

HOCKEY IRELAND

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Affiliated to the International Hockey Federation and to the European Hockey Federation

Message from Trevor Watkins, Chairperson of Hockey Ireland and addressed to the Provinces, Clubs and members of Hockey Ireland

This message is very important and should be read by all the Irish Hockey Family including the Directors, Trustees and key personnel of all the Branch structures. It should also be read by all club executive Boards and Committees and finally it should be read by everyone who is a club member and a member of Hockey Ireland. It falls to the provinces and the clubs who have all the club and membership details to ensure that this is cascaded to all relevant recipients. HI does have certain data but the current membership process has highlighted that this is incomplete and will be until all members have signed up with their correct contact details.

Hockey Ireland (HI)

HI is a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) owned by the clubs. The CLG is governed by the Board in line with the Constitution, sporting governance protocols of both Sport Ireland and Sport NI and the laws of the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

HI is responsible for hockey throughout the 4 provinces with up to 40,000 members (registered with clubs, a further 15,000 play in schools but not registered), 160 clubs and 450 schools. HI is responsible for delivering (in conjunction with the provinces) competitions, financial budgets to meet all requirements and members expectations, player development, club development, High Performance programmes, coach and umpire development, player and coach pathways, indoor hockey, Hockey ID, player welfare and child protection programmes and recently Masters hockey.

The Constitution states that The Board can number between 7-12 members, currently there are 9. All directors must be volunteers and therefore receive no payment for their role as Directors. Directors are democratically elected by the members and are guided by decisions taken by the members in general meetings in accordance with the Constitution. The Directors are also tasked to ensure best practice in corporate governance, guidelines, laws and funding as implemented by the governments of NI and ROI through their sporting agencies Sport Ireland (SI) and Sport Northern Ireland (SNI).

Upcoming EGM.

You will be aware that an EGM has been called by c20 member clubs who are constituent members of Ulster Hockey. The resolutions being proposed by these clubs are challenging decisions that have previously been democratically passed by the members in general meeting (GM) and are now being implemented by the Board. On the basis of the decision made by the members, your Board entered into legally binding contracts in respect of IT support and insurance, which have been in place since Aug 1 2021.



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Company Limited by Guarantee registered in Ireland under registration no 187471
Registered Office: 6 Harcourt Terrace, Dublin D02 P210
Place of Business: Newstead Building C, UCD, Belfield, Dublin DO4 V1W8
Directors: T Watkins, K Morrow, E Brady, S Hutchinson, I Kelly, B Pollock, A Keogh,
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To date HI has received approx €180,000 in membership fees, based on members currently registered on the system and it is estimated that with full compliance the total will be c€450,000. Since the introduction of the scheme nearly 7000 new members have signed up. It is very important to note that to date the clubs requisitioning the EGM have not put forward any financial projections or solutions to replace this revenue stream.

In 2017 at the AGM, it was agreed by all clubs to create an equitable and fair fee structure. All members contribute to the organisation. The current model is not equitable as it is an adult team-based fee only. The new structure is sustainable and will be supporting the development of 'grass roots' hockey in the future.

In the immediate years the Board held off introducing the scheme at the bidding of the provinces and clubs. There has been no increase in revenue through the club affiliation fee structure in 15 years yet the demand for an ever-increasing range of services and Government oversight is relentless.

The pressure to introduce a membership scheme was mounting from the Government agencies and the changes in how other sports were funding themselves with significant success. HI is only 1 of 2 NGBs (out of 25) that are not funded through membership scheme.

When a structure of funding that has existed for over 100 years requires changing it will of course meet many new challenges to effect a positive change on HI and the hockey community. This year is a year of transition as some of the issues you have raised are dealt with. It is not intended to implement fines or sanctions as all clubs become comfortable with the way forward.

Following discussions in Jan/Feb/Mar this year with focus groups comprising of clubs and provinces. it was agreed that the membership scheme together with the agreed rates would be implemented for the 2021/22 season. The implementation of the scheme was also required to satisfy the financial sustainability of HI in the future, this was also stated in the Audited Financial Statements of 2019 and 2020 circulated to all clubs. In short, the current level of funding from clubs and members could not sustain hockey in Ireland. There will be full transparency on all monies raised by the Membership Scheme and how they are spent.

Over the past few months and in the video released to all clubs in July I have emphasised how monies received by HI are spent, it is worth reiterating here - **all** monies spent on High Performance are provided solely by SI, SNI and sponsors.



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Affiliation fees from clubs are the only source of income to pay for all the administration and other services. HI is working very hard to attract new supporters who in the future may fund some of the exciting opportunities presenting to our sport.

Currently the age profile of our membership shows approximately 75% under the age of 18, who to date have contributed no fees/monies to HI yet are the major beneficiaries from most of the programmes. This group, particularly 14-18yo, who require added structures around player welfare and child protection, cannot continue. The fee structure has been pitched at the lowest possible level to provide the benefits of PA insurance and other consumer offers to enable HI Directors to deliver on their financial obligations requested by the Auditors.

In summary there are 2 outcomes from the EGM

1 All the resolutions are defeated. The Directors can then move forward and put HI on a sustainable financial path, maximise the opportunities with State bodies and sponsors and to deliver the highest standard of governance and services now required.

2 The resolutions are passed. In this case it may result in all the directors resigning with immediate effect. HI may be in breach of contracts and financial undertakings. Hockey in Ireland may cease immediately, and State support may be withdrawn with immediate effect.

The membership scheme is a game changer for hockey in Ireland. It will allow our sport to put in place proper resources in a sustainable way to grow, develop and maximise the opportunities that are now available.

I urge all the clubs to register and attend the EGM.

Trevor Watkins.
Chairman
Hockey Ireland



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