



6th MARCH 2008.

Dear Fellow Bookmakers,

I must agree it is too long since I made a report to you on this website, so here goes.

As you know it is almost a year since we received the infamous letter from the RCA giving us notice. Since then thanks to you via your letters to your constituency MPs, we have had a positive result from the Select Committee, but that is not the be all end all, there is still a lot of work and negotiations to deal with. I shall try to explain these in detail.

First, through the FRB, there are meetings being held under the independent chairman Sholto Douglas-Home. We are represented by B. Johnson (ARB), K. Johnson (NAB) and R. Grossmith (RBA), all of whom spoke at the Select Committee. The RCA also have 3 representatives, these talks are ongoing. When we get results from these talks, your Association will be informed and so will you.

As you know the NJPC should have been long gone, but due to the many obstacles being put in our path by the RCA this has been delayed, much to everybody's annoyance, holding up pitch sales which for varying reasons were important to individual bookmakers and firms. As you should know pitch sales are being allowed during March to clear up these needs. It is regrettable that these sales have to be held at the old tariffs and commission rates, this is because we are still operating under the auspices of the NJPC. It is therefore up to the individual to make a commercial decision whether it is prudent to trade at this time. This brings me neatly onto the subject of NewCo, which will replace the NJPC. This will be known as AGT and we had our first full Board meeting on 26th February at the Crown Plaza Hotel NEC, Birmingham. The Board comprises Mrs. Tracey Barlow (Independent Chairperson), Steve Winfield (Independent Member), myself and Keith Johnson (NAB), Mark Fogarty and Robin Grossmith (RBA) and Mick Williams (ARB). Also in attendance were Tim Moore and Peter Smith. I should probably explain who our independent members are and their backgrounds. There were many outstanding applicants for these posts, unfortunately, some had to be discarded because they were too close to the bookmakers and at least one because he was too close to the racecourses. The final interviews from the short list were held in London by Tim Moore, Mark Fogarty and myself, and I feel that in Tracy and Steve we have appointed truly independent and thoroughly capable members of our board. Tracey lives in Lanarkshire and currently is a Non Executive Director and Audit Committee member, DfT Highways Agency, also an Executive Coach and Business Development Consultant with a 'Blue Chip' client portfolio. Prior to this Tracey was an Executive in Water and Utilities. Steve lives in Norfolk and had obviously researched the subject prior to his interview. He is a Fellow of The Chartered Institute of Bankers and is Managing Director of Crown Mortgage Management Limited. Both are keen race-goers and I look forward to working with them.

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AGT is short for Administration of Gambling on Tracks Ltd. I am extremely worried that the AGT budget will not be met at the current state of the outgoings and incomings. Our daily pitch administration fees have been doubled and the FRB has had to loan the company more of our money. I can assure you that I will not allow excess expenditure and have already asked for the reasons why 6 BRMs have to go to Cheltenham on Monday at our expense and what their expenses consist of? The same question applies to Aintree and other stop-overs. It also seems ridiculous to send highly paid BRMs to AWTs to look after 4/5 bookmakers, when a local part-timer could do it at half the cost. There are other areas where the budget can be trimmed, and I shall be exploring them all thoroughly, on your behalf, because AGT cannot keep coming to the 'wishing well' (that's us!!).

I know times are hard, so let's hope that we have a successful Cheltenham and Aintree. In between those two meetings I shall be attending three very important meetings on your behalf. The first meeting on the 31st March is the 'Bookmakers' Committee' where the NAB has two seats out of the thirteen. Andrew Watson (Fife and District) is the other NAB representative and is the longest serving member of the committee, his help is invaluable. The other seats are taken by the 'Big 3' (two seats each), four independent off-course bookmakers and one Betting Exchange representative. A big worry for us at this meeting with the advent of TurfTV is that the majority of the committee could be looking to put an end to the Betting Levy. This would be bad news for racecourse bookmakers as I am fairly certain that this would cause racecourse closures. The second meeting on the 1st of April will be the AGT meeting. The third meeting will be on the 2nd of April and will be when the Association Directors representing the nine affiliated associations meet as the NAB. The NAB represents all bookmakers the length and breadth of the country and welcomes constructive criticism, so if there is anything you need addressing, please ask your association representative to raise it at the meeting, particularly if you liked or disliked this report. I aim to file another report on the NAB web-site in mid April.

The Gambling Commission has recently been asked to consider the possibility of the FRB making a donation to RIGT on behalf of all racecourse bookmakers, rather than asking for individual donations. To date there has been no definitive answer and nothing has been paid to the GC on behalf of racecourse bookmakers. Any further developments on this issue will be advised as and when it is received.

Best Wishes to all,

George Moir.
Chairman.