

Notes from Nottingham Bookmaker Liaison Committee Meeting

Wednesday 28th March 2018

Attendees:

Ann Whelbourne – Operations Executive, Nottingham Racecourse
Dickon White – Group Betting Director – The Jockey Club
Neil Pateman – Betting Ring Manager, AGT
Paul Johnson – Bookmaker
Adrian Smith – Bookmaker
Ricky Shepherd – Bookmaker
Dave Smith – Bookmaker

Apologies:

James Knox, General Manager, Nottingham Racecourse

Welcome & Introductions

Apologies were received from James Knox, the Nottingham GM.

BLC's introduced to develop relationships between JCR racecourses and bookmakers. Notes would be circulated to attendees, and then published on AGT website. JCR wants to work with bookmakers, and recognises the service that they provide on racedays, and welcomes feedback from bookmakers. It was important that all bookmakers who attend the meetings inputted into the discussions, and own views were encouraged. It was hoped that ties to Associations could be removed and personal views could be contributed.

2017 Review of Trading – Nottingham only

Bookmakers were invited to give an overview of their trading at Nottingham in 2017. RS stated that he operated two pitches, and his turnover was down 10% from previous year. He also commented on the excellent Ladies' Day that nearby racecourse, Leicester stage, and asked why Nottingham could not achieve similar attendances. There were also traffic issues at Nottingham due to the roundabout outside the course. AW responded by stating that changes had been made to the road layout and this should assist traffic in the future.

PJ added that racecourse location was positive (RS agreed) and that the facilities at Nottingham are good. He also stated that a recent report on bookmaker SP's by the Horserace Bettors Forum, Nottingham was leading the way. Lots of decent maidens. However, he questioned why the poor attendances? He stated that he felt that the locals did not know about the facilities. He also questioned was there any focus on Nottingham by JCR.

RS also raised the question of music, and why Nottingham did not stage post-race music events?

AW responded by saying that JK had looked at this but the stage location was an issue for them.

PJ asked about car parking in the middle of the courses, and why bollards had been installed at the end of the racecourse stopping cars from exiting that way.

RS asked about the five x Wednesday afternoon meetings in October and November, and whether there was a better way to promote? Could these be made to be free racedays for racegoers.

DS commented that Warwick had recently staged a £5 admission raceday that proved to be very successful.

NP added that bookmaker attendances at Nottingham had grown in 2017.

PJ was not supportive of free racedays, but questioned why admission prices had been increased, when there was no real demand. He was aware that all racecourses were pushing for pre-sales but lacked promoting racedays on the day. Could racegoers be offered free racecards to help? It was apparent that the cost of entrance, food, travel, etc. were costly.

AW responded by stating that Nottingham were offering discounted admission to senior citizens and they had tried to target students with limited success. There was a lack of appetite for any of the Universities to engage with the racecourse.

RS offered to support the racecourse with an Emergency Services Raceday, he had a number of local contacts. AW was appreciative of that offer, and would speak with JK post-meeting.

AW outlined plans for the Construction Raceday were going well. Hospitality had sold out and they were looking at additional capacity opportunities.

NP added that JK had spoken with him about a potential loyalty scheme for bookmakers. As JK was not at the meeting, NP said he would discuss with him at a later stage. This would then be shared with the bookmakers. DS added that it should reward bookmakers who attend over 15 fixtures, and NP agreed to add this to the discussion with JK.

RS also asked about an annual badge for bookmakers.

AW outlined that the two pitches would be available for bookmakers at the fixtures on 12th May and 7th July.

AS said that there needed to be more focus on marketing at Nottingham. Although Leicester had already been mentioned earlier, he said that the Southwell Ladies Day was also a great success, and that Nottingham should use that as a case study to see if they could replicate. Could DJ's and/or Music Nights be introduced?

2018 Plans

In JK's absence, AW outlined brief plans for 2018 at Nottingham. Fixtures are the same as in 2017; Ladies Day on 12th May, Beer Festival on the 11th May (working with local brewery), Ladies Night on the 7th July and Family Day on the 10th June.

Also working on a promotional offer for the Wednesday fixtures at the end of the season.

Bookmaker Access/Car Parking

Already covered within Review of Trading although general view was that an additional exit would be helpful for both racegoers and bookmakers. AW would speak with JK about this.

Bookmaker Numbers & Rings

No changes to bookmaker numbers or rings at present at Nottingham. However, DW outlined that JCR will be reviewing all bookmaker numbers as a general review and would feedback to individual BLC's with any proposals.

Marketing Fees/Promoting the On-Course Market

DW outlined the use of AMF's at all JCR courses. However, all agreed that more could be done to promote the betting ring. This would include big screens, PA announcements, etc.

Rule 4 announcements were never clearly heard and more could be done to assist bookmakers.

It was also proposed that pre racing Punters' Panels could include an on-course bookmaker and AW said she would discuss with JK.

Role of the BRM's

DW outlined the importance of the BRM as one of the raceday team at all racemeetings at Nottingham, and would not accept any abuse to any BRM from bookmakers.

Think 21/under 18 Gambling

This is taken very seriously by racecourses, and bookmakers needed to step up on this also. The awareness of responsibility by bookmakers has improved due to the Serve Legal training programmes, although additional improvement is required. There is a great deal of pressure from Local Authorities on this matter, and they are putting racecourses under pressure to suspend bookmakers who fail Test Purchasing operations.

Health & Safety in the Betting Rings

No issues at Nottingham although any support from bookmakers to keep joints clear and tidy is always appreciated.

Anchorage points also needed to be checked prior to the first raceday of the season.

AOB

Each Way Betting Terms

DW stated that a proposal to increase place payouts, but reduce the fractions, had been received from PJ. This would be as an alternate to the standard each way terms. There would be no change in the short-term but if this was something that should be implemented, then bookmakers (with their associations) should provide a proposal to racecourses.

RS said that there had been a very late announcement of a stewards' enquiry in 2017 and could this be improved. This was a BHA matter but everything should be done to improve this.

PJ also mentioned that a number of racegoers complained to him about horses not parading in front of the grandstands. This was a decision that is taken by the Clerk of the Course but will be communicated to the CofC by AW.

DS wanted to see racing sell racing in a more positive manner.