

DRESSAGE Ireland

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17th August 2023

Dear Avalon

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Dressage Ireland is the National affiliate for promoting the sport of Dressage within Ireland.

We had in the previous board of HSI, representatives from Dressage Ireland on the **Leisure and Recreation, Coaching and Education** and the **High Performance Advisory** committees.

As stated by HSI in 2022 on the successful elections of chairs from the Advisory groups' The function of the four HSI advisory councils is to provide advice to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland in support of the development strategy, policy, funding, activity and sustainability and to identify future priorities and opportunities to be pursued under its strategic plan, and the development of clear plans of action, integrating activities across skills and partnership.'

The 4 advisory groups were populated by the affiliates of HSI, the Chair of each group was elected every 3 years from within these groups. The chair served as a director of HSI and was responsible for reporting to the Board of HSI, feedback from the advisory group and to report back to the advisory group on matters pertaining to that group. It was a good system as it provided direct feedback to the Affiliates and it recognised the importance of the membership of the Affiliates to HSI.

The proposed changes of the appointment of Industry directors to the Board of HSI will remove the direct affiliate connection to the Board negating the regular feedback from affiliates to the Board in contravention of the Sport Ireland code of governance.

The appointment of independent directors which only need a nomination from any one affiliate is a regressive step as it effectively cuts off the other affiliates and at most would only be a nomination from 4 affiliates!!

The selection criteria states that *'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.'*

If the advisory committees were reconstituted and ensured that affiliates could elect or appoint members to those advisory committees as appropriate and then elect a chairman to report and serve as a director to HSI The feedback from the Affiliates to the Board and vice versa would be restored.

DI would like to see the 4 Advisory committees reinstated with clear terms of reference and which affiliates are nominated to either single or multiple committees and how representatives to those committees are elected.

We would also like to comment on the proposed appointment of a High Performance industry director who would represent 4 affiliates but possibly have no knowledge of any of the affiliates as the selection criteria only asks for...'*High Performance (Olympic and Paralympic Disciplines or non-equestrian discipline experience but able to demonstrate experience in high performance teams and culture).*

Each of these affiliates has a High Performance committee which feedback to the Board only through the Executive of HSI. This is unacceptable as there is no recourse for the affiliate to be effectively and democratically represented at Board level. The High Performance Advisory committee at least allowed all High performance nominees to elect the chairman, the amalgamation of these 4 disciplines needs further thought.

Further comments on the proposed selection of Industry Directors

All directors of the Board should 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.

DI comment this criteria is relevant to all Board members.

Professional experience at an appropriately senior level in one or more of the following

areas: Finance, Business, Economics or Accountancy

and Auditing or Public Administration or Corporate Governance or Project Management & Investment or Media, Public Relations or Law.

DI comment This level of skills should be sought in the independent directors appointed by the Government.

DI comment The gender balance should be achieved by the appointment of appropriate government independent directors and not from the industry directors.

Combined with experience in the sport horse sector

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)

DI comment All these disciplines were already included in the Advisory committee structure which had direct feedback for election of members from the respective affiliates. We recommend that the Advisory committees elect the industry directors to the board.

Kind regards

Marguerite Kavanagh

On & behalf of the Board of Dressage Ireland

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