

BHRCAGM 2015
at Days Inn Wetherby - Sunday 15th November 2015

Present: Roy Sheedy (Chairman), Jim McNally (Vice Chairman), Jackie Maguire (Steward), Lisa Knott (Steward), Bret Strickland (Steward), Barry Delaney (Steward), Fred Hay (Steward), Roland Pugh (Regional Steward), Robert Thompson (Regional Steward)
Lee Price (WWHRA), Jason Podmore (MHRC), Craig Stevenson (MFDA), Huw Evans (TTC), David Edwards (CCB), Sarah Thomas (CW), John Smart (SHRC), Bob Lee (HHA), Richard Wigham (NESA), Geoff Robson (EVHRA)
Michelle Strickland, Michael Lord, Sheelagh Lord, Alan Haythornthwaite,
Frank Huchska, Raymond Huschka
Dave Walsh (Accountant), Kirsty Lee (Secretary), Helen Tyler

Apologies: Gordon Garnett, Anthony Fettah, Les Coward

Apologies and Adoption of Minutes of 2014 AGM

Mr Pugh read a message from Mr Garnett regarding the resignation of Lord Lipsey and the Chesterfield development.

The Vice Chairman stated that he had attended meetings at Chesterfield on three occasions but could not see it getting off the ground, there was not a turf of grass there.

The Chairman confirmed that those involved had been invited to attend the PACT fixture at York.

Mr Podmore confirmed that he had been a few times, there had been promises about the work being done but that was over three years ago. He wanted to support the development but it was not happening.

Mr Thompson informed the meeting that Mr Coward was in hospital so Mr Robson would represent Eden Valley.

The Chairman wished Mr Coward well on behalf of the BHRC.

Minutes proposed by Mr Lee, seconded by Mr Delaney.

Minutes carried

Adoption of Accounts

Mr Walsh reported on the accounts presenting the Income and Expenditure. Mr Walsh stated that the company was still solvent and operational but due to losses the funds are diminishing. The cost basis is very tight, the club needs more income to move forward whether by way of a larger membership or other issues, it would depend where the club wanted to go.

The Chairman stated that they were looking at drawing up a business plan to be in place for at least 12 months. Mr Walsh reported on the Prakas fund, which has hidden costs due to administration and Corporation Tax. The lack of opportunity for investment was an issue needing to be resolved.

Mr Podmore agreed that the Prakas issue needed to be resolved finally.

The Vice Chairman informed members that he had been in touch with Dr McKenzie who was amazed that the BHRC still had the funds. The BHRC do not have details of any contract or agreement and the reason is that there never was one, which has been confirmed by Dr McKenzie, who has kindly agreed to give BHRC permission to spend the money in any way that enhances the sport of Harness Racing. This has been discussed by the Council and the decision made that in the meantime the fund will carry on to enhance British Bred Trotters, although a new format would be drawn up, which may involve spending some of the fund to enhance the races and sport as the investment route is not working. Now the permission had been granted the Council could work on some suggestions of a formula.

Accounts proposed by Mr Evans, seconded by Mr Lee.

Accounts adopted.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman stated that the last 12 months had been a steep learning curve, but he felt that things were moving in the right direction, there were good ideas from the Vice Chairman for the future, which with help and less aggravation could move quicker. There is a great sport which needs to work together on the opportunities and move forward together. The Chairman asked for any questions.

Mr Podmore questioned how the Chairman felt the one person one vote suggestion could work.

The Chairman replied that it had become obvious with banking issues and other conversation with associations the BHRC wanted to link up with that the memorandum is totally out of date. The Secretary was working hard with the Co-op bank, but questions kept getting asked like as the income is from licence holders why are they not members, why are there people on the memorandum that are not part of the company. The one member one vote would give opportunity for the licence holders to vote on Director elections only, not to vote on rule changes, licence changes or all other issues. At times of discontent it would be possible to put issues out to a vote but not always necessary, the day to day running of the company and organisation would still be down to the Directors. On travelling to the members meetings there had not been one where 50 members had been present, the most was 31 at SHRC or 28 at WWHRA. This could bring licence holders in so they can have a say and have a vote.

Mr Podmore questioned whether the clubs would stay.

The Chairman replied that the clubs would be the promoters of fixtures, but the whole idea was open for discussion.

Mr Podmore suggested that the vote could go through each club for their number of members. The idea needed more legs, but it was good.

Mr Stevenson questioned whether the document had been put together by the Council and whether they were happy with it.

The Chairman replied that the document had been worked out by the Secretary from information available on the internet. It would now be presented before the Council for discussion, it is the foundation for the discussion and action.

Mr Lee stated that it is a discussion document.

The Chairman agreed that without a document no discussion would ever get started, the legal fees to tie it up will be reasonable.

Mr Delaney stated that it would not be cheap.

The Chairman replied that he had a quote that if the majority is drafted by the BHRC for £1500.

The Vice Chairman stated that document was not a Council document.

Mr Stevenson added that is what he was asking, if the Council had input into it as the old one is outdated.

Mr Evans questioned whether there was a reason that Lord Lipsey had resigned.

The Secretary read Lord Lipsey's resignation letter.

Mr Stevenson stated that he would not want the Chairman to resign.

Mr Huschka agreed.

The Vice Chairman stated that Lord Lipsey would have read the disciplinary report on the website regarding the Chairman.

