



Record of a meeting between the NTF Council and senior BHA representatives.

On Tuesday 9th April 2019

At the Institute of Directors, London

NTF Council members present:

Ann Duffield (President), Nick Alexander, Ralph Beckett, Jim Boyle, Ruth Carr, Henry Daly, John Gosden, Rae Guest, Diana Grissell, Lawney Hill, Eve Johnson Houghton, Emma Lavelle, Seamus Mullins, Hugo Palmer, Matt Sheppard, Susie Smith, Jamie Snowden, Roger Ingram, Roger Varian.

BHA representatives:

Atholl Duncan, Chairman; Nick Rust, Chief Executive; Brant Dunshea, Chief Regulatory Officer.

The meeting had been arranged in the light of trainers' dissatisfaction with some BHA decisions and a lack of confidence, being expressed in the public domain, in the regulation of the sport.

Prior to the meeting, the NTF and BHA prepared a framework to guide this discussion. In summary, the framework consisted of:

- The need for a mutual understanding, in a genuinely two-way discussion
- All parties want to improve the situation
- All parties should be willing to listen and to understand the other's perspective
- Tone of any discussions should always be constructive and respectful
- What are the specific areas on which the BHA/NTF/trainers need to work more closely together?
- BHA/NTF consultation & engagement (i.e. the NTF's formal role in BHA governance & decision-making)
- NTF/trainer consultation on BHA-related matters (i.e. how the NTF gets input from trainers on BHA policies/decisions)
- BHA/trainer consultation & engagement (i.e. the BHA's direct, day-to-day relationship with trainers)

The first subject for discussion was the BHA's approach to equine welfare.

Nick Rust (NR) provided some evidence of the trends in public opinion and said racing's challenge was not the Animal Rights organisations but the way in which the general population might influence politicians' attitudes.

Council members questioned the effectiveness of the BHA's political lobbying. NR agreed to send evidence of BHA engagement with Ministers and MPs. The Ministers for Sport and Immigration had both been guests of the BHA at the Grand National the previous weekend.

Council members said they were unhappy with some ill-considered statements from the BHA in response to external pressures after incidents on the racecourse. NR accepted that on occasions the BHA had made some unhelpful press statements but that they always have the best interests of British Racing and horse welfare in mind.

John Gosden (JG) stated that British racing was a world leader and that the BHA had failed to make the positive case for racing. NR said that the BHA does stand up for racing and he would provide examples of what has been written in favourable terms in the media. He asked for trainers help and Council members welcomed the opportunity to support the BHA's political lobbying activity.

New Stewarding system

Council members suggested that the new Stewarding system was responsible for wrong decisions that had affected the reputation of the BHA. Brant Dunshea (BD) explained specific incidents and showed that the Stewarding model was not to blame. He accepted that the new system was still in transition and Stewards were adjusting to changed roles. BD explained the way new Stewards would be recruited and trained so there was an effective succession plan. NR agreed that sometimes common sense had not been used, partly because it was easiest for Stewards to resort to the letter of the rule when in doubt.

Consultation

JG raised concerns about the disassociation between the practitioners and the regulator. Atholl Duncan (AD) noted three themes from the current meeting – communication and consultation; the tone of BHA regulation (the BHA should not behave as if they were the police); and performance. He said racing is not in crisis but the BHA and trainers should work together to improve the reputation of the sport.

BD said he was keen to spend more time with trainers on the racecourse and at their yard. He was a horseman himself and had trained in Australia so he understood the environment and pressures that trainers face.

Council members asked about the restructure of the BHA Board. AD said that it would be important for conflicts to be managed.

NR expressed the desire for a closer alliance with the NTF – trainers need to protect their future. Fixture policy and revenue generation would be key factors. In response to JG's question about levy development, AD explained the discussions with the Secretary of State and Minister at DCMS. Rather than reacting to the effect of FOBT regulation, the Government would look more favourably at an argument for a level playing field in relation to a levy on bets placed on global racing. It may take up to a year to have this in place.

Equine flu and vaccination policy

Rupert Arnold (RA) raised the ongoing discussion about reviewing the requirement for vaccination within 6 months prior to raceday. In response to NR, he said the NTF had put some proposals to David Sykes but a decision was being delayed. NR agreed that a policy based on a strict scientific line

was not necessarily appropriate and regulation could be based on a pragmatic approach. A meeting would be arranged for trainers to have some input.

Turf management

Council members were unhappy at the lack of investment in turf management at some racecourses where the ground was in a terrible condition. Specific examples were given and the BHA would refer these to the Racecourse Inspectorate.

Conclusion

Speaking for the Council, Roger Varian (RV) said it was good that a senior team from the BHA had come to the Council meeting. Trainers want to have the dialogue and would welcome getting the same people round the table up to three times a year.

AD agreed and it was decided to send out a short press release immediately after the meeting to report that the meeting had been positive and there was an with the intention to provide opportunities for more trainers to be involved.

Ends.