

Odds and Sods

Brian O'Connor



Jump racing's long-term prospects an issue that can't be fudged

Within National Hunt racing, it is the nagging fear that usually dare not be spoken about. On the occasions that it is brought up, much of the sport finds itself trying to pretend the future isn't uncertain.

In a recent, wide-ranging interview, one of British racing's powerbrokers boiled the cross-channel sport's glacial decision-making process down to one word – fudge.

David Armstrong appears to have been on every type of committee known to man or beast. He's been CEO of the Racecourse Association, as well as a British Horseracing Board member and on the Levy Board, so pretty much at the centre of every political wrangle there for much of the last decade. His observation that most tough calls get

fudged due to clashing sectional interests resonates here too. But one thing he was notably blunt about, and that got treated as something of a footnote, is the long-term outlook for jump racing.

"I'm worried that jump racing might not exist for welfare reasons in 10 years," he told the Racing Post. "We just come under more and more pressure all the time and we haven't really got a solution. I mean, the solution is don't jump over anything."

Armstrong is hardly a stereotypical lentil-munching trot eager to see hundreds of thousands of rewinded thoroughbreds roaming free over Salisbury Plain. He comes across as a classic committee man, a species not known for any impulse towards rocking the boat. But by any measure, his observation on National

Hunt racing's prospects is a stark one.

There was some reaction to his comments, mostly along the lines of how he was speaking out of turn. There were claims too about the sport talking itself into oblivion with introspective pandering to lobby groups that won't be satisfied until racing is banned completely. But otherwise, much of the response was notably muted.

That's unremarkable. Racing's default position, whatever the jurisdiction, is often to circle the wagons and trust to riding out thorny problems that arise. So, it's little surprise that many are prepared to simply ignore Armstrong's opinion, presumably in the hope that a difficult subject will simply go away.

But this is a significant policy maker, an establishment figure – one of those inner-circle types not normally given to indiscretion. For him to be so frank on such an existential topic suggests real concerns exist within the corridors of power in British racing about the winter game's long-term future.

Such a sensitive topic

Since jump racing in Ireland and Britain are basically two sides of the one coin, such unease can hardly be expected to conveniently go into quarantine in Holyhead either.

Not that there will be any rush to address such a sensitive topic here too. Those in racing have long since come to terms with equine fatalities being an inevitable if regrettable consequence of a tough game. But washing your hands of a sensitive issue presumes racing operates in its own little vacuum, removed from broader public opinion. It doesn't.

Equine fatalities are inevitable, no matter what kind of racing it is. They're inevitable outside the track too. Even galloping loose in a paddock, any thoroughbred is only ever one bad step away from disaster. But, by its very

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PHOTOGRAPH: BRYAN KEANE/INPHO



nature, running horses over obstacles brings an added element of risk for what are, essentially, entertainment purposes.

It is jump racing's great vulnerability; with the thrills come spills and statistically, a tiny fraction of them result in fatal injuries.

There's a pervasive 'C'est la Guerre' attitude about that among those working at racing's coalface. It's probably inevitable and shouldn't be confused with apathy. But it's a position that's only going to become an increasingly tough sell to wider public opinion, which is progressively more uneasy about how animals are treated in food production, never mind for sporting amusement.

Privately, some racing professionals here will concede to concern about National Hunt racing's future. That's despite it being much more popular with most racing fans in this part of the world than the flat. Predictions that it could be in trouble in a decade are widely viewed as alarmist. But only the most complacent can dismiss it will be the same in two decades' time, or three.

Something for the Weekend

Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary looks like he has a firm grip on tomorrow's maiden hurdle at Naas, but with which of his two hopefuls? Poetissa gets a valuable sex allowance but was let down by her jumping last time. **Jaton d'Oudaires** (2.15) started favourite for the 2024 Cheltenham Bumper and has finished runner-up in two maiden starts this season.

He can make it third time lucky. The weekend's big handicapper is Newbury's William Hill Hurdle.

Conditions look like being ultra-testing and a significant piece of form could prove to be how **Bubble Dubi** (3.20) won on a heavy surface all of two years ago. He returned from a 623-day absence to win at Aintree in November but got loose and was withdrawn at Windsor last month.

On his best behaviour, a mark of 129 and a strong pace in the mud could see him go close.

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Amsterdam, 6 February 2026

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To exercise the Put Option, the Put Option Noteholder must deliver, at the specified office of the Principal Paying Agent (as set out below) at any time during normal business hours of the Paying Agent by no later than 13 February 2026 (the "Put Notice Period"), a duly completed and signed notice of exercise in the form as required by Euroclear and Clearstream, Luxembourg (the "Put Notice") in which the Put Option Noteholder must specify a bank account to which payment is to be made under Condition 6(d) of the Terms and Conditions of the Notes accompanied by the Put Option Note(s) or evidence satisfactory to the Issuer that the relevant Put Option Note is upon delivery of the Put Notice, held to its order or under its control.

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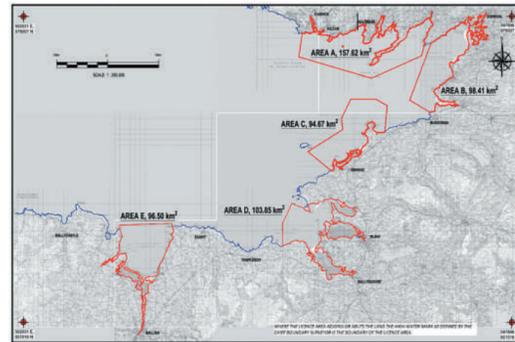
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PUBLIC NOTICE

The Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

Invitation for public submissions on an application for a maritime usage licence and an appropriate assessment

Uisce Éireann submitted an application to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority ("MARA") for a maritime usage licence under section 117 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 to undertake marine environmental surveys for the purposes of site investigation, falling under Schedule 7(3) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 (the MAP Act). The activities are required to gather information on water currents, bathymetry and ancillary data on temperature, conductivity and salinity within Donegal Bay, Sligo Bay and their adjoining waters. This data is required by Uisce Éireann in order for them to carry out numerical modelling for the purposes of informing future design and installation of wastewater treatment and to examine the impact that wastewater causes on water quality and designated shellfish waters in the surrounding areas. The licence application is for a period of 3 years.



