

## Notes from Cheltenham Bookmaker Liaison Committee Meeting

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018

### Attendees:

David Mackinnon – Group Head of Operations, SW Region – The Jockey Club  
Steve Clare – Consultant  
Dickon White – Group Betting Director – The Jockey Club  
Andy Pinnington - Bookmaker  
Paul White - Bookmaker  
Mark Jeal - Bookmaker  
Nick Daisley - Bookmaker  
Graham Thorpe – Bookmaker

### Apologies:

Andy Collins – Betting Ring Manager, AGT  
Dale Such - Bookmaker  
Barry Johnson - Bookmaker  
Robin Grossmith – Bookmaker

### Welcome & Apologies

DW welcomed all to meeting. Unfortunately, RG, DS & BJ were unable to attend the meeting, and AC had experienced car issues on the way to the meeting and had to offer his apologies.

### Notes from Previous Meeting

There was a brief discussion about New Year's Day in 2018 and the view from the bookmakers that it was a disappointing crowd compared to 2017, when the raceday was followed by a Bank Holiday. DM stated that, once again, in 2019, there was no Bank Holiday on the following day.

Within the last meeting's notes, the recommendation of a trial for a "yellow line" behind the joint (all equipment needs to be stored within this area) was to be discussed with the AGT Technical Committee. DW was unaware if this had taken place, and would speak to Tim Moore to get feedback. All at the meeting felt that it would be a worthwhile exercise to trial at a future racemeeting.

### 2018 Trading Review – Cheltenham only

DM opened the discussion by outlining how positive the feedback had been regarding the 2018 Festival. Despite the adverse weather conditions leading up to the meeting, the visitor numbers were extremely strong and it was viewed to be one of the best Festivals ever. DM mentioned the improved customer facilities within the Best Mate enclosure and the additional access into the main Tattersalls ring, both which should have benefitted on-course bookmakers. GT complimented the Cheltenham team on getting the Festival on and thanked them for their efforts.

PW (various Rails positions) commenced the bookmaker review and stated that from their pitches they had similar turnover figures to the previous year. MJ (bets within Lower Tattersalls at the Festival only) also commented on the positive Festival and reported that although his turnover was down, his bet numbers were marginally up from the previous years. He added that feedback from other Lower Tattersalls bookmakers had been that the additional entrance from the Guinness Village had resulted in making all of the pitches fairer for bookmakers.

GT (Best Mate, Festival only) said that we had a problem with the Best Mate enclosure, and outlined that the best pitches continued to do well, but there was lower turnover across all pitches in the main Best Mate ring. He stated that this was down to the lack of facilities in the ring, i.e. no food or bar outlets and that racegoers not being able to bring drinks into the area was having a massive impact on turnover. He outlined that were issues for racegoers accessing the ring as they could not bring drinks in, and that this was causing

logjams at the entrances. The additional 1k racegoers into the Best Mate on Friday had not resulted in any improvement in turnover within the ring. The additional temporary stand had improved facilities for racegoers but customers could not access the ring from this stand and had to access at the rear of the grandstand itself.

ND (Best Mate, Festival only) stated that it was a positive Festival for his business and that the additional facilities had been good news. ND stated that his turnover on his pitch at the front of the grandstands was at a similar level to the previous year. He stated that the toilet facilities were much improved and that the improvements in catering facilities seem to have been well received.

AP (Festival and Off Rails) who bets on the Rails at the Festival had had a trouble free Festival this year, with a couple of issues with customers that had been dealt with on the day.

#### Bookmaker Numbers & Rings

There was a general discussion about the various bookmaker rings, and the respective numbers of who bet within these rings. DM outlined the desire to review the Best Mate and try to improve racegoer experience. GT said that any review should include assisting the main ring, particularly in relation to access from behind the grandstand. ND wanted the meeting to be aware that he is one of the five bookmakers who bet round the back of the grandstand, and that he would also benefit if additional bookmakers were positioned at the rear.

SC asked whether there was one specific area behind the stand that was not serviced by bookmakers currently. ND stated that he could potentially see an opportunity. DM asked whether a "trial" of a number of pitches could be considered. DM also added that he will look to open up the entrances further into the main ring for 2019. However, there would be no catering concessions offered and no drinks would be allowed in the ring.

DW & DM agreed to review and make some recommendations for a trial of additional pitches, this would include number and location. They would revert back to the BLC at Cheltenham.

DM also showed photographs to the BLC of the main Tattersalls betting rings and the Lower Tattersalls rings. There was general discussion about the images, and what they showed relating to customer movement.

#### Drinking in front of Grandstands

DM once again stated that Cheltenham's policy, unlike many other courses (that he accepted), would be that drinks could not be taken in front of any grandstand.

