



Report: Questionnaire on the Future of the Irish Pony Club December 2017 KM Harvey

Rationale:

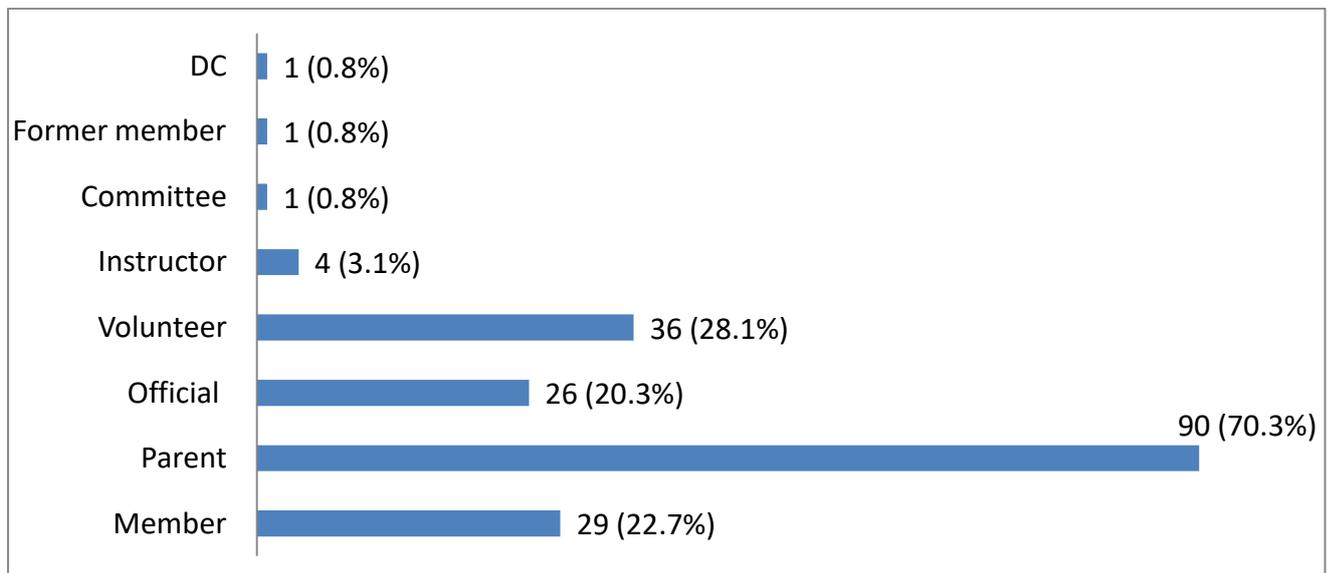
This survey was undertaken to provide information for the Irish Pony Club (IPC) about the opinions of the Membership, parents and officials concerning what the IPC currently provides, and what it can do to improve in future.

The questionnaire was compiled using Google Forms and disseminated from October to December 2017 *via* the IPC website with reminders *via* the Facebook page and email to the Branches. The responses were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis. The questions asked and the answers provided are given below. Where respondents were asked to write what they thought, the answers have been grouped according to the type of response provided.

Questionnaire:

Which of the following describes you? Check all that apply.

