

Éilis Fallon

From: John Jordan <John.Jordan@tcagsm.gov.ie>
Sent: Wednesday 16 June 2021 11:22
To: Public Accounts Committee
Subject: Reply to Correspondence from the Committee of Public Accounts Ref S0389 PAC33
Attachments: R0520 (i) PAC33 C Neil Lovatt.pdf; R0520 (ii) PAC33 C Neil Lovatt.pdf; R0520 (iii) PAC33 C Neil Lovatt.pdf; R0520 (iv) PAC33 C Neil Lovatt.pdf; R0520 (v) PAC33 C Neil Lovatt.pdf; S0389 PAC33 - DTCAGSM mtg 28.04.2021.pdf; Sport Ireland Reply to S0388 PAC33 – Tennis Ireland.pdf

Categories: Correspondence for future meetings

R0658 PAC33

Dear Éilis

I would like to refer further to your letter your ref S0389 PAC 33 on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee regarding Tennis Ireland.

Sport Ireland is the statutory body with responsibility for the development of sport, increasing participation at all levels and raising standards. It also has responsibility for governance oversight of the National Governing Bodies of Sport.

I understand that Sport Ireland has provided a detailed response (attached) to the matters raised in the correspondence submitted to the Committee.

The National Governing Bodies of Sport are independent, autonomous bodies and are responsible for their own operational and governance matters, including procurement matters. The Secretary General has no role in such matters and has nothing further to add to the response provided to the Committee by Sport Ireland.

Regards

John

John Jordan
Private Secretary
Office of the Secretary General
Oifig an Ard-Rúnaí

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Éilis Fallon
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
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03/06/21

By Email Only: pac@oireachtas.ie

RE: S0388 PAC33 – Tennis Ireland

Dear Ms Fallon,

I refer to your letter of 26th May, 2021.

In line with the request of the Committee of Public Accounts, I have set out below Sport Ireland's response to the matters raised in the correspondence Ref: R0520 (i) PAC33 and associated documents.

Innovation Funding to Tennis Ireland

During 2020, Sport Ireland invited all recognised Governing Bodies to apply for Funding under the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Under the Technology Strand of the Innovation Fund, Sport Ireland sought applications for projects that test innovative solutions to critical problems in the development of sports participation at national, local, community and individual levels.

Information on the implementation of similar projects in the international sporting environment was an important part of the application process.

As part of its application Tennis Ireland requested support towards its World Tennis Number (WTN) and ClubSpark Integration Project.

The following points submitted by Tennis Ireland in relation to the project should be noted:

- The application followed an invitation from the International Tennis Federation (ITF) for Ireland to become one of the first counties in the world to launch the World Tennis Number (WTN)

initiative. This is a global initiative managed by the International Tennis Federation, which chose ClubSpark as its global implementation platform for all national federations. As such, Tennis Ireland required the integration of ClubSpark at HQ level as part of the implementation of the WTN in Ireland. This was clearly outlined in Tennis Ireland's Dormant Accounts Funding application to Sport Ireland.

- The primary reason for engaging with ClubSpark was that they had been chosen by the International Tennis Federation to build the ITF WTN. Tennis Ireland has been a key partner with the International Tennis Federation in the development of the ITF WTN and working with ClubSpark allowed Tennis Ireland to directly integrate the WTN and WTN Data into a redeveloped website and into our other digital offerings.
- The ClubSpark System that is used as part of the initiative has been adopted by the International Federation along with three of the four biggest tennis playing Nations in the world, the United States, Great Britain and Australia.
- In Great Britain over 85% of tennis venues use the software.
- The United States and Australia introduced the system over the past 3 years after it was extensively used and tested in Great Britain.
- Following further research into the programme, Tennis Ireland also became aware of other services that ClubSpark provided in the areas of a Club Management Platform. Tennis Ireland was aware that a number of clubs did not have access to such systems, particularly during COVID, when a court booking system became a key protocol to assist with contact tracing.
- Tennis Ireland engaged with its club network to ascertain if there was a demand for an additional, all-encompassing platform for clubs. 85% of respondent clubs expressed an interest in the platform.
- Tennis Ireland also explored alternative providers in the market however Clubspark provided a more comprehensive platform and better price point than other providers.
- Tennis Ireland presented its recommendation to both the Tennis Ireland Finance Sub Committee and the Board of Tennis Ireland, and the recommendation was approved.

- By rolling out the system in Ireland, Tennis Ireland aim to follow the well-established best practices in these Countries to enable the NGB to take a data-driven approach to identifying gaps in its provision and targeting of participation.
- The clubs that have engaged with Tennis Ireland to date have done so by choice.
- It is important to note that clubs are not obliged to utilise the platform.
- Tennis Ireland is offering an alternative which, in its opinion and experience to date, does what it sets out to do, at a price that is competitive in the market and that the clubs will pay for the ongoing use of the service – if they decide to continue with the service.
- Tennis Ireland has stated that it believes that the ClubSpark platform demonstrates excellent value for money for a very modest investment.
- It is worth noting that the centralisation of such a system is not unique to Tennis Ireland. In particular, Golf Ireland has in place a system that specifically manages user handicap index, score records etc.

Should the Committee have any further queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Treacy', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

John Treacy
Chief Executive, Sport Ireland