#### Pitching-in Times

Bookmakers were asked for their views on pitch-in times at the 2018 Festival, as times had been moved forward following a request from the racecourse. DM outlined that he was keen to try and have all bookmakers pitched-up by the times the gates opened, although he stressed that they did not have to be ready to trade at this time, and bookmakers would make the decision about what time they actually trade from. He stated that gates opened on each day of the Festival at 10.30am and that pitch-in times were currently 11am.

GT said that the majority of bookmakers would be against earlier pitching-in as it would lead to travel issues and additional overnight costs. The majority of other attendees were against the earlier times, but respected what the racecourse were trying to achieve. Could it be done on the first day, and then back to 11am for other days, and could an incentive be offered to assist bookmakers?

DM/DW would take away and speak with AGT further and revert back to the BLC.

#### Daily Betting Badges

SC stated that the online purchasing of bookmakers' badges had gone very well at the 2018 Festival, and thanked all bookmakers for their support. Although the system was not perfect and user-friendly, all bookmakers had succeeded in purchasing. Everyone agreed that the system could be improved, and it was requested whether bookmakers could purchase online on the day itself, rather than by 5pm on the previous day.

Once again, the question about the Festival discounted badges was asked. Could the DBB be worked out on the last available public admission price? DM stated that he will look at this again and revert.

#### Marketing Fees/ Promoting the On-Course Market

DW outlined how the marketing fee is currently spent to help support the on-course betting market. This included racecard and CCTV support.

All stated that more should be done to help when a Rule 4 announcement is made. There was a discussion about whether a leaflet could or should be produced. GT stated that he was working with Tim Moore at AGT on the appropriate wording to be used in literature. DW stated that this should then be provided to Racetech and all racecourse PA announcers to ensure consistency of the messaging.

ND asked about the launch of britbet in July and whether they would have more selling positions than Totepool. DM & DW stated that there would be a similar number.

#### Bookmaker Access & Car Parking

DM outlined that, despite difficult conditions, bookmaker access and car parking was a success. MJ thanked Cheltenham for allowing Lower Tattersalls bookmakers to park near to the LT entrance, this was appreciated. AP asked about a contingency for car parking if specific "bookmaker" areas were unavailable. DM confirmed again that bookmakers can have vehicular access onto the site, up to one hour before gates open to the public, to drop equipment off.

#### Think 21/under 18 Gambling

DW outlined the ongoing concerns relating to under age gambling on racecourses, and stated that local authorities and the Gambling Commission would continue to monitor closely. He also stated that it was the racecourses' licences that were potentially under threat so everyone needed to work collectively to improve matters.

GT stated that he had recently attended a GC seminar on the subject, and was feeling more comfortable than previously on the matter. PW added that the FRB continued to work with Serve Legal on this subject, and procedures and test purchasing sampling needed to improve.

#### Health & Safety in the Betting Rings

As stated earlier, Cheltenham are keen to trial a programme of marking out a specific area for bookmakers' equipment to be stored within, near to the joint itself.

### Betting %'s

DW and SC outlined that the racecourse had monitored the betting percentages in various rings at the Festival, and had no concerns to report. They requested that this continued to be monitored at future racemeetings.

### AOB - Badge Box Location

DM outlined that the badge box for all enclosures would be moved to outside of the entrance. This would be located on the main driveway.

*Rails Presentation* – DM showed a photograph of the presentation of signage on the Rails. This showed a sign being held on the rail using strapping that was agreed to be unacceptable. There was a discussion about how that could be improved. Could it be a magnetic strip? It was agreed that Cheltenham would post a notice on the AGT website and to the Rails Association on how signage will be allowed to be fixed onto the Rail at Cheltenham, and also what would be the maximum size allowed.

*Lower Tattersalls* – MJ asked about whether the Lower Tattersalls enclosure could be opened on the Saturday of the BetVictor meeting in November. This could possibly include allowing the 10 around the Paddock to be available on this day. DM/DW agreed to review and would speak with AGT and revert back to the BLC.

*Consolation Day for the Festival* – GT asked whether a fifth day would be considered for the Festival in the future, it could be a day of handicaps for horses that had been balloted out earlier in the week. DM stated that this day currently takes place at Kempton Park.

*Wifi* – ND stated that the wifi at the pitches at the rear of the Best Mate had been poor. DW would speak with JCR's IT team to improve for future racemeetings.

*See You Then betting positions – Off meetings* – ND also asked about a potential waiting list for the SYT Terrace betting positions, SC/DW said they would look into and revert back to the BLC.

The next BLC meeting would take place sometime in late October, date to be circulated shortly.