

# Cross-Party Group Annual Report

## Cross Party Group Details

### Cross Party Group Title:

**Horseracing**

## Group membership and office holders

### Name of Group Chair:

Llyr Gruffydd MS

### Names of other Members of the Senedd:

Alun Davies MS, Jack Sargeant MS, James Evans MS, Samuel Kurtz MS, Sam Rowlands MS, Gareth L Davies MS, Peter Fox MS, Joel James MS, Ken Skates MS, Mike Hedges MS

### Name of Secretary and Organisation:

Jack Barton – British Horseracing Authority

### Names of other external members and organisations represented:

Phil Bell – Executive Director, Chepstow and Ffos Racecourses

## Other meetings of the Group since the last AGM

### Meeting 1

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#### Date of Meeting:

8<sup>th</sup> December 2021

#### Attendees:

Members – Alun Davies MS (Labour), Gareth L Davies MS (Conservatives), James Evans MS (Conservatives), Peter Fox MS (Conservatives), Llyr Gruffydd MS (Plaid Cymru), Joel James MS (Conservatives), Samuel Kurtz MS (Conservatives), Sam Rowlands MS (Conservatives), Ken Skates MS (Labour)

Senedd Staff – Carys Lewis (Llyr Gruffydd), Lee Gonzales (Joel James)

British Horseracing Authority – Julie Harrington (Chief Executive), Jack Barton (Public Affairs Executive)

#### Summary of the issues discussed:

##### Introduction to Racing Presentation by Julie Harrington

Julie Harrington began by thanking the members for the opportunity to speak to them and for their support for Welsh racing, and then spoke for around 35 minutes giving 'An Introduction to Racing' presentation which covered subjects including:

- Numbers behind the industry's size and economic impact
- Detail of the structure and governance of racing
- The key challenges faced (including the horserace betting levy, gambling act review, business rates) by racing across Britain and specifically in Wales
- A draft schedule for the Cross-Party Group in 2022

During her talk, she stated that we would share the presentation from the meeting, a copy of the Horse Welfare Board's strategy, 'A life well-lived' and keep the CPG up to date with developments around the consultation that the BHA is running on the use of the whip in British racing.

##### Q & A

Sam Rowlands MS asked a couple of questions on whether or not the BHA currently regulates Harness Racing in Wales, and whether as part of the creation of a Welsh Racing brand, Harness Racing could be involved with that.

Julie Harrington responded to the question by stating that the BHA does not currently preside over or regulate Harness Racing in Wales, and that there is no relationship between the BHA and the governing body of Harness Racing in Wales. She did note that during her time managing Chepstow racecourse when she was at Northern Racing, the Harness Racing community had been invited for a

trial event at the course, however it was ultimately decided that for biosecurity reasons – namely most of the horses within the Harness Racing community are not thoroughbreds – to not go any further than a trial.

**Joel James MS and James Evans MS both had to leave the meeting at this point.**

Gareth L Davies MS asked a question about the highly regulated nature of the racing industry and asked Julie Harrington whether the industry feels that we've got the current level of regulation right.

Julie Harrington stated that the reason why racing is so highly regulated is due the importance of keeping our sport fair and free from corruption, as well as racings close links to the betting industry. She made the point that consumer confidence is key and cannot be lost by racing. If racing customers believe that the product they are watching/betting on is not genuine and is being manufactured, we would risk them switching off from the sport which impacts the sport financially and its sustainability.

## Meeting 2

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### Date of Meeting:

30<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Attendees:

Members – Alun Davies MS (Labour), Gareth Davies MS (Conservatives), James Evans MS (Conservatives), Llyr Gruffydd MS (Chair, Plaid Cymru), Mike Hedges MS (Labour), Joel James MS (Conservatives), Jack Sargeant MS (Labour)

Senedd Staff – Mike Bryan (Samuel Kurtz), Carys Lewis (Llyr Gruffydd), Ryland Doyle

British Horseracing Authority (BHA) – Jack Barton (Public Affairs Executive)

Arena Racing Company (ARC) – Phil Bell (Executive Director of Chepstow and Ffos Las racecourses)

Horse Welfare Board (HWB) – Barry Johnson (Chair)

