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IRISH SPORTS INDUSTRY UNITED IN SUPPORT OF RETURN TO MAJOR EVENTS IN 2020

As sporting events continue to shape up for a return to play, 9 in 10 members of the Irish sports industry group Sport for Business believe that major sports events should proceed behind closed doors or with reduced capacity across the remainder of 2020, according to new research by consultants ONSIDE.

The second wave of the **ONSIDE COVID-19 SPORTS IMPACT MONITOR** survey of Sponsors, Rightsholders, Broadcasters and Agencies found that over half of sports industry stakeholders (53%) agree with major sports events going behind closed doors this year, and a further 35% think sports in Ireland should go ahead in 2020 with reduced capacity in venues.

According to John Trainor, Founder and CEO of ONSIDE: "There may still be a lot to play for in 2020 as 3 in 4 sports industry stakeholders expect to see sports events such as the FAI League of Ireland and Irish International fixtures going ahead later this year, with 2 in 3 anticipating the return of Guinness 6 Nations and PRO14 games in the second half of 2020."

Meanwhile, just 7% of sponsors are currently considering dropping out of current sports sponsorships due to Covid-19 impacts, albeit 1 in 4 sports rights holders fear losing a partner as a result of the pandemic.

Trainor added: "There are several opportunities being rebooted for next generation sports presentation as the Covid-19 grip eases somewhat. Livestreaming is increasingly seen as a leading activation opportunity for 60% of sports industry insiders, up 16% in appeal since April. This is in part being driven by early learnings from overseas, with the Bundesliga and the National Rugby League in Australia returning to action and both excelling in viewership and online engagement. Additionally, the recent launch of a global streaming service by FC Barcelona also shows the growing potential of sports streaming worldwide".

Budget constraints lead the way as the greatest challenge for organisations within the sector (up 4% wave on wave to 82%), while the fastest growing challenge is difficulties managing relationships with their sponsorship partners – which is now an issue for 59% of the sector versus 38% in April.

Rob Hartnett, CEO at Sport for Business, noted: "Encouragingly, sports industry stakeholders are standing behind Women's Sport, seeing it as a major opportunity in the aftermath of the crisis. More than half of all respondents surveyed strongly agree that their organisation would be interested in supporting women's sport and 3 in 4 agree that women's sports have a strong future in the aftermath of Covid-19."

The industry research revealed Musgrave Group and the GAA's 'Club Together' initiative as the stand-out initiative in action over the past 2 months, along with others including sponsors like Aviva, FBD and Boots and rights holders such as the FAI, LGFA and HRI.

Looking past 2020, optimism levels for recovery in the sports industry are encouraging, with 2 in 3 industry practitioners expecting good recovery in sport in Ireland in the next 1-2 years.

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About the 'ONSIDE Covid-19 Sports Impact Monitor'

The ONSIDE Covid-19 Sports Impact Monitor is a survey of members of the Sport for Business community, including Ireland's premier sports sponsors, rights holders and agencies.

The second wave of the ONSIDE Covid-19 Sports Impact Monitor includes valuable inputs from almost 104 sports related organisations, and fieldwork was carried out at from 22nd May to 2nd June 2020.

ONSIDE is a leading specialist in marketing and sponsorship consulting and research services – With a proven track record and strong industry experience in a cross section of sectors, ONSIDE is currently feeding into the marketing and sponsorship decision making of circa €50m+ of Irish spend – working on many of Ireland's premier sponsorships – on sporting, music, cause-related, broadcast and other platforms.

Photo Caption: John Trainor, Founder & CEO, ONSIDE