



**MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL HUNT COMMITTEE
VIA CONFERENCE
ON WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE 2020**

Present: Mr S Mullins (Chairman)
Mr H Daly
Mrs D Grissell
Ms E Lavelle
Mr C Longsdon
Mr J Moffatt
Mr M Sheppard
Miss S Smith
Mr J Snowden

In Attendance: Mr R Arnold
Mr G Noad

Apologies: Mr N Alexander and Mrs T Hill

ITEM 1 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

The Committee acknowledged that the padded hurdle was now an official option in the BHAGI's but suggested it should be rolled out across more racecourses.

ITEM 2 – Resumption of Racing

Chase Races

Following the publication of the early index the number of chase races reduced to 2 per fixture at calendar stage. This was based on the rate of rider falls and the length of stay in hospital. S Mullins highlighted that the statistics did not support this. Furthermore it highlighted the lack of communication between the Race Planning Department and the Medical team. The Committee also noted that restrictions placed on flat racing during resumption have taken 3 weeks to be lifted.

Race Programme

The Committee felt there were a good selection of races but J Snowden suggested there may be some gaps for horses rated 108. C Longsdon agreed and suggested some of the 0-120 races could be converted to 0-110 and 0-115. H Daly highlighted that the programme has been built on the feedback provided by trainers therefore there were probably not enough horses in that bracket. E Lavelle asked if there was an option to add in more fixtures. It was noted that the additional fixtures

were only added in to fill the gap when there was no Irish racing scheduled and at an additional cost to the Levy. S Mullins informed the Committee that the 8 race cards programmed would allow 1 division except at Cartmel.

Ground and Going

E Lavelle informed the Committee that following the preparation of the ground for the resumption of flat racing trainers are walking the courses for the resumption of jump racing. This has had the desired effect because ground staff are getting unfurloughed and maintenance work is being carried out.

Owners Attending BCD

R Arnold highlighted informed the Committee the RCA and ROA are working on getting owners back on to the racecourse during the behind closed doors protocol. This is a top priority for the RCA and there should be an announcement next week.

Item 3 - Fixtures and Funding

The Committee was shown a proposal whereby 53 existing fixtures would be moved. This would see a transition of afternoon and evening fixtures from midweek to the latter part of the week. The model suggested this would see an increased benefit of £1.6m and increase staff retention by 6%. The Committee felt more detail was required on the specific fixture moves as there was no indication as to Jump, Flat turf or AW. Furthermore placed into the context of COVID 19 the revenues may not be as predicted. R Arnold highlighted that the detail suggested the majority of the revenue would go to the racecourses. The Committee suggested that similar moves have been made before and the transition of fixtures towards the weekend should be avoided. It was concluded that the shift in fixtures was a significant amount of change for minimal benefit.

The fixtures and funding group is also looking into increasing the fixture list by 20 in 2021. This would be adding in the 20 fixtures lost for 2020. However now some racecourses have moved onto a turnover model for their media rights rather than per fixture basis there could be an opportunity to expand the number of races on a card rather than the fixture list. The Committee agreed to the principle ground and start time dependant.

The Committee concluded more detail was needed on the creation of a three day festival.

Item 4 - Cheltenham Festival 2020

Race to be removed

E Lavelle reported the Jump Pattern Committee supported the removal of the Kim Muir to make way for the mares chase at the Festival. The Kim Muir could then be moved to Sandown where it would fit well into the programme for amateur races. The Committee debated the merits of removing the Kim Muir, the Fred Winter, the Listed Novice Handicap Chase and the Martin Pipe.

Conclusion. There was no great support for the idea of removing a race from the Festival. However if a race had to be removed there was more of a case for the Kim Muir with the Fred Winter being the secondary choice.

Wash Up

The Committee felt the Festival 2020 went well with the Medication Declarations and the trot up procedures becoming more familiar.

Item 5 – Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

Vaccination App

H Daly expressed concerns the Vaccination App will be extended to cover all medication. This was referenced by Weatherbys in their communications. R Arnold reported that the medication book would still remain an option, but the Committee felt that commitment should be made in writing.

Racing Calendar

J Snowden asked when the racing calendar would be brought back into production. The calendar would remain as a PDF during the emergency fixture list. The paper calendar would not be removed without consultation.

Horsemen's Group Letter

There was no update following the letter the Horsemen's Group sent to the RCA Board

The Committee proposed having another meeting after the resumption of jump racing.

