

THE BRITISH HORSERACING BOARD

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RTR/ap FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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DRAFT GAMBLING BILL

I am writing in response to requests for comments on the Draft Gambling Bill to be submitted to you by 28 February 2004. In so doing may I draw your attention to the fact that some of the points covered below were addressed in my letter to you of 30 June 2003, when commenting on the DCMS Position Papers issued last summer.

Gambling Commission

As you know, the Board has been consistently supportive of the proposal to establish a properly resourced Gambling Commission with powers to deal effectively with a range of licensing and integrity issues. The Board strongly supports the views of the Jockey Club who, as the Regulatory Authority for British Racing, is commenting to you separately on this important strengthening of the current regulatory regime.

Betting Exchanges

As you know, the Board last December submitted a Memorandum to the Joint Scrutiny Committee, which focussed in particular on issues surrounding Betting Exchanges. I enclose a further copy herewith. I would also commend to you in this context the transcript of the oral evidence given by the BHB Chairman and others to the Committee on 20 January 2004.

Licensing of Betting Premises

In my earlier letter I stated that: "With betting premises now to be licensed by local authorities for the first time, we and racecourses are understandably concerned to see consistency in the terms of licences granted to racecourses. This can perhaps be most appropriately achieved by a requirement for the Gambling Commission to issue clear guidance".

The Board takes this opportunity to repeat this concern which, hopefully, will be addressed in due course in the form of a Gambling Commission Code of Practice in respect of licensing guidance, on which there would be consultation with interested parties.

Occasional Use Notice

In my earlier letter, the Board asked you to give favourable consideration to representations made by the Jockey Club on the implications of the proposed new premises licensing regime for Point to Points. The provision in Clause 28 of the Draft Bill that no more than four Occasional Use Notices may be issued by one track in any one year will have implications for some Point to Point courses, and we would again ask you please to review whether it is possible to provide some appropriate relief in this area.

Betting Shop Opening Hours

The Board notes that there is nothing in the current Draft Bill which deals specifically with Betting Shop Opening Hours. It would strongly support the inclusion in the Bill of permitted core opening times throughout the year to ensure consistency nationwide, with the opportunity for individual betting offices to apply to their local authority for permission to open outside these times.

Access Charges for Bookmakers at Racecourses

In my earlier letter I stated "The Board's view in respect of the 'Five Times Rule', in the light of its licensing agreement with bookmakers, was conveyed to you last year. The 'hybrid' approach now proposed in the Paper, involving the abolition of this Rule within, say, five years, is supported. The Board noted that you will be entering into detailed discussions with track operators and on-course bookmakers before coming to a final view on the detail". The Board continues to support the principles underlying this approach.

Recently Published Clauses

The Board noted the publication earlier this month of Clauses relating to, inter alia, the voiding of bets and the offence of "cheating". These are both issues on which the Jockey Club will be commenting and, if the Board has anything to add, I will be in touch with you.

Please let me know if you require any further information at this stage.

Yours sincerely

R. T. Ricketts

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