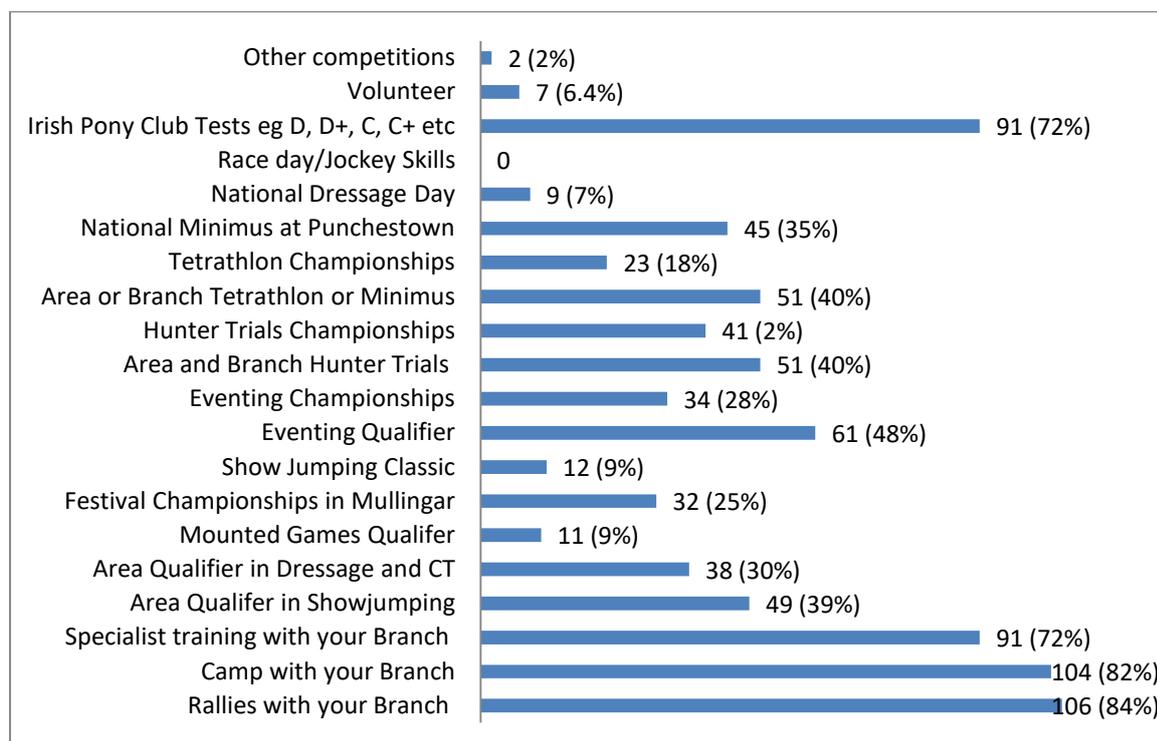
128 responses; some respondents have several roles so total % is more than 100%



There is good representation of parents (many of whom are also officials and volunteers), and members. However, the 128 respondents represent only 4.2% of the IPC Membership, ie 3008 paid up Members as of November 2017.

What activities did you take part in with the Irish Pony Club this year? Check all that apply.

127 responses; many did several activities so total % is more than 100%



Thus the majority of activities undertaken were at Branch level: Rallies and Camp, Training (Show Jumping, Cross country, Flatwork, Tetrathlon, Games) and IPC Tests. Eventing, Hunter Trials, Tetrathlon & Minimus and SJ were the most popular competitions.

What were the reasons for taking part in the activities you have identified above?

121 responses; some gave several reasons so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Enjoyment	47	38.8
Training	39	32.2
Interest	30	24.8
Volunteer/official	23	19.0
Competing	23	19.0
Support for Branch	7	5.8
Other (included income, location, mental fitness)	9	7.4

Enjoyment, Training and Interest were the main reasons given for taking part in IPC activities.

Why did you not take part in the other activities listed above? 119 responses; some gave several reasons so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Lack of time/clash with other equestrian activity/family commitment	43	36.1
Lack of interest/experience	42	35.3
Age of rider (too young/old)	28	23.5
Too far to travel	7	5.9
Clash with exams/holidays	6	5.0
Cost	4	3.4
Didn't know about it	3	2.5
Other (injury horse/rider, too competitive, not offered in Area, no pony)	15	12.6

Lack of time and lack of interest/experience were the main reasons given for not taking part in IPC activities.

What was the best thing about your involvement with the Irish Pony Club this year? 126 responses; some gave several reasons so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Enjoyment/friendship	52	41.3
Achievement/improvement/confidence	38	30.2
Competing	31	25.4
Camp	21	16.7
Other (all positive)	10	7.9

Enjoyment/friendship considered to be the best thing about the IPC by far, with improvement in riding and confidence and achievement of results the next most important, followed by competing and camp. All the other responses were positive.

