

CONNEMARA PONY SHOW CLIFDEN

Report to the Annual General Meeting of the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society June 2026

The Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee is pleased to present its report on the 2025 Connemara Pony Show, held at the Clifden Showgrounds from 19th-22nd August 2025.

The 2025 Show marked the first year of operation under the revised arrangements approved by the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society AGM in June 2025, whereby responsibility for the organisation and delivery of the Show was delegated to the Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee under a formal agreement with the Society.

As the first year operating under these revised arrangements, 2025 provided an opportunity not only to deliver a successful event, but also to continue the development and progress of the Show, building on the foundations of decades of successful Shows and the dedicated efforts of Show Committees down through the years.

From the outset, the Committee's objective was to deliver a world-class showcase for the Connemara Pony while continuing to develop Clifden as a festival celebrating the breed, its breeders, owners, riders, supporters and the wider community.

Delivery of the 2025 Show

A significant amount of work was undertaken in advance of the 2025 Show to address important operational and governance matters. These included securing appropriate insurance arrangements, formalising the operating agreement between the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society and the Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee, and ensuring that any concerns raised regarding the sand arena within the Showgrounds were fully reviewed and addressed.

The Committee engaged with a leading arena construction and surface specialist to review the arena and advise on the most appropriate steps. Following this process, the necessary works and interventions were completed, the arena performed very well throughout the Show, and confirmation was received from the National Parks and Wildlife Service that there were no outstanding concerns regarding the arena. The work undertaken represented a positive investment in the Showgrounds and now provides an ongoing benefit to the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society, exhibitors, riders and future users of the facility.

Significant effort was also invested in enhancing the appearance and presentation of the Showgrounds. The Committee wishes to acknowledge the many volunteers and supporters whose efforts ensured that the grounds were presented to an exceptionally high standard throughout the week.

Entries and Participation

The 2025 Show attracted approximately 700 entries across in-hand, ridden, loose jumping

and performance classes. Entries came from all four provinces of Ireland, as well as from the United Kingdom, reflecting the national and international standing of the Show and the continued importance of Clifden as the premier showcase for the Connemara Pony. 1

Qualifying competitions for the Loose Jumping Championships, Green Hunter Championships and High Performance Championships were held nationwide in advance of the Show. These qualifiers were very well supported and generated significant interest, helping to strengthen participation levels and reinforce the national importance of the event.

The quality of ponies exhibited throughout the week was of an exceptionally high standard and reflected the continued commitment of breeders, owners and riders to the preservation and development of the Connemara Pony.

Sponsorship, Advertising and Financial Position

One of the Committee's priorities in 2025 was to engage and re-engage businesses, sponsors, advertisers and supporters, whether by encouraging previous sponsors to become involved again, supporting existing sponsors to continue their involvement, or attracting new sponsors and advertisers to the Show.

The 2025 Show benefited from the support of approximately 60 sponsors and supporters together with dozens of advertisers. This broad base of support was instrumental in enhancing the Show, increasing prize funds, supporting new initiatives and strengthening the long-term sustainability of the event. There was also a particular focus on creating greater balance in prize funds across both in-hand and ridden sections.

Particular acknowledgement is due to Horse Sport Ireland, the Irish Shows Association, Galway County Council, Sweeney Oil, Carey Construction Ltd. and Fáilte Ireland, together with the many businesses and individuals who provided sponsorship, advertising and support throughout the year.

The Committee also wishes to express its sincere gratitude to Connemara Chamber for the provision of office space and ongoing support throughout the year, which was greatly appreciated and contributed significantly to the successful organisation of the Show.

The Connemara Pony Show Clifden entity is a not-for-profit organisation, with the Committee itself made up entirely of volunteers. The 2025 Show required significant investment by the Committee, including resourcing the Show Secretary role and other personnel, meeting insurance costs, legal costs associated with the establishment of the company, investments in the Showgrounds and sand arena, and supporting additional elements such as the marquee, hospitality, entertainment and town-centre activities.

Despite significant establishment-year costs and additional investments, the 2025 Show delivered a surplus of approximately €10,000. This was a positive outcome in the first year of operation under the revised arrangements and reflected the strong support received from

sponsors, advertisers, exhibitors, volunteers and the wider community. As a not-for-profit organisation, this surplus will be reinvested in supporting the continued development of the Show in 2026 and beyond.

Festival, Promotion and International Reach

A major focus of the 2025 Show was expanding the event beyond the competition rings and strengthening engagement with Clifden town and the wider Connemara community.

The official launch of the Show took place several weeks in advance on Clifden Town Square and proved to be a tremendous success, generating significant publicity and 2 anticipation ahead of the event. During Show week, shopfront displays, town-wide participation, evening entertainment and a range of social activities helped create a genuine festival atmosphere and strengthened the connection between the Show and the local community.

