



Sarah Cremin
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House
Dublin 2
D02XR20

Ref: S0913 PAC33

8th July 2022

Dear Ms Cremin,

I refer to the above and to your correspondence dated 4th July inst. on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, ("the Committee"). I note the specific request of the Committee for further information/clarification from Horse Sport Ireland. From the outset, I wish to advise the Committee of a recent decision of the Board of Horse Sport Ireland in respect of the proposed project.

On 7th July, the Board of Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) has decided that due to compounding external economic factors beyond its control, the agreement in principle to build a Centre of Excellence at Greenogue, in Rathcoole Co Dublin will no longer be pursued.

The proposal to enter into a 35-year lease with Greenogue Equestrian Limited will not be advancing at this time and in the context of the HSI Strategic Plan 2019-2024, an alternative strategy will be considered. Consequently, as a legally binding lease will not be entered into, any construction development works will not be tendered for, and the proposal to further develop the site to Horse Sport Ireland's specifications will fall away.

The decision has been taken by the Board of HSI after careful consideration of the current economic context and prudent assessment of the inherent risk factors arising for such a significant strategic project. Within the Board's cognisance is the spiralling construction costs, due to inflation in the economy in general and increases in raw material costs because of the war in Ukraine, mean that the building costs of the proposed Centre of Excellence could increase by at least 50 per cent, making the project non-viable.

However, it should be noted that the concept of a Centre of Excellence for equestrian sport in Ireland has been a central ambition for HSI and it remains a key goal and very much a live ambition for the organisation. Given that the current project cannot now proceed due to the consequential inflationary environment both in terms of construction and supply chain which is beyond our control, we will be re-assessing our overall plans. In that context, HSI is open to discussions with all players in the equine industry in Ireland in relation to the strategic initiative.

Since March 2021, HSI has been hiring the facility on an ad hoc basis for High Performance Training as well as other venues in the industry, subject to the needs of the respective programmes.

HSI selected the Greenogue site for its proposed Centre of Excellence in November 2020, after extensive research, a feasibility and economic analysis and discussions with affiliates and other stakeholders. Since then, architects, designers, and planning experts have been engaged to work on the project and to bring it through planning. Planning permission for the development works relating to the proposed new facility was granted last August.

Of note, HSI has not incurred any capital costs in respect of development works on the project at Greenogue. Any such works during the course of the negotiations was undertaken exclusively by Greenogue Equestrian Limited as part of the ongoing desire by the proprietor to upgrade the facility to the highest standards.

The total invested in the design and planning for the new centre to date has been €120,000, however significant elements of this activity, such work on developing the concept, and the core design, can be reused in any future Centre of Excellence project. HSI will bear the cost of the design and planning instructions now that the project at Greenogue will not be pursued to the next stage.

HSI recognise that stakeholders will be disappointed with this outcome for the project at Greenogue, however, we remain positive that the concept remains and will be pursued when the right opportunity arises in the future.

In the interests of transparency and completeness, please find below responses to the specific list of questions arising from the Committee:

1. whether there has been engagement with the affiliates of Horse Sport Ireland in relation to the proposed Centre of Excellence, if it would meet their needs, and if they will all be accommodated;

During the course of 2019, Horse Sport Ireland undertook a stakeholder consultation process in respect of the Strategic Plan 2019-2024. The submissions received from the equestrian community highlighted a need for such a concept to be seriously considered by Horse Sport Ireland, and as such the concept was included in the corporate plan. Accordingly, engagement intensified once a tangible development concept was identified. In the early part of 2021, Horse Sport Ireland engaged in proactive one-to-one meetings with the affiliate family outlining the concept in detail, with the provision of graphic aids/visualisations and discussions as to the possible granular needs of affiliates. Given that Horse Sport Ireland has a diverse range of disciplines, from Showjumping to Western Riding, the overall aim of the Centre of Excellence was to achieve a standard of commonality amongst disciplines, where possible. Regrettably, this meant that not all of the disciplines would have the exact needs of their discipline met, for instance, a full-fledged cross country course would not be feasible on the site for the eventing discipline, however, an all-weather training cross country alternative would be utilised instead.

2. the length of the lease for the site for the proposed Centre of Excellence and the associated costs;

The proposed lease in consideration was a 35 year renewable Lease for the entire demised premises, facilities and new HQ over 30 acres. The rental amount was predicated on the build cost, as finalised.

3. if there is a condition in the lease that no competitive activity can take place;

Horse Sport Ireland are not aware of any condition set by the proposed Landlord nor does the grant of planning permission by South Dublin County Council in August 2021 include such a condition prohibiting competitive activity.

4. the exact size of the site and whether there is space for expansion; and

The size of the proposed site was 30 acres, and subject to the relevant developments, allowed for modest expansion in the future.

5. exactly how much of the land is sterilised (i.e. set aside for other purposes).

The Planning Permission received from South Dublin County Council did not include a sterilisation clause.

6. It was also agreed to request sight of the business case for the acquisition of the site.

The reports procured for the project are deemed commercially sensitive documents as commissioned exclusively for Horse Sport Ireland. As such, as an organisation, we are not in a position to share the reports (economic, financial, feasibility) with the Committee. We trust the Committee understands the position.

I remain at the disposal of the Committee should any further queries arise.

Yours sincerely,



Denis Duggan
CEO Horse Sport Ireland