What was the worst thing about your involvement with the Irish Pony Club this year? 117 responses; some gave several reasons so total % is more than 100%

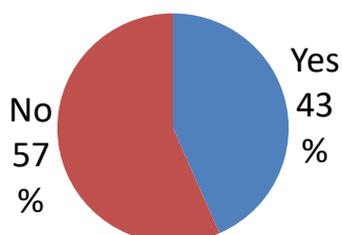
	Count	%
Nothing was bad!	25	21.4
Unable to compete (no suitable competition or pony, injury, clashes)	19	16.2
Branch issues (small Branch, cttee, lack of support, poor communication)	18	15.4
Competition issues (delayed results, poor organisation, lack of volunteers)	15	12.8
Unpleasant parents	10	8.5
Cost	5	4.3
Conflict/dispute	5	4.3
Lack of appropriate training	5	4.3
Rules	4	3.4
Other (including C and B test issues, weather)	9	7.7

Note that more people had *nothing* bad to report than there were people giving any of the types of negative responses.

Not being able to compete due to lack of a suitable competition or pony, injury or clashes of dates was the most important negative reason given. Branch issues included the Branch being small and so not offering much to Members, committee issues, lack of support and poor communication. The main competition issue cited was a delay in results causing the day to be very long for riders and ponies. Unpleasant parents also featured.

Interestingly, cost was not an important reason given for not taking part in IPC activities.

Would it be better to spread the Championship Qualifying competitions and Championships out during the year rather than all of them taking place in the summer holidays? 122 responses



Thus most respondents would prefer the Qualifier and Championship dates to remain as they are. This should be considered when planning the calendar of Competitions in the future.

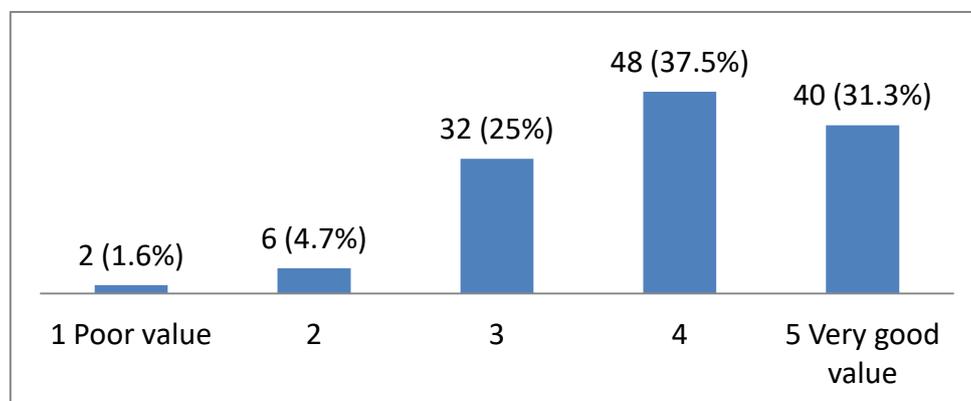
If you answered Yes to the previous question, what Qualifying competition or Championship do you think should be moved, and to what time in the year? 52 responses; some gave several responses so total % is more than 100%.

	Count	%
SJ earlier	18	34.6
and/or SJ later (because can be run indoors all year round)*	9	17.3
D and CT earlier	16	39.8
and/or D and CT later (because can be run indoors all year round)*	5	9.6
HT/Eventing earlier	11	21.2
HT/Eventing later	3	5.8
Tetrathlon earlier	1	1.9
Tetrathlon later	3	5.8
Minimus earlier	3	5.8
Minimus later	1	1.9
Games earlier	4	7.7
Games later	1	1.9
Other (includes avoid clashes with other equestrian activities, more space between Championships, Qualifiers autumn and following spring)	11	21.1

* Some respondents put earlier *or* later; this has been included separately as both earlier *and* later.

