

BOOKMAKER LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING 2024 - Newbury Racecourse via Teams

Friday 16 February 2024

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bookmakers – Nigel Spencer, Alan Stadler, Tony Morris, Paul Metcalfe, David Hughes.

Newbury Racecourse – Lucy Hayes, Mark Leigh, Steve Clare, Vicki Moore.

Apologies – Gerry Chesneaux, Paul Gold

MEETING NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Bookmaker representatives from Rails, Tattersalls & Lower Tattersalls were in attendance.

NEW SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM - LH

Chief executive Julian Thick resigned last year (although will continue to assist as a consultant), his replacement Shaun Hinds, most recently CEO of Manchester Central Convention Centre and keen horseracing enthusiast, starts in June this year. In the meantime, finance director Mark Leigh is in addition interim CEO.

Harry Walklin has replaced Harriot Collins as marketing director with a specific focus on data lead initiatives to increase public admissions.

TRADING FEEDBACK FROM BOOKMAKERS

Each bookmaker provided brief feedback of their trading experiences at Newbury since the last BLC. In a repeat of recent years the Flat race meetings performed better than those NH meetings. However, overall Rails betting turnover had held up well and was at expected levels, it was less so in Tattersalls and Lower Tattersalls, where bigger race meetings with larger public attendance were okay, but particularly disappointing on weekdays, especially so when the Dubai Duty Free grandstand was closed due to low public attendance.

The Lower Tattersalls enclosure was enhanced during the year by the provision of picnic benches, and these were requested for the 2024 season.

It was recognised that bookmakers had a good relationship with Newbury management and welcomed the opportunity to discuss mutually important matters.

2024 SEASON - LH / ML

Overall, racecourses in the UK have suffered a 7% decline year on year and Newbury has not been exempt from lower attendances on certain days, in particular at weekday meetings.

The senior team are focussed on halting further decline and aim to at least achieve similar public attendance in 2024 to 2023. Marketing and promotional activity is aimed at online discounted pre-purchase.

There are in three online sales phases – biggest discounts, c.20%, three months in advance; next level 10% discount one month in advance; on the day sales.

In addition, new initiatives include: multi-day passes (both per race meeting and days of the week) and group discounts for smaller groups too.

Newbury has joined Rewards for Racing and will benefit from the promotional opportunities that provides.

The in-house promotional team has been boosted by the recruitment of a videographer and graphic designer for a renewed focus on social media exposure.

The local community will benefit from several special activities to encourage more local attendance.

There will again be three music nights – acts t.b.a. – with a three day music night attendance pass under consideration.

A students raceday will take place on Sat 2/3 with c. 2,000 students having exclusive use of the DDF grandstand.

Owing to the current lower weekday public admissions, for the time being one enclosure race meetings will continue to be a feature.

The following race meetings are planned to operate as one enclosure however, should advance sales justify the opening of the DDF stand bookmakers will be notified via a message on the RBC website, a few days in advance –

Fri 1/3, Fri 22/3, Fri 17/5, Thu 13/6, Tue 25/6, Sun 4/7, Thu 11/7, Thu 25/7, Thu 29/8, Thu 5/9, Thu 7/11 & Wed 18/12.

AOB

Bookmakers asked for consideration to be given to new temporary betting areas behind the grandstands.

LH explained that consideration already had been given to this request, but that on busy racedays there is insufficient space available.

In response to a question concerning a limited number of bookmakers having the opportunity to operate in marquess on busy racedays, LH explained that the racecourse has an agreement Tote to operate within.

A request was made for a picnic area to be provided on busy summer racedays – LH to consider.

ATM machines were discussed.

It is recognised by the racecourse that availability of cash on course is important to bookmakers and has therefore arranged for the two existing ATM to be retained, for which the racecourse has to pay the operator for this service.

LH agreed to review the directional signage to ATM machines.

Participants were thanked for their attendance and contribution.

Meeting closed.