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Press Release

Irish Tennis Clubs Vote Overwhelmingly for New Governance Structure

Tennis Ireland Motion for Board reduction receives strong support

Sport Ireland welcomes vote as move towards NGB best practice

Tennis clubs throughout Ireland have given resounding support to proposals to change the way their sport is governed.

At an EGM on Thursday 8 June, member clubs voted by a margin of 10 to 1 (100 votes to 10) to implement several changes, including reducing the overall number of Board members from 15 to 10 while retaining the number of Portfolio directors at 5. One of the Portfolio directors will Chair the Board.

Welcoming the changes, the President of Tennis Ireland, John Ryan, said:

“I am really grateful to our member clubs and our 4 Provincial Branches for trusting that these changes are in the best interests of the way our sport is governed at Board level. A smaller, leaner, Board will be more fit for purpose and will help us move on from the periodic difficulties we have faced over the past few years.”

The Chair of the Board, David O’Beirne, added:

“The Tennis Ireland Board is very pleased that our members have supported the changes provided for in our new Articles and that we now have a governance framework which enables our Board to move our sport forward in an efficient and streamlined way. The Board is particularly pleased that the Inter-Branch Forum, which we have already put in place to assist Provincial Branch co-operation and input and increased interaction with Head Office, is now formalised in our new Articles.”

Dr. Una May, CEO of Sport Ireland, noted:

“Sport Ireland promotes and supports good governance practices in our National Governing Bodies of Sport. Following on from their adoption of the Governance Code for Sport, we further commend Tennis Ireland’s proactive approach to enhancing the governance structure within their organisation. Sport Ireland supports this approach and I look forward to witnessing the positive impact it will have on the development of tennis across Ireland”

Meanwhile Kevin Quinn, recently appointed as CEO of Tennis Ireland, said of his first few months in the job:

“Coming into this role at a time when the organisation was debating such a major change has been challenging, but in a good way. It has given me the opportunity to visit clubs all over the country and get a real feel for all the great work happening throughout. Tennis is a wonderful sport, an activity for all, for life, and under this new structure, I am hugely enthusiastic about playing my part in growing and developing it.”

Ends

Notes to Editors:

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 was recommended for Tennis Ireland by the IPA in an independent governance review.

The Board reduction, from 15 to 10 members will be achieved in three ways:

1. **The President:** The President will continue to attend and contribute to Board meetings. However the President will no longer be a Director and so will not have a vote at Board meetings. The purpose of this is to elevate the role of the President away from day-to-day Board affairs and avoid any potential conflicts of loyalty. The role of President 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 and contribute to Board meetings. However, the CEO will not be a Director and so will not have a vote at Board meetings. The purpose of this 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 reduction of the number of Directors to 10 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 (Connacht remaining unchanged). The number of Branch representatives will therefore equal 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 their Branch Council. That is expected to lead to an expanded pool from which Branches may select their nominee(s).

Smaller Provincial representation on the Board will be balanced by the contribution which will be made to Tennis Ireland by the new Inter-Branch Forum (**IBF**).

The creation of the IBF was a key outcome from initial stake-holder conversations during the governance 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 and with Head Office. The IBF has been working very effectively and as a result has been incorporated into the new Articles.