Those who wanted a change of date mostly considered that SJ and D and CT could change to earlier or later in the year, because they can be run all year round.

Do you consider what the Irish Pony Club provides to be good value for money (annual membership, rallies, camp, and competition entries)? 128 responses



Thus the majority of the answers report that the Irish Pony Club provides good or very good value for money.

Please give a reason for your answer. 102 responses; some gave several reasons so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Membership good value	29	28.4
Membership expensive (but 'that's ponies')	13	12.8
Depends on how much you do/number of children but 'worth it'	24	23.5
Rallies and training good value	31	30.4
Rallies and training not always good value	7	6.9
Cheaper than eg SJI, Eventing Ireland so good value	9	8.8
Competitions good value	4	3.9
Competitions expensive	5	4.9
Camp good value	4	3.9
Camp expensive	5	4.9
Need more for Under 12s to make it good value	2	2.0

Many respondents were accepting of the costs because they considered it worth the money spent to get the benefit of being Members of the IPC for their children. The Membership fee, Rallies and Training were the main items considered good value. There was some misunderstanding of what the Membership fee pays for (ie mostly insurance).

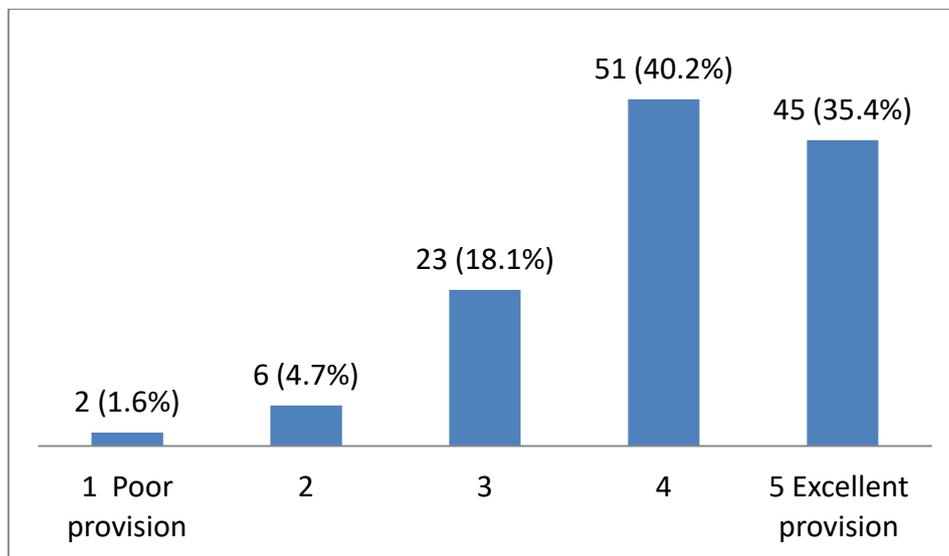
The Irish Pony Club activities are largely organised and run by volunteers; can you suggest a fair way to get more people to help? 99 responses; some gave several suggestions so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Make it a condition of Membership and/or competing to provide help	23	23.2
Rota for parents (online tools and Apps available)	13	13.1
Incentivise volunteers (social event, fee reduction, lottery, team preference for child)	24	24.2
Provide more support for volunteers (training, be more receptive and inclusive, reduce hours of work, ask nicely and thank them)	18	18.1
Widen the net: use older Members, past Members, Riding Club	5	5.1
Other ('don't know', 'always the same people who help', parents too busy and don't realise all is run by volunteers, suggest Branches should have an organiser for each Discipline)	21	21.2

The main suggestions for getting helpers were to make it a condition of Membership or competing (as is done in other organisations eg the AIRC, Dressage Ireland), and offering incentives: these included running a social event for helpers, offering a reduction in fees for Membership or activities, a lottery (as in the AIRC) or giving the volunteer parent's child preferential treatment for team selection.

