

The British Racecourse Bookmakers' Association

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Newsletter

Dear Colleague,

Having endured one of the worst periods in the history of racecourse bookmaking we can now, hopefully, after almost eighteen months of inactivity, look forward to some better days ahead.

Two of our members, Stan Somers and Paul Andrew, have had and recovered from the Covid-19 virus. However, thankfully, the vast majority of members have managed to avoid infection and keep safe.

During the period of the lockdown, although your Board hasn't been able to conduct face-to-face meetings, we have managed to hold regular online Zoom meetings and this has helped us to take steps, where we were able, to act in the best interest of our members. These include:

- Recognising the financial impact of the Cov-19 restrictions on our members and by prudently managing BRBA finances being able to cut membership fees by 50% each year in each of the last two years.
- Waiving point-to-point registration fees and cutting waiting list fees.
- Providing direct support to the Yorkshire Area Point-to-Point Association in the form of a loan and small donation to help them maintain a viable point-to-point structure.
- Writing to the Gambling Commission and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) opposing the Commission's decision to carry on collecting fees from bookmakers during the period of the lockdown.
- Writing to the Gambling Commission and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport opposing the Commission's proposal to significantly increase its license fees.

- Advising, where possible, members to take advantage of Government support in the form of furlough, self-employment income support schemes, bounce-back loans and local restriction and additional restriction grants.
- Writing to a number of Government departments and Ministers, including Paul Scully MP (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) and Nigel Huddleston MP (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport), bringing up the issue of Government support and the lack of consistency in the way different Local Authorities were interpreting the rules regarding their powers of discretion in distributing grant aid.
- Submitting a detailed response to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport regarding a proposed Government review of the 2005 Gambling Act.
- Writing to Administration of Gambling on Tracks Ltd (AGT) and the Race Course Association (RCA) regarding the AGT's announcement during the height of the pandemic to significantly increase its daily betting administration fees. Pointing out the AGT's continuing habit of resisting change and taking advantage of its monopolistic position and suggesting alternative working methods which would result in reduced costs of the administration service to bookmakers. It is noticeable that whilst the majority of bookmakers vehemently oppose the increases in fees few of the Associations have taken the opportunity to oppose the increases. In fact, there are Associations who appear to have actively supported the decision of the AGT to increase its fees.
- Engaging directly with several politicians', including members of the All-Party Gambling Group, to discuss the challenges facing the racing industry and in particular on-course bookmakers.
- Writing to the Financial Ombudsman to bring to their attention the fact that some BRBA members were being refused business bank accounts.
- Writing to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Fair Business Banking and Finance, notifying them of the way in which many on-course bookmakers were being treated by high street banks.
- Publicising the issue of cashless betting in the press and taking up the matter with racecourse executives and the All-Party Gambling Group.
- Publicising in the press the opposition of BRBA members to the proposal to move to an industry based Starting Price (SP), and writing to the Starting Price Regulatory Commission (SPRC) regarding the anomalies resulting from an industry only SP system and asking when the plans to include data supplied by on-course bookmakers in the SP system will be implemented.

- Engaging with the RCA and AGT to introduce a workable Rule 4 deductions system, given the disruption to the system caused by the move to industry SP returns.
- Writing to Racecourse Media Group (RMG) regarding data contracts. A meeting is due to take place with RMG and SPRC to discuss the SP system, following which BRBA representatives will meet with RMG to discuss data contracts.
- Engaging with The Racing Partnership (TRP) to negotiate data monies absence payments which the BRBA have been passing on in full to members.
- Engaging with racecourse executives during the period of the lockdown to discuss Covid-19 protocols, bookmaker return to racing rules and numerous other issues. We seek to maintain the good relationship we have with racecourses post pandemic.
- Meeting with the Jockey Club Racecourses (JCR) to discuss a number of issues, including the move to an online booking-in system for racegoers and bookmakers, bookmaker attendance numbers, pitch-up times, pitch location, the move by racecourses towards the non-acceptance of cash, each way terms, rule 4 deductions, the SP system and the use of data, bookmaker liaison groups etc.
- Engaging with Britbet Racing on behalf of BRBA members and setting-up a working party to jointly formulate a policy to comply with Gambling Commission requirements regarding under-age betting and the introduction of a think 25 policy.

Regrettably, since the last AGM, the BRBA Board has lost John May, Nick Daisley, and Steve Price as Directors. On behalf of the BRBA and its members we would like to thank John, Nick and Steve for all the hard and unpaid work they have so diligently carried out on behalf of the Association and its members over the years they served on the Board. We now have two new members of the Board as Barry Curran and Richard Liles have recently joined us as Board members.

The BRBA would like to thank those members who have remained loyal and continued to support the Association through these difficult times. We are most grateful for your support and recognise that any Association is only as good as its members. In particular on behalf of the Association we would like to extend special thanks to Paul Garrity, Bryan Hazel and Keith Johnson for the work they have carried out behind the scenes during the period of the lockdown on behalf of the BRBA and its members. We can also assure members that we have contacted several racecourses and racecourse executives on their behalf thanking them for the various concessions they have introduced during the various stages of the easing of the lockdown in recognition of the disruption our businesses have experienced over the last eighteen months and the disruption we may well experience for several months going-forward.

The BRBA continues to adopt a policy of working with other Associations where we face common problems and we are particularly fortunate in that are able to maintain our close Association with the East of Scotland Association and we send our sympathies to their Secretary, John Carroll, for his recent loss.

From a BRBA administrative perspective we need to bring to the attention of members that we intend to make changes to the Association's financial year start and end date. Currently the Association's financial year ends on 30th November, its subscription year ends on the on 30th April and for insurance purposes the insurance policies negotiated on behalf of members run from 1 January to 31 December each year. It is, therefore, proposed that as from the 1st of January 2022 the financial year, subscriptions year and insurance cover year will be consolidated and run concurrently from 1st January to 31st December each year.

To conclude this newsletter, we need to remind our members that as yet there is still a two-hour window for help and advice from our office. The BRBA is committed to working on behalf of its members. If you have any bookmaker colleagues looking for the protection offered by a trade association then why not recommend that they join the BRBA - the biggest and best Association. We continue to offer numerous benefits to our members, including:

1. Competitive membership fees.
2. Free advertising on our website including pitch sales and equipment sales.
3. Reduced prices for bulk purchase of entry tickets.
4. Bespoke ticket (printer) rolls supplied to members on a cost basis, with Begambleaware details pre-printed on the back.
5. Free racing calendars and subsidised racing diaries.
- 6.. Gambling Commission compliance packs (see members area).
7. Full insurance assistance with risk assessment forms available.

We also need to bring to the attention to those members who are planning to attend this year's Annual General Meeting (see details below) that unfortunately, unlike previous AGM meetings, sandwiches will **not** be provided on this occasion.

We very much look forward to seeing and hearing from you at this year's AGM, which will be held on 12th September 2021 at the Mercure Hotel Wetherby. Your personal invitation is attached at the bottom of this e-mail.