

Proposed Amendments to the BD Memorandum & Articles of Association

Chair Appointment Process

In recent years we have reviewed and amended the Articles of Association to reflect best practice, in accordance with the Code for Sports Governance published by UK Sport and Sport England, which was further updated in 2021.

It is essential for the future of British Dressage that the Board of Directors continues to attract high calibre individuals with the right level of knowledge and experience to represent members and ensure that the sport is governed effectively.

The introduction of a Nominations Committee has provided greater scrutiny over the Director nominations process, including the appointment of Extra Directors for specific areas of expertise, and members now have a binding vote for all elected Director positions, regardless of whether the candidates stand unopposed – meaning the members have the option to actively reject or choose none of the candidates put forward.

We have also introduced a provision to appoint a Deputy Chair from within the Board. This will normally be an existing Director who can provide expertise in areas that complement the skillset and background of the appointed Chair, as well as providing additional support for the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team.

The changes that we are proposing to the Articles of Association this year will further strengthen our governance standards by amending the process for appointing a Chair to the Board. This is such a critical position, with prime responsibility for leading the organisation and being a figurehead for the sport, we need to ensure that the recruitment process is robust, and that we continue to attract individuals with the requisite skills and competencies.

When the position of Chair is next up for renewal, we therefore want to broaden the pool of potential applicants, by seeking nominations from the BD membership and Board, as normal, but also opening it up to external applicants who meet the specified criteria. The post would be advertised publicly via an open application process, in line with UK Sport / Sport England requirements.

All applications would then be scrutinised by the Nominations Committee, who would conduct interviews with a shortlist of candidates. Following this process, they would make a recommendation of their preferred candidate to the Board.

If approved, this person would then be put forward to the membership as the recommended appointment to the Board, with the membership still having the final say to either ratify or reject the preferred candidate for Chair through a 'Yes / No' vote, in the same way as other uncontested Member Elected Director positions.

If any candidate is rejected by the membership, an Interim Chair would be appointed from within the Board, until the following year when applications would re-open, and the process would begin again. The membership will continue to have the ultimate say when appointing any new Chair.

Please note that this does not affect the current Chair appointment and would only be applicable from the end of their first term in 2026 onwards.

In making these changes, we still want to encourage applications from within the membership, as there will undoubtedly be people with the knowledge and experience that the organisation needs. An appreciation and understanding of dressage and the wider equestrian sector will remain a central consideration. However, under this new process, we would not be restricting the pool of potential candidates and can make sure we recruit the right calibre of person for this vitally important role.

This will also ensure that British Dressage is aligned with the requirements for National Governing Bodies set out in the Code for Sports Governance and remain fully compliant with our obligations as a charitable organisation, by promoting openness and transparency when making any Board appointments, as well as supporting our aim to achieve the highest standards of governance and professionalism.

Jill Day, who was elected Chair of BD in 2022, commented: “We are first and foremost a members’ organisation, here to represent our members and act in the best interests of the sport. However, as a Charity and National Governing Body, we also need to conform to the Code for Sports Governance. I believe the proposed changes will allow us to follow that code and ensure that the Board has the expertise required to drive the sport forward, while still giving members the final say on who will lead the organisation as Chair.”