Another useful suggestion was to providing more support in the form of training, especially for new parents, listening to people's ideas and suggestions, reducing the hours they are asked to help and simply asking them nicely and thanking them. Several respondents made the point that many parents don't realise that the IPC activities are largely run by volunteers, and some might be shy to volunteer for various reasons. Getting parents to sign up for helping at activities on a rota, possibly facilitated by online tools or apps was another popular suggestion.

How do you rate the provision of instruction in riding for its members by the Irish Pony Club? 127 responses; some gave several comments so total % is more than 100%.



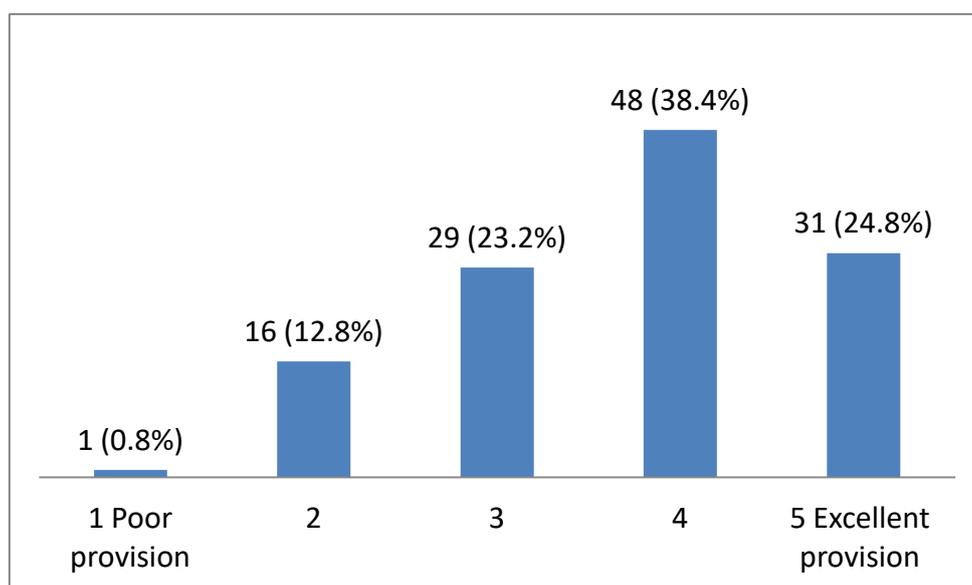
Thus the majority of the answers report that the provision of riding instruction by the IPC is good or very good.

Please give a reason for your answer. 98 responses; some gave more than one reason so total % is more than 100%.

	Count	%
Instruction is appropriate and riders learn a lot*	55	56.1
Instruction is 'hit and miss', not always appropriate to the group	23	23.5
We need more good instructors in the IPC	8	8.2
Some instructors inexperienced	3	3.1
Other (includes get instructors from outside IPC, expensive to get the best instructors, should have less 'going round in endless circles')	8	8.2

* NB some of these responses were from the people organising the instruction and so could be biased. Clearly, the majority of respondents consider the riding instruction to be good most of the time, however where they were dissatisfied, the main reason given was that the instruction was not always appropriate to the level of the group, and what the Member got out of the lesson depended largely on the instructor on the day – the phrase ‘hit and miss’ was used a lot. ‘Other’ included some disparate responses, including that more instruction could be given away from arenas eg on the beach or on treks. The difficulty in getting enough good instructors at an affordable price was also highlighted.

How do you rate the provision of training for its members in care of the horse by the Irish Pony Club? 125 responses; some gave several comments so total % is more than 100%.



