

In our pledge to provide a more transparent organisation we would like to update you on our work in February.

As the nights get shorter spring is finally here and following recent government announcements a sense of normality looks to be on the horizon.

February has been another busy month preparing for the coming season and we are pleased to announce that the ratings based handicap system will be implemented in time for 2021. Work is currently underway to integrate this into our computer database and convert horses to their new ratings.

We are in the process of updating our whip rules and had a very productive meeting with stewards from Harness Racing Australia. A-Class drivers have been invited to a forum next week to discuss this further with the aim being to mirror the whip rules which were successfully introduced in Australia.

After extensive work by a new insurance broker, we are pleased to inform you that we have managed to secure Directors and Officers liability insurance, the cost of this insurance is approximately £7,000, which is significantly less than the quote we received last year and had anticipated having to pay this year for cover, however this isn't a like for like policy to the one we held previously.

Previously we held Directors and Corporate liability, which offered protection for both directors and the company, due to previous claims made against the corporate aspect of the policy it has proved impossible to obtain corporate cover at any cost, with all insurance companies approached refusing to offer cover. The lack of corporate cover does place more risk with you the licence holder, if claims are made in future, they will be made directly against the finances and assets of the BHRC which are almost exclusively comprised of license fees. The previous claims made have put us into this undesirable position.

Unfortunately, we now find ourselves with a rule book that is outdated and funds must be diverted to update the rule book to remove these anomalies. Licence holders must also take accountability for their actions and need to realise that too often it is the actions of a minority of licence holders that is driving up the costs to everybody.

Track insurance each year is paid upfront with the fee being calculated on the approximate number of meetings to be held in the year. Tracks are then charged retrospectively for this insurance. It is a similar procedure for owners/drivers insurance. Due to the worldwide pandemic in 2020 several meetings (that would normally use the insurance) were cancelled, and many owners and driver did not take out licences. This has left the BHRC with a significant shortfall. The premium for our event and member public liability insurance has unfortunately also increased this season. This highlights the need for the organisation to replace this and other losses from previous years.

You the license holders (via your clubs) have voted to implement a new handicap system, in order to do this, we need to make significant changes to our database program. We have followed due diligence and received three quotes for this work. We have recently awarded a contract to carry out Phase 1 of the changes which will start immediately and be in place for the start of the 2021 racing season. Phase 2 will hopefully take place over the closed season of 2021-22 and will serve to make the office more efficient and also improve the user experience for you the members.

On the 19th January we pledged to spend the increase in licence fees on our increased insurance costs and to help the BHRC run more efficiently and be able to fulfil its responsibilities to licence holders, this is just an outline of our work so far. We will be revisiting license fees on an annual basis and it is hoped that we can offer a reduced rate in 2022.

We like to remind licence holders that the Board of Directors are a group of unpaid volunteers who give up huge amounts of their free time to work on various aspects of the sport in order to improve the experience for you all. We are working on numerous other projects at present and will update you

as these are resolved. We would also like to assure you that any money generated from the increases in licence fees will remain within the BHRC accounts and be continually utilised for the improvement and sustainability of your governing body.

On the subject of finances a payment plan has been put in place for the repayment of funds to the Prakas. Minimum payments of £3,700 will be made annually to repay the funds within five years, with an element of interest given. We'd like to take this opportunity to remind you that the Prakas race will return in 2021 with the first stakes payment due on 1st April.

We have also produced a new protocol for stable visits to ensure consistency and a pilot has taken place. Further stable visits will be made throughout the season.

Unfortunately the BHRC have recently received a complaint regarding road racing. We are duty bound to investigate these claims and we remind license holders that any form of road racing is illegal. It has an extremely negative impact on the image of the official form of governed Harness Racing and has many associated welfare issues for the horses involved. Due to these factors any form of Road Racing is absolutely forbidden under BHRC Rules and Regulations.

To end on a more positive note we hope that you all enjoyed the virtual awards ceremony, we would like to congratulate all of our 2020 winners.

If you have any suggestions for future improvements we invite you to submit them via email to the BHRC office, with a heading of 'Future Improvements'. These can then be discussed in Board Meetings.

From the Directors of the BHRC