

**MINUTES OF THE NTF JUMP FORUM  
ON 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020  
VIA ZOOM**

<b>Present</b>	Emma Lavell (Chairman)	Jim Moffatt
	Nick Alexander	Amy Murphy
	Mark Campion	Richard Phillips
	Susan Corbett	Katy Price
	Victor Dartnall	Matt Sheppard
	Harriet Graham	Susy Smith
	Di Grissell	Jamie Snowden
	Karen Jewell	Max Young
	Rebecca Menzies	
<b>In Attendance</b>	Rupert Arnold	Paul Johnson (BHA Racing Department)
	George Noad	Nick Dartnall (BHA Racing Department)

**ITEM 1 Race Planning**

EL welcomed everyone to the Jump Forum and asked for any feedback about the meeting after the meeting. EL thanked PJ and ND for attending. PJ outlined the objective of the Race Planning Department is to be more available but difficult because we have not been on a racecourse since Cheltenham.

**Novice Chase Rule**

VD proposed a change to the Novice Chase rule where you can run in a handicap chase off of your hurdle mark without first running in a Novice Chase.

ND highlighted that the sport moved away from the system because some novices were getting into handicap chases off a very lenient mark making some races uncompetitive. Furthermore the potential consequences could see an increase of unexposed horses running in handicap chases. However the forum felt horses making their full handicap debut perform to expectation regardless of the number of runs. Although it would inevitably lead to an increase. PJ and ND the data would suggest no significant impact.

The Forum discussed any potential welfare implications. Novices only have a slightly worse completion record shown through the jump racing risk model. However this is predominantly down to experience not the race they are running in.

ND highlighted that the number of WFA Novice Chases would drop and would be virtually impossible to do regionally.

EL suggested this was how it used to be and the current programme was introduced to increase runners in Novice Chases. The forum felt it had not made an impact on field sizes.

VD felt the current novice system was only competitive for maybe 4 runners and the rest were just getting the run to get a rating ready to go handicapping. Furthermore just finding the races was difficult.

MS - Trainers are more encouraged to run in handicaps due to the change in handicapping  
SS - Novice chases will never be big field because people do not want to compete on level weights.  
NA – Try and keep 0-130 novice handicap as it will serve a purpose as they may struggle in handicap company but for 120 and below not a problem going handicapping.

The forum supported this.

JS – horses with a rating below 120 should be allowed in handicap. However more variety is needed for a 0-130 or 0-135.

EL - Have to be sure there is opportunity for high rated hurdlers therefore needs to be a balance.

ND highlighted that due to class 2 rule there will still be some WFA and open handicaps. Additionally the reason for not having 125s is because the Race Planning Department have such a limited number of chases they need to ensure horses can get a run

JS – suggested some more conditions novice chase to try and be a bit more imaginative in the race programme.

ND – highlighted that these races are not supported. And therefore very difficult to sell to the racecourses especially during these times.

JS asked why the racecourses do not put these races on? The programme should more imaginative.

PJ highlighted that under the members agreement the racecourses own the race programme. So race planning have to make a very good case for it because they all racecourses are looking at field sizes as the key metric therefore we need to come up with a strong proposal.

#### Conclusion

Horses would no longer have to run in a Novices' Steeple Chase of some description before being eligible to run in an Open Handicap Chase of Class 3 and below.

PJ asked if this could be taken to the Racing Group without a consensus from all trainers. RA and the forum suggested they had opportunity to attend

Next step put together a paper for the racing group.

#### **Changing to the Bumper Elimination Categories**

The Racing Planning Department outlined a proposal to change the race titles and elimination sequence in bumpers. The titles would be changed from Standard, Intermediate and Maiden to Category 1, 2 & 3

The forum supported the changes.

#### **Conversion of Mares Hurdles**

Race Planning highlighted that in mares novices races the winners are becoming overly successful in future races. So the proposal would be to convert some of them into Maiden races to counteract the overperformance of winners in future novice races while remaining competitive.

JS suggested the novice condition could be altered so they can only win two.

NA suggested a compromise could be winner of one can carry a penalty.

Action the forum supported the winner of one carrying a penalty.

#### **Use of the Race Forum**

PJ thanked trainers for using the forum as it has been very helpful to get feedback. PJ conveyed the forum is not just for those who shout loudest and the more that engage get the better it will be.

AM – Mares Bumpers, seems to be quite a demand.

