

Response to Stakeholders from William Buck

Q1. It is a given that you have a passionate interest in the sport of eventing. What are the main objectives that have encouraged you to stand for election?

I am standing because urgent change is needed. BE has failed for many years to provide a vision for the future of our sport, let alone delivering on such a future. Our sport has become increasingly marginal with:

- **Falling membership**
- **Increased competition costs to Members and organisers**
- **An unacceptable level of ‘churn’ of Members – i.e. riders coming into our sport for a few years, before leaving, having decided that BE offers them little**
- **At professional levels, a sport which is falling behind its competitors, holds back innovation and which is not commercially attractive for either sponsors or owners**

And whilst this has attracted much vocal criticism, reversing this situation will only occur through positive, confident action. As change has to start within BE’s Board, I’m standing to make sure that change happens. My objectives are to:

- **Properly enfranchise all stakeholder groups with BE and its decision-making processes;**
- **Provide positions on the Board for each of the key stakeholder groups;**
- **Create a five year plan for the development of our sport, covering all levels of eventing, across all parts of the country, with prestigious, attainable goals for grassroots riders and new competitions/formats for our professional rider and their owners;**
- **Deliver that plan; and**
- **Incorporate the unaffiliated eventing market into BE - the UA market, which involves thousands of riders, is part of eventing in the UK and BE, which is first and foremost a sport governing body, must try and incorporate that market into BE’s structure and not treat it with hostility**

Q2. The BE Board comprises individuals with a range of skills derived from their professional lives. How do your own skills and expertise fit with the current Board members’ expertise in relation to running the sport and the business of eventing?

For any director to be successful, they must have an:

- **An understanding of the role of director in the context of the relevant organisation; and**
- **Have the skills to undertake that role.**

Being a successful BE director is therefore not just a question of having competed to a certain level, run X or Y event or having obtained a certain level of social media popularity. It is similarly not about providing a ‘voice’ – we don’t need more ‘voices’, we need directors who actually achieve things.

A successful BE director therefore must (i) have an understanding of the issues faced by our sport and (ii) the skills to enact real change.

As to (i), I have that understanding – both direct from first-hand experience, but also through my many dealings with a huge range of officials, riders, owners and organisers.

As to (ii), I have the skills, both through a 20 year career as a commercial lawyer and also as a long-term director of various businesses and sporting organisations, to implement tangible change. Those skills will ensure that I deliver (i) change to the corporate structure of BE, (ii) the creation of effective advisory groups to properly inform decision making, (iii) ensuring fair and transparent engagement with Members and stakeholders in all aspects of BE's activities (iv) being clear with Members as to what BE is doing and why, its finances and where, critically, it is failing and (v) formulate and deliver a future plan for eventing.

Q3. Given the pressures the sport faces, with falling membership, competition from other equestrian activities and the prospect of a generally poor economic climate, marketing is likely to be important to BE in 2021. Where do you think BE's marketing efforts should be focused in order to address these challenges? Please provide specific examples of initiatives that are likely to enable existing members to gain full benefit from their membership and suggest means to encourage new members and horse registrations.

Marketing is crucial to the future health of eventing, both at the grassroots and professional levels. But marketing only works if you have something to market and, with absolutely honesty, BE currently offers very little. Our sport is, tragically, seen as marginal and increasingly irrelevant, offering nothing more than a handful of 'name' events and riders at one end, and an expensive day out at the other.

To be able to market eventing effectively, we have to make it relevant to riders, owners, sponsors and the world outside of eventing. This means making it attractive. We therefore need to:

- **Expand BE's base to incorporate the UA market – the days of only competing at BE if you can run 12 times a season have to go. We therefore need a more flexible, cost effective membership, which will bring in a much larger number of Members – a higher number of active members makes for a healthier and more marketable sport.**
- **We need to offer tiered levels of events, with tiered entry fees. We all know which are the 'go to event' and this should be recognised, with a greater number of lower cost events available in the calendar for Members.**
- **We should utilise our 'go to events' to provide prestigious competitions for both grassroots and professional competitors – every rider or owner, whatever their level, who is part of BE, must feel that they have available to them achievable goals, whether (i) at a regional or national level and (ii) on an amateur or professional basis. All BE championships and competitions must therefore be reviewed so as to provide a comprehensive and comprehensible offering to Members, which can in turn be marketed outside of the sport - the current piece meal offering has to go.**
- **At the professional level, we must not shy away from innovating eventing's formats and competitions to make them more accessible and marketable to wider audiences. By not doing so, we are consigning eventing to a bleak future. I would therefore, along with stakeholders, pursue new initiatives to bring elite eventing to the wider public. This in turn will help make eventing more relevant for the benefit of all Members.**