

The British Racecourse Bookmakers' Association

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Dear member,

New On-course Bookmaker Trade Association

As you are probably aware, for a number of years there has been a call for the various on-course bookmaker trade associations to work together more closely in order to present a united approach when pursuing matters of **common interest** in our dealings with racecourses, regulatory and disciplinary bodies etc. This has led to a call for the setting-up of a single body (trade association) to replace the other trade associations currently operating independently. The setting-up of the new body is being managed, in the main, by Keith Johnson and John Hooper. Those members who attended our recent AGM (1st October 2023) will recall that Keith and John attended our meeting to give the BRBA Board, and those members who were in attendance, an overview of how, in their view, the new association would operate.

Having met with Keith and John the BRBA Board requested more information concerning the proposed new body and asked for more detailed information, which included the request to see a copy of the Articles of Association of the proposed new body. On Tuesday 17th October 2023, having not yet been provided with a copy of Articles of Association, BRBA Board members met to further discuss the matter of a single trade association and in particular the winding-up of the BRBA, which is one of the conditions of BRBA members having representation on the Board of the new body. Based on the fact that our Association was faced with winding-up, and a lack of detail to support a decision as to whether this was something we were prepared to recommend, a list of suggestions and requests for further information was drawn up. Our suggestions/requests, are set-out in the table below:

Suggestions/Requests	Rationale
Current regional trade associations to be left to continue to operate for a minimum period of twelve months, with the new company to initially act as an independent over-arching body representing a 'one-voice' approach in dealing with external bodies when pursuing matters of common interest .	This would give the new body and its Board time to 'bed-in', and other trade associations would be in a much better position to assess the success and strength of the new body prior to instigating winding-up procedures.

<p>Free membership to all those who wish to join the new association for the first 12 months of operations.</p>	<p>We gather substantial funds are to be transferred from AGT and FRB over to the new company. We believe these funds will provide more than sufficient working capital to set-up the new company and enable it to operate effectively in its first year. It will also give members the opportunity to see first-hand how successful the new company is in achieving its objectives.</p>
<p>Future funding of the new body to be agreed after the initial twelve months period. We would favour membership to be a flat annual fee i.e. the same fee for each bookmaker.</p>	<p>Many of our members are at the lower-end of the pitch investment spectrum with high number picks. A number of members have pitch attendance figures based on mid-week and all-weather low crowd/low turnover/low profit. Therefore, a fee based on an annual membership fee, coupled with a further fee based on attendances would be out of all proportion to the turnover and profits of many bookmakers. We also believe a qualified voting system as proposed within the Articles of Association to be undemocratic. To date voting rights have always been one member one vote. Anything else is undemocratic and as far as we are concerned unacceptable.</p>
<p>The Board of the new company to be solely made up of representative(s) appointed by each regional trade association, and be set with a maximum of seven members. The initial Board to be appointed for a twelve months period, following which Board members would be appointed by the membership on a one-man one vote regional basis. There should be no maximum period over which Board members are allowed to serve.</p>	<p>We feel that selection of representatives by members is fairer than hand-picking Board members, although we recognise that a Board has to be in place to get the new company up-and-running. Therefore, following the first year of operations, rather than the three-year period which form part of the start-up plans, Board members would be elected or deselected based on performance. We believe in free and fair elections and that there should be no maximum period over which Board members can serve – those who are most effective would be encouraged to continue to serve on the Board should they so wish.</p>
<p>Objectives within Articles of Association must be detailed and transparent.</p>	<p>We feel that from the onset it be established that the new company be pursuing objectives which represent common interests. We believe that common goals be at the centre of the</p>

	company's objectives, thereby eliminating the opportunity to promote self-interest We would also like to see a detailed action plan for year one of operations outlining the aims and objectives in the first year, against which we can all measure progress and effectiveness.
A detailed budget of income costs and expenses for year one of operations to be provided.	It is essential that before entering into a contract with a new company those who are to contribute to its finances, whether they be trade associations or members, be given forecasts illustrating its income, costs and expenses in year one of operations.
A ceiling to be set whereby cash reserves of the new entity must not exceed £100,000 or one year's operating costs.	As it is proposed that the new company be a not-for-profit entity we believe it should operate, as far as is reasonably possible, to generate income over expenditure necessary to establish break-even point, and that it not be allowed to build up excessive reserves.
Salaried staff posts to be advertised.	We think this is necessary for ensuring the people are 'employed' with clear responsibilities duties and rights. This is particularly important to the role of CEO who we would prefer be 'employed' on a consultancy basis.
Point-to-points be allowed to operate as separate entities.	We believe that this would give point-to-point committees autonomy.

Having received a copy of the Articles of Association from John Hooper on Wednesday 18th October 2023, and seen some of the proposals contained within, the qualified voting system was amongst several proposals which were of concern, we sent a letter by email the following day to John and Keith outlining our suggestions/requests as per the table above. Shortly afterwards we received a telephone call from John informing us that our suggestions/requests had been rejected and that it was most likely that the setting-up of the new company would go ahead without any input from the BRBA. You will find a copy of the proposed Articles of Association of the new company posted for your attention in the members section of the BRBA website.

We then (Saturday 21st October) resent our list of suggestions/requests this time also outlining the rationale (as per the table above) supporting the suggestions we had made. We think the suggestions and requests are reasonable on the basis that we believed the new association was proposed as a joint venture.

On Monday 23rd October we were notified that the Board of the proposed company will meet towards the end of November, note that a BRBA Board member, or members, will not be in attendance at the meeting, however, we gather our suggestions are on the agenda for discussion and that we can expect further feedback in December.

In the interests of democracy our members are free, having weighed up the pros and cons, to decide whether they want to become members of the new company – we have no intention of in any way preventing them from doing so. However, for the BRBA for the time being it is business as usual.

Yours sincerely,

The British Racecourse Bookmakers' Association Board