### Summary of the issues discussed:

#### Come Racing in Wales Presentation by Phil Bell

Phil Bell was invited to begin by Llyr Gruffydd MS and spoke for around 15 minutes giving a presentation on the 'Come Racing in Wales' project, which when created, will deliver a brand and dedicated staff member to promote the Welsh Horseracing industry through a website and online channels. Key points from the presentation were:

- How Welsh racecourses can attract more visitors and look at offering unique tourism experiences

- Celebrating the heritage of racing in Wales, and highlight the achievements of Welsh trained horses and Welsh based industry professionals who regularly punch above their weight in the wider industry
- Attracting the next generation of racing fans through education, promotion over digital channels and experience innovation
- An outline of what funding arrangements would be to deliver the Come Racing in Wales brand including contributions from the Welsh racecourses, and possibly a start up contribution from the Welsh Government, with the ultimate aim of making the brand self-sustainable with sponsorship contribution

### Introductions

Before the Q&A, Llyr Gruffydd MS asked Members to introduce themselves and invited any initial views on the Come Racing in Wales project.

Llyr Gruffydd MS mentioned that he was a racing fan and is looking forward to attending Bangor's family day in May. He remarked that he would be happy to support the project and assist with any representations to the Welsh Government.

Joel James MS – noted that he had met Phil Bell on a visit to Tim Vaughan's yard within his constituency, and said that he very interested in helping the initiative, particularly with a view to how it will positively impact the businesses within his constituency.

Gareth Davies MS – stated that he had been a big racing fan all his life and remarked that he was a big champion of improving transport links in North Wales to venues like Bangor-on-Dee.

Jack Sargeant MS – introduced himself as a racing fan who had been to Chester racecourse many times being from North Wales. He stated that he would be happy to support the initiative.

Alun Davies MS – introduced himself and stated that in his view, horseracing as a bit of a sleeping giant in Wales, a sport that is enjoyed by many. He said that he was interested in the plans, and that there is a wider point that needs highlighting about the racing industry's contribution to rural sustainability.

**Joel James MS and Jack Sargeant MS both had to leave the meeting at this point.**

### Q & A

Alun Davies MS asked where he, and others on the group, as politicians, could add value to making the case for the 'Come Racing in Wales' brand and stated that we needed to identify the role that the Welsh Government can play. As a follow up, Llyr Gruffydd MS stated that members could speak in debates and submit questions to help lay the groundwork for any approach to the Welsh Government over the funding.

In response, Phil Bell said that he was going to call his superiors at ARC to establish what funding was available internally before we establish our ask of the Welsh Government.

Jack Barton confirmed that he will consider how members of the group can assist us with representations and make sure to coordinate any activity.

Llyr Gruffydd MS raised the possibility of a special Welsh racing weekend/week as part of the new initiative to promote Welsh racing.

Phil Bell noted that the Go Racing in Yorkshire had an event setup running a 9-day Summer festival where racing takes place at all 9 Yorkshire tracks. Jack Barton said that the BHA – who have a degree of control over racing's fixture list – are usually keen to support such initiatives, for example the recently created 'Go North' weekend.

Gareth Davies MS and Phil Bell left the meeting following the conclusion of this section. Barry Johnson joined the meeting. Mike Hedges and James Evans joined the meeting at around 12:35pm during Barry's presentation.

### Horse Welfare Board Update by Barry Johnson

Barry Johnson spoke for around 15 minutes giving a presentation updating on progress on the Horse Welfare Board's strategy 'A life well-lived', which was released in February 2020. Key points from the presentation were:

- Some of the recommendations of the strategy were delayed by the pandemic, but now the projects are moving at a pace following the appointment of project leads – for example the change from orange to white obstacles
- This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a multi-year strategy and discussions are already taking place about a potential second phase of the Horse Welfare strategy between 2024 and 2028
- The strategy is underpinned by four main aims – ensuring best quality of life for our horses, collective lifetime responsibility through increased traceability, continuing to improve racecourse safety, and growing and maintaining trust in racing and the industry's processes around horse welfare
- Communication is a key strand of the strategy and efforts to improve the public's understanding around equine injuries and fatalities and demonstrate how racehorses are treated in racing (National Racehorse Week)
- A review of the Aftercare sector has been carried out following a recommendation from the Horse Welfare Board

Before the Q&A, Llyr Gruffydd MS welcomed James Evans MS and Mike Hedges MS to the meeting.

