understanding of the sport horse industry amongst the recent ministerial appointees or amongst the senior HSI Executive. None of the aforementioned have ever had to make a career or living from the industry. None have bred, bought, produced and sold horses. None have created an equestrian competition venue from a green field site to an international venue, nor trained and coached a young rider from pony rider to world class competitor.

HSI needs input from those who make a living directly from the sport horse industry, be they owners, producers, riders or coaches. These people know what is required to achieve excellence and are willing to work with HSI for the betterment of the industry. The old method of appointment of directors from the four Advisory Councils on Sport and Recreation, Breeding and Production, High Performance and Coaching and Education worked. It ensured a link between all levels and aspects of the equine industry and HSI, from leisure riders to professionals and everyone in between. The decision to suspend these Councils was deeply flawed and should be rescinded immediately. The reasons for the mass resignation of frustrated directors have never been addressed by Horse Sport Ireland or the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Their concerns about HSI governance were simply brushed under the carpet. The solution to this should not be to introduce less transparency and less accountability to

the equine industry. This is what the Board is now proposing and it is shameful.

HSI needs to work hard to regain the trust of the industry, which, at present, is very low. The proposals in the document mentioned above do nothing to improve this situation. They appear to be an attempt to vest power in a small minority who know very little about the horse industry. This cannot be tolerated.

In summary, we

1) reject the new proposals contained in the Consultation paper for the appointment of industry directors to the Board of HSI, and,

2) demand the immediate reactivation of the four Advisory Councils to fill the vacancies on the Board which arose last November.

Yours in sport,

Pat McCartan,  
Spokesperson,  
ECVOA

Please acknowledge receipt.