

STATEMENT FROM THE NORTHERN BPA.

New pitches at Ayr - statement to the Racing Post March 5 2008.

Ayr racecourse management have told bookmakers that they will not agree to use existing ring lists to allocate betting pitches in new areas for next month's Scottish Grand National meeting. Instead they insist on putting the 18 new pitches out for tender.

Bookmakers' leaders are extremely unhappy about the move, particularly when talks with the Racecourse Association (RCA) to resolve the dispute regarding tenure of existing pitches are so delicately poised.

The Scottish bookmakers' associations and the Northern Bookmakers' Protection Association are now contacting all members to say they do not believe it is in bookmakers' interests to take part in any auction process.

The associations fear that unilateral action taken by Ayr will undermine the RCA's negotiating position as the umbrella association for 59 UK racecourses in the main pitches dispute. They believe the RCA should be allowed to establish guidelines for any new areas, through consultation with its members and negotiation with bookmakers.

In the meantime, bookmakers say that any new betting pitches should be allocated according to the seniority list. They believe the trading system for list positions, established in 1998, allows new entrants to enter the market and satisfies competition requirements.

Detailed negotiations have failed to persuade Ayr management to agree a commercial system that would bring additional revenue to Ayr for the new pitches but still use the existing lists. The associations have concluded it is not in the long term interest of on-course bookmakers to "assist Ayr Racecourse in undermining the negotiations that are taking place". Consequently, they are telling their membership they believe it is not in their interests to take part in the auction process.

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