### Q & A

Alun Davies MS thanked Barry Johnson for the overview and stated he was impressed with the holistic nature of the work. He asked about how we guarantee the quality of life of a racehorse in a training yard on a daily basis.

Barry Johnson responded that, when a horse is in training, it is in the care of a licensed trainer who is subject to the BHA's regulations around equine welfare, anti-doping etc. Yards can be inspected by BHA inspectors team at any time. He also noted that it would be counter productive to mistreat racehorses or let them get into poor shape if you want them to perform to their best ability on the racehorse.

Alun Davies MS also asked about what industry professionals are doing to ensure that horses who retire from racing get the quality of life they deserve.

Barry Johnson stated trainers work hard to find suitable homes, with some yards having staff members dedicated to the task. It makes business sense to quickly find good homes for retiring horses as trainers want racehorse owners to replace the horse in training with a new one. He summarised that, in his

experience, 99/100 horses are going to good homes, and it's the 1/100 who suffers a bad experience that we are trying to prevent through the Aftercare review.

Llyr Gruffydd MS asked about the Equine ID consultation that Barry Johnson had briefly touched on during his presentation. Barry Johnson noted that digital passports in racing would be a positive step as racing moves to address issues with horse traceability in the aftercare sector. Jack Barton shared that the Equine ID consultation is a UK Government process that DEFRA are due to release in the coming weeks. He also noted that there are potential benefits to using digital passports for horses when it comes to addressing issues related to cross-border horse movement post-Brexit and reducing the amount of paperwork that is currently required.

Jack Barton (BHA) gave a short update on timeframes around the current BHA review into the use of the whip in British racing – a recommendation of the Horse Welfare Board. He stated that the recommendations of the Whip Steering Group are due to be released in June with a view to any changes being implemented in November.

### **Meeting 3**

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#### **Date of Meeting:**

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

#### **Attendees:**

Members: Llyr Gruffydd MS (Chair, Plaid Cymru), Alun Davies MS (Labour), Gareth Davies MS (Conservative), James Evans MS (Conservative), Samuel Kurtz MS (Conservative), Sam Rowlands MS (Conservative)

Senedd Support Staff: Kiera, Helene and Angela (Plaid Cymru)

From Racing: Jack Barton (Secretariat), Phil Bell (Executive Director of Chepstow and Ffos Las racecourses), John Flint (Racehorse Trainer), Alan Johns (Professional Jockey) and Tim Vaughan (Racehorse Trainer)

#### **Summary of the issues discussed:**

The meeting kicked off at 12:05 with Llyr opening by welcoming everyone to the meeting, and asked everyone present to give a short introduction.

Llyr then handed over to Tim and John for a discussion about their career as a racehorse trainer. Tim mentioned that he trained in Cowbridge and employed over 50 staff across his business (which he has diversified in recent years). John stated that he ran a family-orientated racehorse

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training business near Bridgend and has a 28-box yard. Their segment quickly got onto some of the key issues faced by trainers in Wales including:

1. Problems with gaining planning permission in order to expand and grow their business
  
2. Having to pay more business rates than yards of a similar size in England – i.e. their direct competition – something which was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic as yards in England have not paid no or half rates for over 2 years now.
  - In response, a number of Members spoke about a lack of awareness of the issues faced by trainers during the height of the pandemic.
  - Phil noted the strong levels of support that racecourses had received in comparison, including a Welsh Government grant to cover lost revenues from the Welsh Grand National.
  - Jack confirmed that the BHA had raised issues with the business rates system for racehorse trainers to Deputy Minister Dawn Bowden at a previous meeting, where they had been encouraged to put together a proposal for how the Welsh Government can support trainers although workload had limited scope to action this work so far.
  - Members present agreed that, once a proposal was ready, they would review it and potentially offer their support.
  