A related Natura Impact Statement has been submitted with the above licence application. The licence application and the Natura Impact Statement are available for inspection on MARA's website https://www.maritimeregulator.ie/application/mul240012/ and at the following address by appointment - Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, 2nd Floor, Menapia House, Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 RF29.

Members of the public who wish to make a submission in writing to MARA on the licence application and the Natura Impact Statement may do so quoting ref: MUL240012 to the following e-mail address - licence@mara.gov.ie or by post to the following address - Licence Unit, Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, 2nd Floor, Menapia House, Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 RF29.

The closing date and time for a written submission to be received by MARA is 17.30 on 08/03/2026. MARA will then, as soon as practicable, carry out the appropriate assessment determination in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. After the determination, MARA will either grant, part grant or refuse the licence application. Dated this 6th day of February 2026.

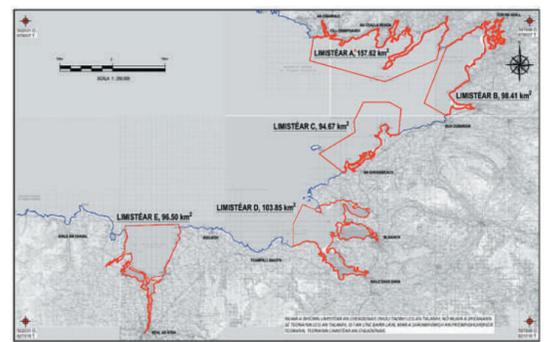
Signed: Representative of Uisce Éireann

FÓGRA POIBLÍ

An tAcht um Pleanáil Limistéir Mhuirí 2021 agus Rialacháin na gComhphobal Eorpach (Éin agus Gnáthóga Nádurtha), 2011

Cuireadh d'aighneachtaí poiblí ar iarrais ar cheadúnas úsáide muirí agus ar mheasúnacht chúí

Chuir Uisce Éireann iarrais faoi bháid an Údarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí ("MARA") ar cheadúnas úsáide muirí faoi alt 117 den Acht um Pleanáil Limistéir Mhuirí, 2021 chun tabhairt faoi shuirbhéanna comhshaoil muirí chun críocha imscrúdaithe láithreáin, a thagann faoi Sceideal 7(3) den Acht um Pleanáil Limistéir Mhuirí, 2021 (Acht MAP). Ceanglaítear ar na gníomhaíochtaí faisnéis a bhailiú ar shruthanna uisce, bataiméadracht agus sonraí coimhdeacha faoi theocht, seoltacht agus salandacht laistigh de Bhá Dhún na nGall, Cuan Shligigh agus uisce eatarthu. Teastaíonn na sonraí sin ó Uisce Éireann chun gur féidir leo tabhairt faoi shamhaltú uimhriúil chun críocha bonn eolais a chur faoi chóireáil fuíolluise a dhearadh agus a chur isteach amach anseo agus leis an tionchar a scrúdú a imríonn fuíolluise ar cháilíocht an uisce agus ar uisce slógúis ainnithe sna ceantair máguaird. Baineann tréimhse 3 bliana leis an iarrais ar cheadúnas.



Seoladh Ráiteas Tionchair Natura gaolmhar leis an iarrais thuas ar cheadúnas. Tá an t-iarrais ar cheadúnas agus an Ráiteas Tionchair Natura ar fáil lena n-ádhúlach ar shuíomhais MARA https://www.maritimeregulator.ie/application/mul240012/ agus ag an seoladh seo a leanas trí choinne - An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí, An 2ra hUrlár, Teach Menapia, Páirc Ghnó Dhraighní, Draighneach, Loch Garman, Y35 RF29.

Is féidir le baill den phobal ar mian leo aighneacht a dhéanamh i scríbhinn le MARA ar an iarrais ar cheadúnas agus an Ráiteas Tionchair Natura a mhlaith a dhéanamh agus an uimhriú thagairtha: MUL240012 á lua chuig an seoladh ríomhphoist seo a leanas - licence@mara.gov.ie nó sa phost chuig an seoladh seo a leanas - An tÚdarás Rialála Limistéir Mhuirí, An 2ra hUrlár, Teach Menapia, Páirc Ghnó Dhraighní, Draighneach, Loch Garman, Y35 RF29.

Is é an dáta agus an t-am is déanaí ar a nglacfaidh MARA le haighneachtaí scríofa 17.30 an 08/03/2026. Tabharfaidh MARA ansin, a luaithe is indéanta, faoin gcinneadh faoin measúnacht chúí i gcomhréir le Rialachán 42 de Rialacháin na gComhphobal Eorpach (Éin agus Gnáthóga Nádurtha), 2011 Déanfaidh MARA an t-iarrais ar cheadúnas a dheonú, a dheonú go páirteach nó a dhiúlú i ndiaidh an chinneadh. Dar dáta an 6 lá seo de Feabhra 2026.

Síniú: Ionadaí thar ceann Uisce Éireann.

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