Additional Fixture and Bangor before Christmas so could look at doing something there.

### **Programme Book Schedule**

Race planning highlighted the difficulties of approaching the end of the year without Programme Book 1. This is impacted by the publication of the fixture list. The aim is to publish PB1 on 14<sup>th</sup> December online. Therefore hard copies maybe end of the year. The Forum supported the early index on the NTF Website..

### **Fixture List**

For 2021 the aim is to have a similar number of fixtures being more betting friendly rather than crowd. Therefore they should be more spread out and slightly better for horsemen.

EL expressed frustration by participants on the allocation of additional fixtures.

PJ explained the difficulties because there are more horses in training at this time of year than in previous years. However there is only so much money to fund the fixtures we have got. Racecourses want to put on the fixtures but has to be centrally funded.

The forum suggested there seemed to be a disparity between AW and jump. RA highlighted that the agreement was across the 3 groups and the NTF was not comfortable with that process.

Furthermore it has been very difficult to find gaps where jump fixtures can be just added in due to constraints on the turf.

### **Open Forum**

Starting Jump Horses Earlier – A proposal similar to the French model of starting earlier. NH Hurdle for 3yo going to 4yo. The forum felt trainers would not have horses mature enough in time like the French to be able to do this. However there is an increasing pressure from owners to run store horses to run early. JS felt the proposal had some merit and it would get support because there are some point to point races for 4yo.

PJ thanked EI for attending the meeting and any further suggestions would be welcome.

### **ITEM 2 – COVID-19**

**Business** – The NTF is working on a protocol for trainers who have got a large number of staff who are off due to COVID to allow the yard to keep going. Therefore if trainers are in this situation please let us know.

**Racing Behind Closed Doors** – The forum highlighted one of the biggest problems was the restriction of owners. RA – reported there have been a few examples of owners turning up to the races without being on the list. Racecourse and BHA are being very strict with regards to entry. Trainers to do everything they can to make sure owners have done everything to attend.

**Return of Crowds** – RA reported the return of crowds is becoming a very complex situation. Racing is lobbying DCMS for more opportunities for pilot events.

JS asked for more flexibility for which zone a trainer can attend as currently an owner has to book a trainer as a guest to be able to enter the amber zone.

**ACTION** – NTF to look into this. All comes down to individual behaviour rather than protocols.

**Racehorse Relief Fund** – Fund supported by the racing foundation. Pays a basic daily rate for trainers to look after the horse if an owner abandons the horse. The Fund basically takes ownership of the horse.

### **ITEM 3 - Commercial Agreements with Racecourses and Levy Reform**

One of the biggest strategic issues for the sport. Charlie Parker and RA are in discussions with ARC regarding Revenue Sharing. The current discussions would deliver a bigger contribution of revenue but there are obligations horsemen and BHA would have to deliver on. There have also been three meetings of the Levy Reform Steering Group, Charlie Parker and Philip Freedman are horsemen representatives and Government are looking at some short term solutions. But need bookmakers to be engaged to help progress discussions.

### **ITEM 4 - Prizemoney Distribution.**

Following the survey whereby 60% of respondents were in favour of the proposals the NTF Council decided to support the changes despite the poor response rate. There has been no other feedback from other horsemen.

The Forum suggested the reintroduction of additional appearance money on Sundays should be reintroduced.

### **ITEM 5 - Brexit**

The advice from BHA is to not to aim to move horses during the first two weeks of January. If trainers do need to it is best to use a transporter. RA outlined that the discussions with DEFRA suggest the movement of horses is going to take time to resolve. Furthermore EU Nationals need to apply for the settlement scheme

### **ITEM 6 - National Racehorse Day**

RA reported on the progress being made to develop the National Racehorse Day with some funds being granted by the Racing Foundation. The Horse Welfare Board liked the concept and it could be built into the welfare strategy. The idea is similar to Open Farm Sunday whereby trainers can invite people into the yard and showcase how well racecourses are looked after in training and create some positive message for welfare and racings image.

The forum agreed with the principle but needs to be done well and perhaps in conjunction with the return of crowds to the racecourse.

### **ITEM 7 – Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting**

Wind Operations – The forum asked which wind operations are more successful than others following the recording of surgeries. RA reported nothing has been circulated publicly. However with James Given taking over as Director of Equine Health and Welfare this data could be more widely available.