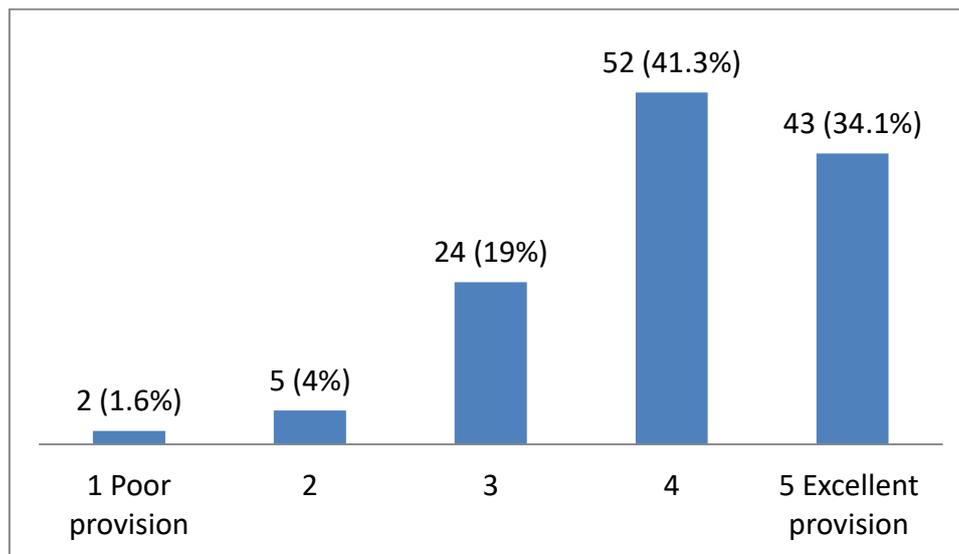
Thus although more than half the answers report the provision of this training to be good or very good, the responses are less positive than for the provision of riding instruction.

Please give a reason for your answer. 87 responses; some gave more than one reason so total % is more than 100%.

	Count	%
More instruction is needed, it is mostly provided at Camp and/or for those taking IPC Tests. Members less keen on this than riding. Some parents also need instruction.	36	41.3
Instruction is sufficient	32	36.8
Instruction is less good than that provided for riding.	4	4.6
More practical and less theory instruction needed	3	3.5
Other (depends on Branch and instructor, suggest visit local horse welfare charities, make IPC Tests equivalent to the Mackey Bar system)	10	11.5

It was acknowledged by many that Members (and parents) need more instruction in care of the horse, but the point was made that there is less enthusiasm for this than for instruction in riding. Most of this type of instruction is limited to those Members planning to take IPC Tests. Some respondents suggested that there could be more practical and less theory, and one thought that Members could be taken to visit local welfare charities.

How do you rate the provision for its members of opportunities to experience different disciplines by the Irish Pony Club? 126 responses.



Thus the majority of answers report that the IPC provides good or very good access to different disciplines.

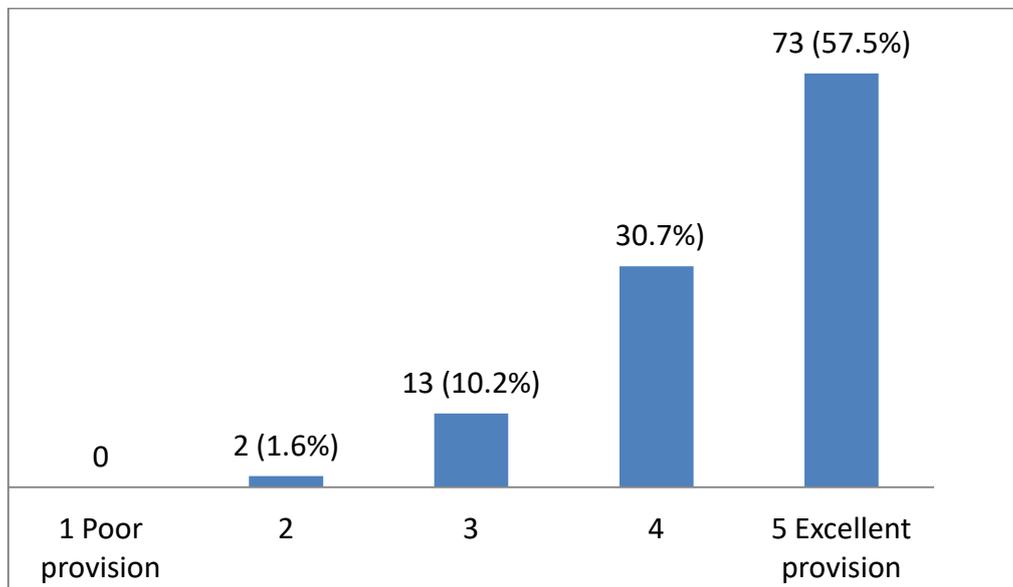
Please give a reason for your answer. 90 responses; some gave more than one reason so total % is more than 100%

