

30<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Dear Club President / Chairperson,

**RE: Tennis Ireland CLG, Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

I am writing to ask for your support for a new Constitution for Tennis Ireland. You will already have received details of next Thursday's (June 8<sup>th</sup>) EGM which is being held to consider its adoption and I would just like to provide a little more detail and context as you and your members consider your vote, a vote which I sincerely hope will be favourable towards the proposed resolution.

The main issue to be decided within the proposals for a new Constitution is about the composition of the Board.

As I am sure you know, Tennis Ireland has had Board issues, both practical and reputational, over the last number of years, and because of that, reviewing its structure and redrafting the Constitution were key priorities for the Board and management over the last 12 months. That work has resulted in the proposals which are before you, and which are, in the judgement of the current members, honest, informed and practical. They were drafted after lengthy consultation with key stakeholders, both internally and externally, as well as with Sport Ireland and other bodies expert in sports governance.

A key component of the proposed reform is the reduction in the size of the Board from the current 15 members to 10 members.

Board memberships of 15 are not the norm in well-run organisations in 2023 and a membership of 10 will, we believe, provide the Tennis community in Ireland with a Board that is up to date with current legislation and requirements, and also structured in a way which is lean and fit for purpose. Crucially, the proposed structure will ensure the Board includes both vital geographical representation and the wide-ranging skill-sets which are required by the leadership of any truly national body.

It is proposed that the Board reduction, from 15 to 10 members will be achieved in three ways:

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**Directors:**

Caroline Murphy  
Clifford Carroll  
Ciara Jennings  
David O'Beirne  
David Spillane

Eddie Ronayne  
Jerry Sheehan  
John Ryan  
Letty Lucas  
Liam O'Donohoe

Paul O'Connor  
Tom Shelly  
Rosamund Thompson

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Dublin City University,  
Glasnevin,  
Dublin 9

**Registered No:**  
342413  
**Incorporated in:**  
Dublin Ireland

1. **The President:** The President will continue to attend Board meetings and to have a strong voice. However, the President will no longer be a member of the Board and so will not have a vote. The purpose of this amendment is to elevate the role of the President away from day-to-day Board affairs and avoid any potential conflicts of loyalty. The role will be honorary in nature and will rotate between the provinces on a two-year pre-determined cycle.
2. **The CEO:** The CEO will also continue to attend Board meetings and to have a strong voice. However, the CEO will similarly no longer be a member of the Board and so will not have a vote. The purpose of this amendment is to reflect modern governance arrangements in NGB's and to satisfy Revenue Commissioners regarding tax-free sporting exemption.
3. **The Branch Nominated Directors:** It is proposed that the further reduction of the Board, from 8 to 5, will be achieved by reducing the number of Branch nominated directors in 3 of the 4 provinces, i.e. a reduction of one each from the Leinster, Munster and Ulster branches. The new structure will therefore be 2 x Leinster; 1 x Ulster; 1 x Munster and 1 x Connacht (unchanged). This will ensure the number of Branch representatives matches the number of 'subject matter expert' Portfolio Directors, which will remain unchanged, at 5. Importantly, branch nominated Directors will no longer need to have served two years on the Branch Council. That will lead to an expanded pool from which Branches may select their nominee(s).

I can understand that there may well be some unease at Branch level at reduction in Branch representation. Indeed, I know some has already been expressed. But we have received much support too and I believe it is essential to point out once again that the increasing move towards smaller boards (with an equal balance between Nominated Branch Directors and Portfolio Directors), is seen as best in class for governance by Sport Ireland and is also supported by our Chief Executive and Management team.

I believe any nervousness about agreeing to smaller Provincial representation on the Board can also be assuaged by the progress being made by our new **Inter-Branch Forum (IBF)**.

The creation of the Forum was a key outcome from initial stake-holder conversations during the review process. It was established in May 2022 to agree on a coordinated response to governance changes, and it has already grown into a vital ongoing structure to improve communication with/between Branches and coordinate activities at Branch level. The IBF has been working very effectively and as a result has been incorporated into our new Constitution.

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I am sure you will agree that a review of our Constitution is long overdue.

And so, as you consider the proposals that review has resulted in, I would just like to reassure you, in closing, that all of the proposed changes (the main components of which have been highlighted above) follow lengthy consultation and debate. They have been very carefully thought through, and a significant majority of the Board of Tennis Ireland (including myself), believes that the best interests of all member clubs will be served by their adoption. We believe that adopting this new Constitution will enable Tennis Ireland to be best positioned to avail of whatever opportunities and challenges present themselves in Ireland in the years ahead.

Can I please therefore urge your Club, whether by way of proxy or by personal or virtual attendance at the EGM, **to vote in favour** of the resolution to be proposed at the EGM.

Specifically, if your Club, for whatever reason, cannot attend the EGM, either personally or virtually, can your Club please complete and return the Form of Proxy (attached) for the EGM in accordance with the instructions printed on it so as to be received by Tennis Ireland, DCU, Dublin 9 D09 W6Y4, not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for the holding of the EGM, or 8pm on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June.

If you have any queries or need any clarification concerning the new Constitution, please email myself ([president@tennisireland.ie](mailto:president@tennisireland.ie)) or Tennis Ireland ([egm@tennisireland.ie](mailto:egm@tennisireland.ie)) and we will reply to you as soon as possible.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

**John Ryan**  
**Tennis Ireland President**  
Tennis Ireland, DCU, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 D09 W6Y4

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