

BHRC Members Meeting **Thursday 7:30PM via Zoom**

Attendees: Carol Jenkins, Charles Inglis, Jason Podmore, Julie Park, Will Evans, Laura Price Davies, Chloe Wakefield, Deborah Wakefield, Ric Park, Melanie Langford, Emma Langford, Robert Millichap, Georgina Nicholson, Anthony Fettah, Alan Jones, Geoff Robson, Hayley Cassells (Minutes)

Apologies: Barry Delaney, Gareth Bevan, Garry O'Grady

Minutes From Previous Meeting

Everyone was happy with minutes from the previous meeting.

Matters Arrising From Minutes

Carol Jenkins gave an update on the constitution. The first draft has been received from the solicitor in the last week, it has been circulated around the board to come back with queries. It will then be published to members.

Robert Millichap queried whether it would be worth circulating it to the members at the same time so that we could go back to the solicitor with all of the questions at the same time. Carol advised that it will definitely go to members for consultation before it is put to a vote.

Update on Office

The original premise that was found had fallen through as there were physical issues with the building. Another premise has been found but it is in the process of being ready and we hope to be in the new office for the beginning of next season.

Since the racing has finished the office has been catching up on accounts, getting prepared for the awards evening by contacting winners and nominees, reaching out to companies for sponsorship for racing and getting ready for licence renewals beginning again in January.

Update on Integrity

In 2023 there were 92 full blood tests compared to 97 the year before, also 43 blood gas tests compared to 66 in 2022. There have been 3 positive cases and although we have tried to get 2 of the cases to panel before christmas however due to scheduling issues with panel members, the responsible person and integrity team we have been unable to get them to panel this side of Christmas so they will come to panel in the new year.

Update on HRBGB

There has been no meeting of HRBGB since the last members meeting.

Update on Stewarding

We have a panel set up which is resuming on Tuesday night. The panel are keen to get the rule book out to members for feedback as soon as possible so that the new rule book can be published in plenty of time for the new year.

General Update

Hayley has been reaching out to try and find sponsorship with different organisations. Julie has been in touch with two different bookmakers to try and get some support, we have a list that we are methodically working through.

At the last meeting we discussed employing someone to promote harness racing. Historically the BHRC had ties with someone named David Hood who we are trying to get in contact with. We are currently in discussions with another contact who we are hoping may come to the awards evening if not he is going to come to a race meeting in the Spring. He has seen videos of races and we have given him some figures and some information on the overseas market for betting in France from England. We will pursue this to see if we can get to an agreement where he can push our sport forward or attract a new market.

The SHRC has re-submitted the planning application for the new track in Stirling a couple of miles from where Corbiewood used to be, it is currently in a period where it can receive feedback until the 29th of December. Any feedback is appreciated even if you are not based locally as this shows people would be willing to travel to the site. You will need to register for an account which only takes a couple of minutes, the link to register is on the BHRC website and SHRC facebook pages. The more positive comments the better the application will stand with the council.

Initially when Musselburgh was in doubt we were asked as a governing body not to get involved which we followed. Last year we contacted Musselburgh with a proposal which initially they were keen on but when it went to Chester Race team it was a no. We adjusted the proposal and sent it again this year and once again they have denied the proposal.

Call For External Audit - Anthony Fettah

Anthony Fettah wants to get an external audit of the accounts for transparency to the members. He feels like it will clear the members' minds.

Carol Jenkins clarified in a perfect world it would be great to have an external audit and it was one of the first things that she discussed when she became a director. She has discussed the possibility of an audit with the accountant, they have a separate company with a totally different staff. The cost of an audit was an estimated seven and a half to eight thousand pounds.

Anthony said there are two options: either we put it to the members to vote on whether they would like an audit or he will speak to the company's house and raise concerns so they will force an audit.

Anthony questions why we are happy to spend tens of thousands on a new database which is not working but not spend money on an audit. Julie Park explained again that the new database is working but it was always a three step system and unfortunately members would not see it until the third stage when it is linked to the new website. The old database was not working and we spent thousands of pounds with the old developers trying to get it to work. The first stage was getting the new database built so that we could put the information into the system, then building the handicap system and then the final stage was connecting it to the website. We are in the process of speaking with the developers to connect the database to the website.

The directors are happy for an audit however the cost is the main factor against it as the money would need to be found to cover the cost of this.

Anthony will put in an official proposal for an audit so that proposal can go to one man one vote at the next members meeting.