Mr Podmore questioned whether Lord Lipsey had brought up any other disciplinary issues during his term.

Mr Stevenson stated that he found it strange that Lord Lipsey had not brought up the legal case that cost the company £18,000. If the panel thought it was serious could they not have suspended you at the time.

The Chairman replied that the panel dealt with him as they saw fit.

Mr Delaney stated that the Chairman was dealt with as a licence holder, not an official of the BHRC, the penalty was based on him being a licence holder.

Mr Stevenson stated that if the Chairman was asked to resign then it would be seen as dealing with him twice.

The Vice Chairman stated that he had insisted the Chairman was dealt with as a licence holder, it then went back to Council for discussion and the decision made that given the short period of time to the AGM if the Chairman wanted to put himself forward again then the licence holders could decide if he was right and proper to continue.

Mr Stevenson stated that rules say you are dealt with as any position.

The Vice Chairman replied that this was an unprecedented issue, the Chairman was dealt with as a licence holder, the Council decided it was then his decision as to whether he would stand as Chairman, also licence holders could decide or object if they saw fit.

The Chairman stated that if anyone had a vote of no confidence then they should table it now otherwise the meeting would move on.

Mr Evans stated that Lord Lipsey would be a big loss to the sport, he had always been in the background with S4C and willing to write in support of the sport. If he wouldn't support the BHRC going forward then it would be a loss.

The Vice Chairman expressed concern over the comment that Lord Lipsey was 'duty bound to report' as he was not sure what it meant.

Mr Huschka stated that he felt the Chairman would be a bigger loss than Lord Lipsey.

The Chairman stated that he did not intend to resign, if the people wanted him out then they would have to vote him out. He was disappointed that Lord Lipsey had not contacted him direct to discuss the issue before he wrote the letter. He intended to write to Lord Lipsey if he was returned as Chairman, he felt that to threaten the organisation at the end of his term was not a good move.

Mrs Maguire stated that all were aware of what a loss Lord Lipsey would be, he knew how to open doors, who to write to etc, but he was gone and would not come back. The Chairman offered himself so the BHRC had to deal with that, but do not underestimate the Council opinion that he is a loss.

Mr Lee stated that he did not like the words used in the letter, it sounded like blackmail.

Mr Delaney questioned whether the Chairman would ask Lord Lipsey to reconsider if he met with him.

The Chairman replied yes.

Election of BHRC Stewards

The Chairman questioned whether any members wanted to put anything forward before the votes were cast.

Mr Stevenson stated that in his opinion reading the constitution this was not correct, rule 34 comes before 35.

Mr McNally and Mr Strickland came in on the same date and Ms Havard has resigned.

The Vice Chairman replied that Mr Delaney, Mr Strickland and himself had discussed the issue and he had volunteered to be on rotation.

Mr Stevenson stated that it was not within the constitution.

The Vice Chairman replied that was Mr Stevenson's opinion. Every Steward soon after the AGM would be advised of their own rotation.

The Chairman agreed that at every AGM each Steward will know. All these issues go back to the constitution as it can be read so many ways, the arguments have to stop at the AGM.

Mr Delaney stated that in that case it must have been wrong for over 20 years, precedence has been set.

Mr Stevenson added that he did not want an argument just for the AGM to be done correctly.

The Chairman added that the constitution needed changing.

Mr Smart stated that the SHRC wanted to know if it was right that the Vice Chairman should also hold a second position within the BHRC and why the Vice Chairman felt he needed to have both.

The Vice Chairman explained that he did not want to be in a position where he was up for election every year. He wanted to know that he had the support of the BHRC for the next three years, he wanted continuity and support as a Council member not just as Vice Chairman. He would not get two votes though, just one as a Council member.

Mr Delaney stated that he could not think of a Vice Chairman that had not been a Steward.

Mr Smart stated that it was felt in Scotland that another position for a fresh Council member was being taken up.

Votes cast

Jason Podmore - 21

Jim McNally - 19

Craig Stevenson - 6

Gordon Garnett - 2

Jason Podmore and Jim McNally elected as Stewards

Election of BHRC Vice Chairman

No objections, Mr McNally returned as Vice Chairman

Election of BHRC Chairman

No objections, Mr Sheedy returned as Chairman.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their continued support.

Appointment of Regional Steward

The Chairman questioned whether parties were willing to continue.

Mr Pugh confirmed yes.

Mr Thompson confirmed yes.

No objections

Mr Smart questioned what the situation with the Regional Steward for Scotland was.

The Vice Chairman advised that through discussion with Mr Hay, Mr Inglis had said that he did not want to stand as Regional Steward for the future.

The Chairman questioned whether Scotland could help with the situation.

The Vice Chairman stated that the position would have to be advertised again for volunteers.

Mr Smart requested that the role of what the Regional Steward does also be advertised.

Mr Strickland stated that the role is explained in the rule book.

Mr Smart stated that he felt that is why the BHRC don't get so many applicants as it is not clear what is required.

The Vice Chairman added that the sport was dangerously short of Stewards and volunteers as it is.

Mr Lee agreed that it had taken a long time to convince the last Regional Steward into the role.

NESA application to be admitted as a voting member

Members agreed to be discussed in the Committee meeting due to review of set up of organisations

Meeting closed - 12.40pm