



To:

Horse Sport Ireland,
Beech House,
Millennium Park,
Osberstown,
Naas,
Co Kildare.

16th August 2023

To whom it may concern,

Having reviewed the recent consultation Paper for the appointment of Industry Directors we would respectfully make the following points and observations to be followed by suggested actions.

ShowjumpingIreland is the largest Equestrian Sporting Olympic Discipline in Ireland and is currently made up of over 7,500 members who represent all areas of the equine industry and have links and interactions to all other equestrian entities and stakeholders. ShowjumpingIreland through their activities and structure support the sport horse and athlete education/training and development activities through their multiple authorised and affiliated activities and events.

We note within your first paragraph (Introduction) that you state that the current Board has undertaken a review of the processes currently in place. Whilst this is laudable, we would be concerned that the current Board may not be adequately equipped or briefed to understand the structure and basis of the structure they were reviewing. In carrying out this task it would surely have been necessary to consult with the previous Board members who filled the positions to gain an understanding of challenges that need to be identified and addressed. Similarly, it would have been best practice to consult with the affected entities to ascertain their views and suggestions relating to a need for change and where that change might be required to best serve the Industry and Sport. To our knowledge these actions have to date not formed part of the aforementioned review, you might confirm with whom the current Board did consult and what level of industry, sport and stakeholder knowledge, understanding and representation do they hold.

At this juncture it might be appropriate to ask how Horse Sport Ireland views its role, responsibilities and accountability to the Industry, Sport, and Stakeholders. In the initial formation, Horse Sport Ireland was created out of prior consultation with the Affiliates on foot of the Connellan Report then amended to the Dowling Report (Current Chairman), whereby the creation of Horse Sport Ireland was with the input from an industry and sport grouping who had meet and formed the fundamental cornerstones of what would become Horse Sport Ireland. This initial structure actually served the Sport and Industry well and whilst some argued to reduce the Board size and Affiliate Input through the Indecon report, this direction would now appear to be a counterproductive step. The Reaching New Heights vision which was authored around the same time does in fact seek to be inclusive but unfortunately one can only consider that the Indecon report should have been viewed as

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guidance rather than required. We now go back to the question posed at the start of this paragraph and we must compare the current incomplete form of Horse Sport Ireland and its working structure. Unfortunately, the current Board structure and the proposed structure and make up will further distance the actual interested and involved Sports and Stakeholders. The current structures are devoid of the essential knowledge and experience base that is required to support the sector.

There is another aspect that must be addressed in how Horse Sport Ireland perceives its status. It is an absolute necessity to understand that Horse Sport Ireland is in place due to the consensus of the Olympic disciplines agreeing to a transfer of NGB status from EFI to HSI as the new umbrella entity circa 2004/2005. Therefore it is now more than ever important for HSI to recognise that its role is and should be of intermediary on behalf of the Olympic disciplines and industry and stakeholders to Sport Ireland, DAFM , FEI etc . This is an understanding that appears to have become clouded over the past few years and one should refer to the foundations of HSI to recognise the understandings and working relationships put in place at that juncture.

To further address the HSI Document it is fair to comment that statements within that the previous council nomination system was exclusionary are wholly unacceptable if one is to consider the very make-up of the industry and sport, it is ultimately through these affiliates , sport , breeding and industry entities that persons with the necessary skill sets and knowledge find their way to the administration and support levels of the various entities and therefore this method is the ideal platform to access skills and specialities . The statement is further contradicted on the basis that the nominees would in effect require stakeholder group, affiliate, etc support in order to be deemed as nominated. To further emphasise the need for a form of reversion to the original HSI concept one should note who the members of HSI are as per the Constitution. HSI has moved to and seeks to move further to a situation whereby a small group of Directors and Executive could potentially form policy or attempt to pass motions or regulations without any requirement to consult with the bodies wholly invested in the running and progression of the sector, once again the current proposal fails to recognise the type of sector that is to be serviced.

Why would previous directors be excluded if the sector believed they would act in the best interest of the sector , this exclusion appears as a measure to attempt to exclude certain parties and is unnecessary and divisive , within the sector as within the TB sector, Conflicts of Interest may and will arise and as such they can easily be addressed in a practical and sensible manner which is suitable to the sector needs and satisfies general governance guidelines. The document refers to a selection panel of external experts and it is again necessary to state that the experts are the appointing bodies as were in place prior to the placing in abeyance of all committees and councils, there are no parties more expert and well equipped to understand the sector needs.

It is pertinent to note that the only benefits noted are 1. Diversity which is a misrepresentation as it is obvious that the sector and the various entities provide this diversity and expertise as is, therefore, the only area cited is point 2. gender diversity which once again is addressed across all the various sector entities. As has been previously mentioned it is important to clarify who was consulted prior to entering into this proposed change process, were the various affiliates consulted with, were the various committees and councils consulted with, were past Chairs of said councils and committees consulted, were the various High-Performance committees, Managers and committee chairs and members consulted. If they were then surely the Executive of Horse Sport Ireland can share the obvious damning concerns and statements that have required such a radical change in structures now proposed. Likewise is it a constructive and sensible action by a Board which is not fully populated and is

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limited in its sector, sport, industry knowledge to undertake a review without consulting with the stakeholders to establish what actually needed to be reviewed and what recommendations might be made by the sector. Are the Board currently in place able to demonstrate that they have indeed carried out this level of due diligence and sought views, opinion, and comment from outside the entity they act as directors of.

The Appendix 1 element of the document is by its very nature going to limit the ability of the sector to appoint persons with the necessary skill set to develop and understand the needs of the sector. Many of the points deemed Essential are in fact a secondary requirement in the sector rather than being a primary requirement. The paper appears to be more suitable to an entity required to oversee a single type of activity which the sector is not. Likewise, the Assessment and Appointment process appears to be effectively in house and it is noted that some queries did arise relating to this process during a Agriculture Committee sitting attended by Horse Sport Ireland representatives. No change appears to have been made in this proposal although it is understood that it was to be revisited.

In conclusion it is felt that the current proposal will not be to the benefit of the Sector, Sport, Industry and Stakeholders and it would be more appropriate to consider the reinstatement of the various councils and committees in their previous form to protect the Industry and Sector. It would also be widely accepted that a review of the function of Horse Sport Ireland and its understanding of its duties to the Industry as an Umbrella Body should be carried out immediately together with an evaluation of the skills and knowledge base within Horse Sport Ireland and their effective usage for the betterment of the sector with primary guidance from the industry entities, Governing Bodies and stakeholders. This will provide a clear roadmap and methodology to ensure maximum benefit is derived from State Investment and Involvement in the Sector. It will also allow all parties to establish if Horse Sport Ireland can be developed to be fit for purpose to service the sector.

To achieve these aspirations and goals it is necessary to pause and create an environment whereby trust can be established, and we would therefore suggest that this might be a more appropriate action rather than an enforced form of change which is creating division and disquiet across many areas of the sector.

Having had detailed discussions within the Showjumping family, membership, and stakeholders and with a significant number of sporting, Equestrian, Olympic Disciplines and Industry stakeholders we believe that they will share the views outlined above and will also correspond directly by way of submission.

Yours Sincerely,

ShowjumpingIreland,

On behalf of The Board, Standing Committees and Members.