

Irish Draught dispute settled

NEWSCOMMENT

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The Irish Draught Horse Society dispute appears to be over. The issues before the High Court have been settled and the case struck out with no order for costs, hours before it was to begin last Friday. The defendants, the Governing Body of IDHS Ltd, have stepped down.

The members of the Governing Body were Chairman Vincent Faughnan from Sligo, Vice-Chairman George Dreaper, also from Sligo, Secretary Sharyn Alexander from Belfast, Treasurer Tony Hession, PRO Eileen Brennan from Carlow, and Patricia Furlong who had already resigned from the governing body but was named in the court case. We also learned that Helen Kelly from Mullingar, who ran the IDHS secretariat, has also resigned.

All members must now put their differences aside and concentrate on making the society work as a united national body. The resignation of the governing body came as a surprise to some members who considered it a complete capitulation. However, *The Irish Horse* understands that the defendants, as well as the society, which is very low on funds, could have been liable for the cost of the High Court action. With farms and businesses in jeopardy, the defendants were not prepared to take that risk and there has been a general feeling of relief that the dispute has been settled. The call of "resign and reform" came from ordinary members at a meeting in Portlaoise under the chairmanship of IFA General Secretary Michael Berkery. In the settlement the governing body hands over control of the IDHS Ltd to the

National Council (concerned members) under the chairmanship of Ann Loughnane from Cork and her team.

A statement from IDHS Ltd said: "the limited company has been handed over to the National Council to comply the members' wish to avoid court action and related costs. This hand over will take place in the next 14 days. In allowing the legal action to be brought to a conclusion, there is now no impediment to immediately complying with the obligation under the Companies Act 1963 to call and hold a long overdue AGM, thus giving the members the opportunity to vote and impose their wishes on the society and where they want it to go, which was always our aim and there is now a full and final settlement with no costs awarded."

It now rests with the

National Council to call an AGM as soon as possible. Under company law, the AGM should have been called 18 months ago but the pending court action prevented it being called and it is now urgent. At the next general meeting every Irish Draught Society member will have a vote. Hopefully a lot of new faces will appear on the officer list to give the new governing body a chance to draw up a new constitution and set of rules that will be totally transparent.

The National Council wants the IDHS to become a co-op but before this can be achieved, IDHS Ltd has to be wound up, requiring a 75% vote of the membership. The debacle of the past couple of years must never be repeated. There is now a great opportunity for a real winner to be declared and that is the Irish Draught horse.