	Count	%
Very good opportunities to try different disciplines for those who want it	51	56.6
Depends on the Branch and facilities available	16	17.6
Want more dressage. Suggest offer polocrosse, polo, LeTrek, endurance, showing, vaulting, side-saddle	15	16.5
Do more inter-Branch activities	2	2.2
Do more for less experienced/nervous older riders, and Under12s	3	3.3
Other (Minimus issue, cost)	3	3.3

Thus most think Members can try all the main disciplines if they are motivated to, but they may be limited as to what is on offer in their Area; some suggested that more inter-Branch activities could be run. Several other types of activity were suggested, including polocrosse,

polo, LeTrek, endurance riding, vaulting and side-saddle and a few made the point that there could be more offered to less experienced or nervous older riders, and under 12s.

How do you rate the provision for its members of the chance to experience fun and friendship in a safe environment by the Irish Pony Club? 127 responses



Thus nearly 90% of answers report that members get great fun and friendship from the IPC.

Please give a reason for your answer. 88 responses; some gave more than one reason so total % is more than 100%.

	Count	%
Good fun and great friendships made 'for life' for Members (and parents)	43	48.9
Good environment, good supervision, helpful, welcoming, well run, safe, good non-competitive activities	14	15.9
Dissatisfied, unpleasantness shown, less good for older Members	9	10.2
Camp is best for fun and friendship	8	9.1
Focus on IPC Tests and competitions impacts negatively on fun and friendship	6	6.8
Depends on Branch	5	5.7
Other (includes 'fences too high')	6	6.8

There were very many very positive responses to this question; the majority of both Members and parents said they made 'friends for life' while in the IPC, and it was hugely

beneficial to them. A lot also commented on the welcome they received at IPC activities, and they appreciated that they were well run and safe. Some contrasted the good atmosphere at non-competitive activities with the negative effect of focusing on Tests and competitions, especially where there was competition to get on a team.

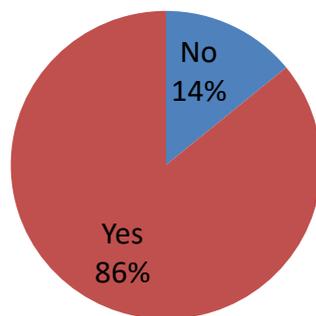
Is there anything you would like to see the Irish Pony Club providing in the future? 92 responses; some gave several suggestions so total % is more than 100%.

	Count	%
Happy with things as they are	8	8.6
Provide more non-competitive activities	13	14.1
Provide more for the less experienced/nervous older Members, including competitions	13	14.1
Provide more inter-Branch activities	7	7.6
Provide more for Under 12s	5	5.4
Provide more unmounted activities for Members and parents (eg First Aid, safety, teamwork/leadership, training for non-horsey parents)	8	8.7
Modernise the IPC to take account of the type of Member and the current times	4	4.3
Less politics and more transparency at the higher levels in the IPC	5	5.4
Minimus and Tetrathlon issues (individual comp, 'maximus', change swim time)	7	7.6
Spread the competitions out geographically and during the year	5	5.4
Better prizes/rosettes at National competitions	3	
Suggestions for changes to existing competitions (SJ age, more team comps)	5	5.4
Suggested new competitions (polocrosse, showing, working hunter, endurance)	6	6.5
Other	15	16.3