3. The biggest point of discussion was issues with congestion on the M4 around Cardiff, with Tim & John reporting that they had to plan for staff to work longer hours – with economic consequences - due to the delays and also allow more time for their horses to get to where they are racing. Tim also felt it was a barrier to racehorse ownership in Wales and therefore investment in the country. Members present had conflicting views as to whether this problem needed to be resolved.
  - James asked Tim for an estimate of how much he thought it cost his business per year. Tim estimated around £40-50,000 but he would have to do the numbers to get a more accurate analysis of the costs.
  - Alun was clear that he does not believe that widening the M4 around Cardiff would provide the 'silver bullet' required to solve some of the issues raised. He also raised environmental concerns around building the extra lanes required on the impact on air quality in the region.
  - On this subject, Jack mentioned that the racing industry had recently commissioned work by independent consultants on, and that he would share a summary with the group's members.

- Llyr bought the debate on this subject to a close by noting the potential welfare impacts that delays can have to racehorses stuck in traffic.

Other areas covered included:

#### The creation of the Come Racing in Wales brand

- Phil updated the group on progress with the project. He is awaiting confirmation from Chester Racing Company (who owned Bangor-on-Dee) on making a financial contribution to the work.
- Phil mentioned that as part of the project, that an Economic Impact study would be commissioned to better understand the size and scale of the Welsh racing industry. All members agreed that this would be a positive move.
- Gareth asked Phil whether he felt there had been a reduction in racing 'anoracks' following the pandemic. Phil noted that there had been changing dynamics in terms of racegoers, and that who you get through the door is usually dependent on the theme and quality of the meeting they are hosting.
- Sam asked Phil whether the plan was to confirm Welsh trainers on the Come Racing in Wales website in order to promote them and their businesses. Phil confirmed that was his intention.
- It was agreed that it would be useful to sit down with the CPG and discuss the Come Racing in Wales brand - when it is at a more advanced stage - in order to get the Members view on our proposal.

#### Point to Point racing in Wales

- Llyr asked Alan to describe how he became a professional jockey. Alan stated that he started riding in point-to-point racing like many of the young riders in Wales. He talked about how it provides a positive schooling ground but how ultimately, he turned professional due to the greater rewards in the professional game. This was an opinion shared by Tim and John who also started training in point-to-points before taking out full training licences.
- There was some discussion about how point-to-point racing seemed to be on the decline in Wales, with poor field sizes and some venues no longer hosting point-to-points. Phil confirmed that the Welsh Government had asked to give some money to the point-to-point racing authority during 2021 and that he had recommended to his board that this continues in the coming years.

#### Promotion of the industry within the Senedd

- Llyr spoke of potentially using parliamentary time in the Senedd to promote the industry and confirmed that he would be looking to host a members debate around National Racehorse Week.

- Alun suggested that we needed to look at how we could increase the groups visibility with other members of the Senedd.
- Jack mentioned that we could potentially offer the planned Q3 group yard visit out to all members of the Senedd in order to get some who wouldn't usually engage along.
- Llyr also touched upon an idea to potentially bring a racehorse to the Senedd, which has been discussed as part of National Racehorse Week planning. Tim mentioned he had already done this for a previous promotional campaign and could potentially do so again.

## **Professional lobbyists, voluntary organisations and charities the Group have met during the previous year.**

[names of lobbyists/organisations/charities should be included as follows, e.g.]

Jack Barton

### **Name of Organisation:**

British Horseracing Authority

### **Name of Group:**

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### **Name of Organisation:**

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### **Name of Group:**

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## Annual Financial Statement

**Cross Party Group Title:**

**Horseracing**

**Date:**

18/11/22

**Name of Chair:**

**Llyr Gruffydd MS**

**Name of Secretary and Organisation:**

**Jack Barton (British Horseracing Authority)**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Group's Expenses</b>	None	£0.00
<b>Costs of all goods</b>	Catering provided for in person meeting at the Senedd on 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2022	£150.48
<b>Benefits received by the group or individuals members from external bodies</b>	No benefits received.	£0.00
<b>Any financial support or other support.</b>	No financial support was received.	£0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>£150.48</b>

Services provided to the Group, such as hospitality.

All hospitality paid for [include the name of the group/organisation].

<b>Date</b>	<b>Name and description of provider</b>	<b>Costs</b>
<b>Welsh Racing Awards – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022</b>	British Horseracing Authority for four members of the CPG	£300.00

<b>Total</b>	<b>£300.00</b>
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