The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the many local businesses, organisations and community groups who, in addition to providing support, fully embraced the spirit of Show Week and contributed significantly to the atmosphere and success of the event throughout Clifden and the wider Connemara area.

Visitors travelled from across Ireland and around the globe, including Scandinavia, mainland Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, Eastern Europe and Australia. This international attendance added greatly to the atmosphere in the town and reinforced the global reach and significance of the Connemara Pony.

Among the most successful additions introduced in 2025 was the large marquee situated adjacent to the main show rings. The marquee provided shelter, dining facilities, refreshments and a comfortable social space for exhibitors and visitors throughout the week. It also served as an important focal point for gatherings and networking. Feedback regarding the marquee was overwhelmingly positive, and it is anticipated that it will remain an important feature of future Shows.

The official Show Opening, held within the marquee following the Loose Jumping Championships on Tuesday evening, was another notable success. It provided breeders, exhibitors, sponsors, international visitors and supporters with an opportunity to meet and engage at the beginning of Show week.

The Parade of Champions once again provided one of the highlights of Show week and showcased the very best examples of the breed before a large audience. The parade generated exceptional interest across social media platforms, with related content viewed by almost a quarter of a million people worldwide.

The Committee's digital platforms continued to demonstrate very strong reach and engagement. Long-term analytics show more than 3.5 million total views across the Show's

digital channels, highlighting the value of the Show's online presence in promoting the Connemara Pony nationally and internationally.

The 2025 Show also attracted significant media attention across national newspapers, digital platforms, equestrian media and national broadcasters. A particular focus of the Committee's marketing approach was to tell the stories behind the ponies, breeders, owners and competitors, helping to bring the Show to a wider audience and further showcase the Connemara Pony on a global stage.

Feedback, Governance and Cooperation

Following the conclusion of the Show, the Committee undertook what is believed to be the first comprehensive public feedback survey associated with the event. The overall response was extremely positive, with strong support expressed for the direction of travel, the enhanced presentation of the Showgrounds, the increased engagement with Clifden town and the wider community, and a number of the new initiatives introduced during 2025.

The survey also generated a range of constructive recommendations which have since been reviewed by the Committee and are helping to inform planning for future Shows.

The Committee remains committed to ensuring that the Show is organised and delivered in a fair, transparent and professional manner. One significant development for 2026 was the appointment of an independent Judge Selection Committee.

The Committee developed and implemented a formal methodology for the selection of judges and oversaw a process designed to be fair, transparent and independent. The draw process was broadcast live across social media platforms and viewed by tens of thousands of people, providing an unprecedented level of visibility and transparency to the selection process.

Over recent weeks and months, a number of positive meetings and engagements have taken place between the Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee and representatives from the Council of the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society. The Committee acknowledges this constructive engagement and looks forward to continued cooperation and collaboration in delivering another high-quality event in 2026.

The Committee also wishes to place on record its sincere appreciation to the staff of the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society office for their professionalism, assistance and support throughout the year.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Planning for the 2026 Show is well underway. The Committee notes that the 2025 Show Committee was chaired by Mary Coyne and that John Sweeney is Chairperson for 2026.

The Committee has recruited a Show Secretary and, for 2026, has also introduced a new

Events Manager role. This new role is intended to support the continued development of the Show and assist with planning, coordination and delivery.

A number of other improvements are currently being explored and implemented, including enhanced use of technology to improve the communication of scoring and results during performance classes, further strengthening volunteer resources to support the increasingly busy Thursday and Friday performance programmes, continued development of visitor facilities and ongoing engagement with exhibitors, sponsors, the Society and the wider community.

Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to acknowledge and thank FORUM Connemara & the many volunteers whose contributions made the event possible.

The Committee also extends its sincere appreciation to the judges and ring stewards whose professionalism, expertise and commitment contributed greatly to the smooth running and success of the 2025 Show.

Finally, the Committee extends its congratulations not only to the overall champions, reserve champions and class winners, but to every individual who participated in the 2025 Connemara Pony Show. Whether competing in in-hand, ridden, performance or loose jumping classes, participating in domestic arts, novelty competitions, the dog show, best dressed competitions or any of the many other activities that formed part of the programme, every participant contributed to the atmosphere, success and enjoyment of the event.

The Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee looks forward to welcoming exhibitors, visitors and supporters back to Clifden in August 2026 and to continuing the development of what remains the flagship event of the Connemara Pony calendar.

Submitted on behalf of the Connemara Pony Show Clifden Committee;

John Sweeney (Chair)

Mary Coyne

Karen Mannion

Terence O'Toole

Eileen Mannion

Gerry King

June 2026