Responses to this question were very varied, with a lot of different suggestions for change; however the feedback was generally positive. The main common theme was that people wanted more non-competitive activities, more un-mounted activities (eg First Aid, training in teamwork, leadership and confidence-building). Also, more to be provided for the less experienced/nervous older riders, including competitions (lower fences), and more for under-12s. There were a number of specific issues mentioned to do with existing competitions (Tetrathlon and Minimus, SJ, better prizes and rosettes), and some suggestions for new competitions (polocrosse, showing, working hunter, endurance riding). A few were unhappy with 'politics' and lack of transparency at the higher levels in the IPC. 'Other' included 'find a way to keep the boys, introduce a buddy system for new Members and parents, less rules, more fun, have incoming DCs shadow for a year and it depends on Branch').

It is also notable that some respondents were happy with things the way they are already. These points can be taken into consideration in future planning in the IPC.

Are you happy for us to contact you to follow up on your replies? 128 responses



The vast majority of respondents are happy to be contacted, which suggests they are motivated to help the IPC improve in the future.

Name 129 responses

If yes please provide either an email address or phone number. 98 responses

Summary of key findings:

- Most of the respondents to the questionnaire were parents and Members. However, the response rate represented only 4.2% of the Membership of the IPC (128 of 3008 Members) so the results should be interpreted with caution.
- The most prevalent IPC activities cited were at Branch level, rallies and camp, training and IPC tests, and the main reasons given were enjoyment, training and interest.
- Lack of time and lack of interest/experience were the main reasons given for not taking part in IPC activities.
- Enjoyment/friendship were considered to be the best thing about the IPC by far, with improvement in riding and confidence and achievement of results the next most important, followed by taking part in competitions and camp.
- When asked what was the worst thing about their involvement with the IPC this year, more people had *nothing* bad to report than there were people giving any of the types of negative responses.
- Not being able to compete due to lack of a suitable competition or pony, injury or clashes of dates were the most important negative reasons given.
- Interestingly, cost was not an important reason given for not taking part in IPC activities.
- Over half of the respondents (57%) would prefer that the Area Qualifiers and Championships dates would not be spread out more during the year; this has implications for future planning of these competitions.
- Those who wanted a change of date mostly considered that SJ and D and CT could change to earlier or later in the year, because they can be run all year round.

- When asked whether the IPC provides good value for money, most of the responses were positive, many making the point that ponies are expensive, and the IPC gives great benefits. Rallies and Training were the main activities considered good value.
- The main suggestion for getting helpers was to make it a condition of Membership or competing, and offering incentives. Another useful suggestion was to providing more support in the form of training, especially for new parents. Getting parents to sign up for helping at activities on a rota, possibly facilitated by online tools or apps was another popular suggestion.
- There was general appreciation of the quality of riding instruction provided by the IPC, though it was noted that this can vary. For instruction in care of the horse, the responses were less positive, with some making the point that the children are less keen on this. Parents were also considered to need training in this area.
- Access to various disciplines was considered to be good for those who wanted it, though several suggestions for other disciplines were made.
- When asked whether the IPC provides fun and friendship in a safe environment, the response was overwhelmingly positive. This point should not be neglected in future.
- Suggestions for the future in the IPC included that more non-competitive activities could be provided, and more offered to less experienced or nervous older riders and under-12s, including competitions. Also, more inter-Branch activities. There were several further disciplines that some respondents would like provided.
- Notably, a proportion (8.6%) of the responses stated that were that they were happy with the way things are in the IPC.

In conclusion, the responses to the questionnaire were generally very positive; useful feedback was provided for some aspects of the IPC competitions, and some suggestions made that could be considered in future.

The survey results suggest that the IPC is fulfilling parts of its Mission Statement to *'promote and encourage horsemanship, sportsmanship, citizenship and loyalty in a safe and fun atmosphere, for all its members and volunteers'* very well, particularly in the areas of horsemanship and the safe and fun atmosphere. However, there are areas that could be improved, specifically for volunteers.