

Notes from Aintree Bookmaker Liaison Committee Meeting

Tuesday 13th February 2018

Attendees:

Carl Pastor – Operations Manager, Aintree
Steve Clare – Consultant
Dickon White – Group Betting Director – The Jockey Club
Mark Ryan – Betting Ring Manager, AGT
Andy Melia – Bookmaker
Paul Dolan – Bookmaker
Bill Colley – Bookmaker
Chris Kirk - Bookmaker

Apologies:

Joe Scanlon – Bookmaker
Anthony Hardy – Bookmaker
Stephen Mansfield – Group Head of Operations, NW Region – The Jockey Club

Welcome & Introductions

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.

JCR also outlined that new agreement with AGT, a five-year renewal from September 2017, to manage on-course bookmakers and also administration around licensing, etc.

Current Trading Update – Aintree only

BC stated that he felt there were too many bookmakers at the Off fixtures. Is there an opportunity to review all ring layouts. Aintree agreed that it could review these numbers and this could be considered, and presented, at a future BLC meeting. This could include factors such as attendances, although final decision ultimately will be the racecourses. Also, outlined issue with the tannoy at Aintree, it was either too loud (Becher Chase meeting) or too quiet, Aintree agreed to review. AM outlined concerns about getting badges for staff, this will hopefully be addressed at 2018 GN Festival. Also raised a question about electrifying pitches to remove requirement for batteries, Aintree thought this would be difficult due to proximity to horsewalk. AM also asked whether hospitality customers could be made aware of on-course bookmakers, and general view was that they could be better promoted to all racegoers, and Aintree welcomed proposals to look at ways of promoting on-course bookmakers, on big screens, racecards, etc.

CK asked about Aintree's replenishment policy, and whether it would continue. Aintree stated that they are not considering changing their policy. He also raised the question of reducing the multiples on Music Nights, as bookmakers did not benefit from the type of customer who was being attracted, and bookmakers did not stay for the events. Aintree agreed to review, and also informed that the two events this year would be headlined by Craig David and The Lightning Seeds.

2018 Grand National Festival Planning & Update

CP outlined the latest plans for the 2018 Grand National Festival, and informed attendees of some of the improvements and changes that were being made. As in previous years, additional toilets, seating and bars remained a priority to enhance the customer experience.

He also stated that GN day itself was sold out in grandstand and Festival Zone (Tattersalls) enclosures although tickets were still available within the Embankment.

A new hospitality facility (Silver Birch – 400 people) was being built near to the GN start, this would result in the relocation of the five bookmaker pitches near to the start, possibly into two areas (three and two bookmakers) nearby.

Little change in 2018 at the Embankment. BC stated that there was something missing in this area in 2017, and facilities and atmosphere seemed different. Aintree stated that all facilities were the same but some had been relocated to improve crowd movement, etc.

On-course betting shops would be similar in 2018, as to 2017.

Red Rum Garden – relocation of some facilities within this area.

Equestrian Centre – the central bank of Totepool facilities and front desk for Stage were being removed in 2018, to create an open facility that would benefit all racegoers, and could also make bookmakers more visible.

Aintree agreed to move Totepool pitches away from bookmakers near the Parade Ring.

Tattersalls Pitch number 39 that was not used in 2017, would not be used again due to Health & Safety reasons.

West Tip area was also being tarmacked to assist racegoers and bookmakers, and avoid drainage issues that have arisen previously. Anchorage points will need to be reinstalled and protected.

Bookmaker Access/Car Parking

Aintree informed the committee that Arriva buses will not transport bookmakers (and equipment) from Steeplechase Car Park to grandstands as buses were being damaged. Bookmakers would need to make their own way across if they parked in this location. The question was raised about whether a bookmaker-only bus could be in place early in the morning, however, this would not be available at the end of racing. Aintree would review.

Aintree also agreed to review parking for bookmakers after 2018 Festival to try and assist bookmakers in all areas.

As previous years, bookmakers will be able to get early access onto site on all three days, via Gate 3. Equipment can also be dropped off on Wednesday if this assists. This has worked well in past few years.

Bookmaker Numbers & Rings

Racecourse has requested Pitch-Up times are brought forward. It was universally agreed by the committee that this made a great deal of sense. Pitch up times for all betting areas would now be; Thursday – 2 1/2 hours prior to the first race, and Friday & Saturday – 3 hours. Embankment would also be three hours.

Daily Betting Badges

Once again, there would be no badge box in operation at the 2018 Grand National Festival. All Daily Betting Badges would need to be pre-purchased online prior to the meeting. Also, staff admission badges needed to be pre-purchase and although Festival Zone badges were sold out on GN day, they were available online to purchase for bookmakers only. Instructions would be put onto AGT website following the meeting, this would include a breakdown of the bookmaker fees that would be charged. Aintree thanked all bookmakers for their assistance with this matter.

Marketing Fees

Aintree outlined current AMF policy (if a bookmaker retains both GN & Off pitches, must be same number, then they only need to pay one marketing fee).
Bookmakers are encouraged to propose ideas for marketing and promoting on-course bookmakers.

Promoting the On-Course Market

As above, Aintree is keen to support pro-active bookmakers. Matters such as taking debit card payments for bets should be encouraged and promoted. Aintree would also welcome big screen and racecard adverts although artwork would need to be provided. Aintree could support specific initiatives, such as Best Odds Guaranteed promotions by bookmakers, on Aintree social media channels

Role of the BRM's

Aintree outlined the importance of the BRM as one of the raceday team at all racemeetings, and would not accept any abuse to any BRM from bookmakers. It was agreed that (occasionally) it was difficult to reach BRM's if they had a dispute. Signage needed to be improved, and AGT also had walkie-talkies on racedays to assist communication.

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

Aintree outlined importance of keeping joint area tidy and store away kit that is not required. Please try to minimise trip hazards.

Betting %'s

Again, Aintree outlined importance of bookmakers not taking advantage of their location to bet to higher margins. This would result in NBA's and other locations being reviewed. This is under particular scrutiny at present by the media after being raised by the Horserace Bettors Forum.

AOB

Britbet – JCR aware that it must not encroach onto any betting area with new Pool betting operation (Britbet) as set out in the bookmaker's licence. Any issues should be flagged to racecourse and DW.

Pitch Renting – still being investigated by AGT, and further meetings with racecourses will take place shortly.

Rubbish – AGT to be provided with, and to assist in distributing rubbish bags for bookmakers.

GN Boards – BC asked whether a maximum size of board should be agreed for displaying GN prices during racing. This had not been raised before but AGT agreed to monitor this in 2018 and review for future events.

Each Way Betting Terms – Aintree stated that a proposal to increase place payouts, but reduce the fractions, had been received from a bookmaker. 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.

Euro Rate – it was agreed that this worked well, and a minimum Euro exchange rate should be agreed between bookmaker and racecourse. AGT would implement. The rate should be clearly displayed if a bookmaker was going to accept Euros.

Next Meeting – to be arranged, but possibly in September 2018.