

EDITORIAL

Firstly I would like to thank the members of the clubs and associations where I attended meetings for their hospitality and also for the discussions we had and issues we debated. It was always my intention as Chairman to speak direct to the licence holders and take on board their thoughts, their ideas and also their complaints. Apologies that I could not attend all association meetings, I will try and catch up with the ones I missed in the New Year.

At the AGM I was returned as Chairman for a further term. I was very pleased that Jim was returned as Vice Chairman and that Bret and Barry stood for a further term as Stewards. I feel that the Council are working together well at present and would like this to continue and be built upon. There are still some factions within the sport that seem to have tireless energy for negativity. As Chairman and a board of Directors, we are striving to adjust this way of thinking. Of course people have complaints and the right to air these grievances, however there are procedures in place to allow for this which should always be the first route for every member. We want our glass full, not half empty!

I am still on a mission to revamp the constitution of the BHRC. The issue has been agreed by the BHRC Committee and BHRC Council members have committed to formalise any ideas or input by the end of January 2017. From this date, a new structure can be formulated and put to paper. From here I am confident we will progress swiftly. I will keep members posted.

Looking over figures as we do at this time of year, it is clear to see that the membership base is still declining. However, the number of horses registered to race, the number of races and fixtures remains at a fairly static rate. On a positive, the total annual prize money has increased in the last couple of years. This is of course due to the input Le Trot has into the Trotter Francais races, the increased purses in the juvenile sector, the hard graft of the Promoters and Fund Raisers and of course the continued support of generous sponsors across the sport. Going forward, and on the back of the success of the Handicap Panel, I would like to see a Promotion Panel appointed and also a Fixture Panel. Across the three panels then the set up of the racing year could be agreed with regard to funding, grants, spacing of juvenile events and handicapping of horses - an idea I will put forward under the new structure and constitution changes. With regard to trying to increase the membership base, I believe the continued strength of the integrity programme is a boost, ideas have come forward for a Young Drivers Development Programme and also the idea for Harness Racing 'Red Letter' have-a-go-driving days is being explored. Exposure of the sport was excellent in 2016 with Chelmsford, Musselburgh, Newcastle and Wolverhampton thoroughbred racecourses all staging Harness Racing. This is what we will be working with Promoters to continue and to open the sport to new eyes and fresh blood.

I will continue to support as many race meetings as possible in 2017, where I will always be available for members to chat with me and raise any issues.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year and the best of racing luck for 2017. Please join us at the inaugural BHRC & STAGBI Awards Event in February!

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