First steps

- In 2019 the second Grooms’ Working Group meeting held and I was invited to join.

- Following this meeting, I felt it was important to gather some wider thoughts from the international grooms’ community.

- The British Grooms Association and Show Grooms International teamed up to produce a survey.

It was shared worldwide and completed by 780 respondents.
The three disciplines most represented were:

- Show jumping (51%)
- Eventing (29%)
- Dressage (12%)

There were also contributions from grooms in driving, endurance, para dressage and vaulting.
Level of competition

Over half of respondents (54%) had groomed at 5* level.

These were experienced grooms that were responding.
Are their voices heard?

Participants were asked if they felt that they currently had a mechanism to have their voice heard.

79% felt that they did not.

A majority of international competition grooms feel unheard, despite being at the top of their sport.
Is there a need for an independent representative organisation?

An overwhelming majority (90%) said that there was a need, and it should exist and be formally recognised by the FEI.
79% of grooms, when asked, said that they would be willing to pay circa:

- 26 euros
- 28 USD
- £22.50
to belong to this organisation.
The formation of the IGA will give international grooms a formal voice.

A relationship with the FEI

Ensuring that it meets the governance requirements, the IGA will sign a Stakeholder MOU and join the FEI recognised organisations.

Grooms will then have a formally recognised voice internationally.
The discussions regarding the need of improvement for international grooms will be taken from the tack trunks and stable corridors....

to become a collaborative and constructive opinion via the grooms’ own professional organisation.
The IGA Vision

Striving to achieve representation with a collaborative voice, a greater career recognition, status and working environment for all grooms within the international equestrian competition community.

The IGA Mission

To represent, promote, support and educate the career and professionalism of international competition grooms.
As former British Team groom I understand grooms and I have done this before.

The BGA is the world’s only professional grooms association and over the past 15 years 8000 grooms have been members.

To date no other nation has a similar body.

The BGA has 15 years of experience and a tried and tested membership model and website on which the IGA can capitalise.
The IGA will be a professional association and not a trade union.

It will be independent, with its own company formation.

It will be a not-for-profit social enterprise, primarily focused on making the grooms world a better place.
Membership for all

- **All** grooms are welcome to join.
- No joining criteria requirements.
- Worldwide organisation.
- Affordable annual membership fee.
- A place for international grooms to be understood and to belong to.
The IGA will have democratic structure where the membership have the right to be involved in decision making, have the right to vote and the ability to apply to join the Board if they so wish.

All Board positions are voluntary with expenses paid.

The IGA Board is to be a hybrid of:
- Skill based positions - recruited into post.
- Experienced representative positions – elected into post by the IGA membership.
IGA Reps

For each sport there will be between four to six Reps recruited.

There are to be role descriptions and terms of office created so the individuals are aware of the remit and responsibilities.

The Reps must be working grooms or recently retired, but still active on the international scene.

Diversity, a range of experience and nationality will be considered when selecting Reps and there will be a transparent and fair recruitment process.
Pay it forward

Going to your first international show can be a daunting experience.

By providing a mentor scheme we can create a new environment which welcomes grooms who are new onto the circuit and give them support.

One of the roles of the Rep will be to identify the inexperienced groom, and make an extra effort to be a support and point of contact for them.

Some international grooms already do this, but it will become more formalised once the IGA is launched.
IGA Structure

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FINANCE DIRECTOR
COMMS. DIRECTOR
INTERNATIONAL/EXPERIENCE DIRECTORS (3 to 4)

IGA ADMINISTRATOR

JUMPING REPS.
DRESSAGE & PARA DRESSAGE REPS.
EVENTING REPS.
DRIVING REPS.
ENDURANCE REPS.
The website

IGA members will have a website which will be built on a platform that enables full membership recruitment and retention functionality.

Modelled on the BGA site, it will have an easy to navigate menu system and focus 100% on what international grooms need and want to better their careers and well-being.

Built by former grooms, for current grooms.
International groom centric

- **Career support** - inspiration on how to become an international groom, how to find a job and a CV Creator tool.

- **Freelancer’s toolkit** – templates, client agreements and marketing tips.

- **Member services** – employment support, helping members to understand the importance of good employment.

- **International Grooms Minds** – mental wellbeing portal – no groom should ever feel alone.

- **Education** – Anti-doping, general stable management and linking with the FEI on their Campus Education and providing unique learning opportunities for the international grooms.
Professionalism

- The survey highlighted the importance of professionalism.

- The IGA will support and promote professional conduct and development, which will include the consideration of personal and travel insurance, pensions and employment contracts.

- The IGA offers the pathway to communicate these important messages in self-improvement and protecting one’s livelihood.
Currently there is no formal pathway for grooms to feedback their experiences – again their voice is not being heard.

This member only access tool will:

Give the experienced grooms the chance to share their venue knowledge, and the less experienced, invaluable logistics insight into the competitions that they are attending.
Similar to an initiative in the horse racing industry in the UK, the directory will have a monitored star voting system.

IGA members will be able to rate shows by their facilities/provision for grooms.

This will inspire organising committees and show organisers to improve and become known as a great show to work at.
The IGA is possible.

It benefits all.

The grooms, the athletes, the sports and most of all the horses in their care – happy grooms equal happy horses!

The IGA will become the voice of the international grooms.

The organisation will provide an opportunity to directly educate and inform those that can be difficult to otherwise reach.

It will be governed legally and professionally and provide a community, support and guidance for the superheroes who care for our horses from early in the morning until late at night.