Non Standard Race Times

A proposal has been put forward to set races off at non standard times (not on a 5 or 0). The committees agreed the proposal. It was noted that all ITV races will have traditional times and all fixtures would start at traditional times. The Committee suggested more needed to be done to coordinate with Irish Racing.

Flat Racing Break

R Arnold asked how the flat break in November worked this year. H Palmer highlighted how it proved difficult due to the demand for all weather fixtures because of the heavy ground in October. H Daly highlighted how the jumps break took time to settle and suggested the Flat break will also need time to find the correct position. The Committee felt the later the break could be the better for the programme.

Minimum Values

This is a continuation of the discussion earlier in 2019 regarding a fall in executive contribution following the closure of betting shops. The choices facing horsemen are:

- reduction in minimum values
- reduction in the Appearance Money Scheme
- downgrading the programme

J Boyle felt the AMS scheme should remain in place due to the positive effect it has had for small owners. N Alexander suggested that any agreement reached over a reduction in total race values should only be agreed when there is transparency over media rights. R Arnold said that this will be included in prizemoney agreements.

The committee concluded that the NTF should be committed to keeping AMS and genuine transparency over the media rights deals.

Item 3 – Racecourse Matters

Non Runners on Going

R Arnold informed the Committee that a letter would be going out to trainers regarding the new rules on non runners. H Daly reiterated that 48 hour declarations has lead to more non runners and the harder they make it to have non runners then there will be fewer declarations.

R Arnold informed the committee of proposals put forward by other members of the going group, including having a trainer representative walk the course and only being able to withdraw on going when it has altered by a full point. E Johnson Houghton felt trainers do not always need to walk the course to asses the going. R Arnold felt it would be beneficial to have an additional trainer representative on the Going Group. R Carr suggested Steve Brown. N Alexander proposed that the NTF should be advocating going updates every day at 8:30. Furthermore the going stick should maintain its mandatory status.

Stables and Biosecurity

R Arnold reported that A Duffield joined the RCA Technical Group by conference call. The RCA proposed Trainers/Stable Staff to notify racecourses when they are bringing feed into the stables. A Duffield declined as staff would not do this and if the rule was brought then all staff would just say they have fed as a matter of practice.

A Duffield suggested that racecourses should put rubber flooring down and minimal bedding. The Racecourses provided the example of Leicester who spend £6k a year on bedding and putting down rubber flooring would cost £70k. Therefore it would be an 12 year payback on the investment. R Arnold asked if there was a better short term solution. The Committee concluded that the onus should be on the racecourses to find out if the horse has been fed and there should be a box to tick on the signing in sheet in the stable managers office.

Equine Vision

R Arnold reported that the trial of florescent paint on fences was not rolled out across Point to Point tracks and some members of the sport have suggested that as the research is there to roll it out for 2020/21 season. N Alexander suggested that the sport had other priorities. E Lavelle highlighted that it was a positive news story not just in the sports pages and it was worth exploring. The Committee concluded that more research was required, specifically if Hexham had a lower than average faller rate.

Padded Hurdles

The Committee agreed that the majority of trainers supported racecourses using padded hurdles. It was noted that the trial of the hurdle had ended and they were now an official option in the BHAGI. However it was suggested that the wider membership should be consulted before they are rolled

out to all racecourses as some trainers have expressed concerns over injuries to the front of the cannon bone.

Item 4 - Race Planning

Merge of Auction and Median Auction

R Arnold informed the Committee that most of the feedback from the Regional Meetings had been positive towards merging auction and median auction races. Following this the Racing Group approved the proposal however the Group asked for a direction from the NTF if this should be introduced in 2020 or 2021. J Boyle and R Ingram felt the proposal should be introduced in 2020. However E Johnson Houghton a H Palmer had reservation around the proposal and suggested it should be delayed until 2021 to allow buyers to modify their purchases. R Arnold concluded that a vote should be taken among the full NTF Flat Committee to decide the position.

Optional Claiming Handicaps

R Arnold highlighted that despite poor field sizes Optional Claiming Handicaps would be maintained for 2020.

Jump Race Classification

R Arnold reported that following positive feedback from the Regional Meetings the reclassification of 0-105 to C15 has been approved by the Racing Group. This will be introduced for Programme Book 2.

All Weather

H Palmer suggested an all weather programme book should be published. E Johnson Houghton expressed how the all weather programme was not meeting the demand of the horse population because horses were getting balloted out multiple times.

UPDATE: The Fixtures and Funding Group have approved a new divided race fund and every all weather racecourses has agreed so divisions will start again in 2020.

The next meeting will be in April 2020