



National
Trainers
Federation

Scotland and the Borders Part of the Northern Region

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT KELSO RACECOURSE ON WEDNESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2017

PRESENT: N Alexander (Scottish Representative) Chair
J Moffatt (Deputy Chairman)
S Corbett
P Craggs
R Dobbin
H Graham
J McGregor
K McLintock
B Murtagh
L Normile
N Richards
K Scott
M Smith

IN ATTENDANCE: R Arnold (Chief Executive)
G Noad (Racing Executive)
J Garratt (Managing Director of Kelso Racecourse) Item 8 Only

APPOLOGIES WERE RECEIVED FROM: A Crook, A Hamilton, L Harrison, P Robson, B Rothwell and J Stephen.

ITEM 1 – Approval of Minutes and Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record

- Northern Lights Series – The Region was provided with a progress report on the Northern Lights series. J Moffatt said that the series has been well received by owners and proposed the BHA publish a list of all of the qualifiers at the start of the season in the Racing Calendar.
- Hexham – R Arnold informed the Region that since the last meeting the NTF had been in contact with the ROA regarding the owners experience at Hexham. Unfortunately the management at Hexham was not receptive but the NTF and ROA would keep up the pressure to encourage them to improve.

ITEM 2 – Highlights from the NTF Council and Committees

2.1 Adjusting Weights in Jump Handicaps

R Arnold informed the Region of discussions between the NTF NH Committee and the BHA regarding horses running 1lb or 2lb outside the handicap carrying an excessively high weight due to the way the races are framed. The conclusion of the discussions has resulted in the weights being lowered so the lowest weight is 11stone. This has taken into consideration jockey's weight and mirrors what occurs on the flat.

2.2 Declaration of Wind Operations

N Alexander outlined the proposals by the BHA for wind surgery to be declared. R Arnold reported that there was support from the BHA Board as the Bettors Forum felt this was a key piece of information. The Region supported the Council's strategy of resisting the proposal as best as possible. The Region also highlighted potentially difficult consequences from animal rights activists and the detrimental effect this could have on breeding rights.

ITEM 3 - Trainer Feedback for the BHA on the Programme Book

S Corbett suggested more could be done to increase awareness of National Hunt Mare Owners' Prize Scheme. R Arnold suggested the TBA should help promote the scheme as the majority of eligible foals are registered before they get to the sales.

N Alexander highlighted that the value of maiden hurdles and bumpers at Ayr and Newcastle were decreasing. R Arnold highlighted that Maidens and Bumpers had not been included in the appearance money scheme at the grass roots of the sport. However the value of bumpers was an area the NTF and ROA aimed to improve. J Stephens also suggested that there were less bumpers being programmed in the north and it was becoming increasingly difficult to place a bumper horse rated 115-120.

S Corbett felt that the summer jumping programme staged a number of clashes. G Noad informed the Region that at the latest review of summer jumping there would be a few Sundays where there would be clashes so there would be a few days free from flat racing. However outside of those occasions it was recognised that the summer jumping programme is a national programme so the fixture list avoids clashes whenever possible.

H Graham highlighted that the BHA was taking back more control over the race programme and therefore programming difficulties would arise.

ITEM 4 – New Stewarding Model

R Arnold informed the Region of the consultation paper sent to the NTF regarding the new stewarding model including the replacement of all unpaid stewards with paid stewards. The main reasoning behind the proposal is the difficulty in getting unpaid stewards and their accountability. M Smith felt the current system was working well and the unpaid stewards already held themselves to a high standard. R Dobbin agreed but felt the consultation was causing stewards to leave their positions. N Alexander felt the NTF needed to convey to the BHA that the independence of the stewards is important and should be retained. H Graham informed the Region that racecourse executives in Scotland shared the same opinion as the NTF.

ITEM 5 – Rules on Non - Runners

R Arnold outlined the background to the non-runner rules and stressed that the proposal relating to going was only put on hold for 2018 to see if there would be a significant decrease. If this decrease does not materialise then it may result in additional rules coming to place. N Alexander highlighted how withdrawing on going has been picked up by the press and therefore it is down to trainers to make sure additional rules are not forced upon trainers. The Region also felt the NTF should continue to convey that 48hour declarations are the cause of the increase in non-runners.

ITEM 6 - Stable Staff

6.1 Pay Negotiations

R Arnold highlighted that the articles in the paper are slightly misleading and the only change proposed would be to move away from the consolidated wage. The Region felt that most of the proposals were already taking place so would not affect their businesses. The 3% pay increase may go up further when the figures for the increases to the National Living Wage are published.

Furthermore R Arnold highlighted the concerns in the NTF office regarding the subsistence allowance. Staff are not keeping their receipts and this could result in HMRC removing the tax free element of the allowance. If this does occur then the tax free allowance will be removed completely.

6.2 Team Champion

R Arnold informed the Region of the ongoing work to promote the work done by trainers to create a good working environment and the long term strategy to address staff shortages. This has developed into the Lycetts Team Champion Award to celebrate yards with a strong team ethos with the mission to deliver praise and a sense of achievement for the best managed yards, showcasing the positive results of developing a team.

One of the main aims of the award is to demonstrate how employers do everything they can to improve working conditions in their yard and to counteract some of the negative images presented by the industry. N Alexander informed the region of the work involved in developing the award and hoped lots of trainers will enter the competition.

ITEM 7 - Equine Disease and Biosecurity

R Arnold informed the Region of concerns raised at the Summer Regional Meetings regarding the cleanliness of racecourse stables and starting stalls. As a result the NTF is conducting a risk assessment on racecourse stables. The Region felt this was the correct course of action and would be interested to see the results.

ITEM 8 - Kelso Racecourse – Jonathan Garratt

N Alexander welcomed J Garratt to the meeting. J Garratt outlined the changes to the funding and highlighted how Scottish Racecourses were playing their part with all racecourses increasing their executive contribution to secure the additional central funding. R Arnold highlighted that this policy came from an ROA study into the returns to owners, the results showed that the return for owners significantly decreased at Class 3, 4 and 5 for National Hunt racing. J Garratt outlined how this will

make it harder for racecourses to downgrade their programme and highlighted that the overall prize money at Kelso will go from £950,000 in 2016 to £1.15mil in 2018.

N Alexander asked how the new media rights payments will affect racecourses. J Garratt outlined the policy and explained the increase in media rights will enable Kelso to increase its executive contribution for prize money; therefore unlocking the appearance money and incentive payment scheme.

N Alexander asked if there were any plans to develop the facilities at Kelso in particular the Owners and Trainers area. J Garratt agreed that the facilities at Kelso needed to be improved and would be in contact with trainers with any plans

J Garratt also wanted to assure trainers that there would only be a few alterations to the Novice Chase Programme at Kelso in light of recent changes. The Region felt the recent changes to the Novice Chase programme was a positive step forward but would take time to settle.

N Alexander thanked J Garratt for attending.

ITEM 9 – Any Other Business and Date of Next Meeting

- Racecourse Gallops – the region felt there was a lack of opportunity for racecourse gallops in the area putting them at a significant disadvantage to trainers elsewhere. This problem is exaggerated due to the lack of opportunity to run on the all-weather at Newcastle Racecourse.
- Chester – some members informed the Region that they had not received their appearance money from Chester. The Region felt this was very uncharacteristic and suggested the owners contact Chester.

The Northern Regional Meeting is on Thursday 9th November at Ripon Racecourse.

The next Scotland and Borders Meeting will in September 2018.