Robert Millichap explained that Anthony will need to clarify which set of accounts he would like audited.

Robert Millichap has queried the use of one man one vote and it is not utilised by members.

Anthony Fettah said that the BHRC Integrity has blown a lot of money on the last few cases.

Julie objected to this as the integrity system is in place to prevent cheating in the sport, the integrity program covers the costs with fines and recovered costs.

Julie queried the process of one man one vote in Anthony. Anthony will need to put a proposal in writing, this will be circulated around the members along with feedback from the directors as to why it may not be beneficial, then it will go to a member vote.

Anthony was struggling with audio so it was decided to get in contact to explain the process of putting forwards a proposal.

Jason queried if anyone could put any proposal forward to be voted on, what if they wanted to put a proposal through that would want to hit their horse 20 times in a race, or put multiple proposals through.

Carol explained that this is one of the reasons why the directors have been putting effort into getting the constitution simplified. So that it is clear to members which items can be put forwards for one man one vote/

Jason raised concerns of the amount of time, costs and effort that would go into having votes multiple times per year.

Robert Millichap explained that you could have a designated point of the year either, once or twice annually that one man one vote would be used for any proposals to be voted on.

Robert Millichap said that the idea was never to have big ticket items to vote on and anyone should be able to raise a proposal on any item they want. He doesn't want to return to previous times where no one knew what the board was doing. He clarified in the last meeting that he asked for it to be minutes that the board was not changing the constitution, just putting it in layman's terms.

Carol objected saying that one man one vote was sold to the members on the premise of big ticket items being available to vote.

Robert Millichap stated that no one knows what a big ticket item is. He doesn't want a constitution that has a list of items that members can vote on. When the constitution goes to a vote he feels the members were not happy before so can't see how they would be happy now.

Will Evans does not feel that we can define a big ticket item. The constitution will go to the members for approval before it is voted on.

Julie Park explained that at the time of the vote to move to one man one vote, if we look back to calendars and meeting minutes the idea was sold as the members getting to vote on big ticket items as it would be totally unmanageable for the members to vote on every single item that need attention. There is nothing to hide, the directors do this job voluntarily and there would not be the time or the funds to vote on everything that goes to the board. We need a workable structure that works both for the board and the members. One positive is that the members now vote for the directors which is a big step forwards.

Anthony asked if there is a financial director. Julie Park explained that all of the directors look at the company finances, there is no one director that has all of the responsibility it is taken as a board responsibility.

Jason clarified that even if there was a financial director and there was a mistake the full board would still all be equally liable.

Anthony Fettah disagreed with this, he also complained that the members of sub committees are not published to the members. He said it would be better for members if they could have one director that they could ask questions to rather than having to consult the full board.

Robert Millichap explained that a resolution was passed to increase the membership from just 30 clubs and directors to 430 licence holders.

Carol said that a change to include one man one vote was put into the constitution as she was surprised when she found it in the constitution.

Robert Millichap explained that there was only a written resolution passed which did not affect the constitution where the existing membership of 30 increased to 430. The only changes to the constitution were being able to vote by post and removing the regional stewards as directors.

Robert Millichap changed the constitution on behalf of the office and just copied and pasted the changes he was sent.

Carol advised she would send through the changes made to Robert Millichap.

Any Other Business

Jamie Davies asked how much help would Wales and the West get if they were unable to fill their top table.

Jaimie also asked how many directors would be attending the meeting.

Jason clarified that he would 99% be attending the meeting and that the BHRC will be happy to assist with anything that is asked for whether it is licences, IT support etc.

Julie Park apologised that she is unable to attend due to time restrictions getting out of school however she is more than happy to help producing provisional start sheets or collating results as she can do these jobs remotely.

Carol said she will hopefully be attending the meeting as a member. She advises that they have had a candidate come forward for a meeting with the directors that was interested in standing for the top table where the directors agreed that they would help in any way that they can.

Will Evans also confirmed he would do his best to be there and that he hopes the meeting gets a good turn out and that people put their names forward for the positions.

Charles Inglis confirmed he would be attending.

Jason asked if Anthony Fettah is a member. Anthony confirmed that he is a promoter and he feels that if you are a promoter you do not need to be a member.

Date & Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting is following the AGM.

Hayley confirmed that she would need to confirm that date at a later time so we can confirm a date when the accounts will be produced so these can be provided to members in the correct time scales.