

## **Cross-Party Group for Horseracing – Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 – 12-1pm**

**Venue:** Video Conferencing Room, Ty Hywel.

### **Attendance**

Members: Llyr Gruffydd MS (Plaid Cymru – Chair), James Evans MS (Conservative), Peter Fox MS (Conservative), Samuel Kurtz MS (Conservative), Jack Sargeant MS (Labour)

Senedd Staff: Members of Samuel Kurtz MS and Mike Hedges MS (Labour) Senedd Staffing teams were present

External: Jack Barton and Zoe Elliott (British Horseracing Authority)

Apologies: Alun Davies MS (Labour), Sam Rowlands MS (Conservative), Joel James MS (Conservative)

### **AGM**

Llyr Gruffydd MS was re-elected as Chair of the Cross-Party Group. This had the support of all Members present.

Jack Barton, on behalf of the British Horseracing Authority, was re-elected to continue to provide the Secretariat of the group, with the support of all members present. Llyr placed on record his thanks for all the support given to the group by the British Horseracing Authority so far.

### **Careers in Racing Presentation on the Job Opportunities Available in British Horseracing**

For this section, Zoe Elliott (Head of Careers and Marketing at the BHA) gave a presentation to the Group outlining the work of Careers in Racing, British racing's internal recruitment agency, as well as some of the different career paths, courses and training available to those in the racing industry.

### **Q & A**

Samuel Kurtz MS asked a question about whether family links to the racing industry are key to getting into sport. Zoe answered that it is often useful but clear pathways into the industry exist for those that don't and that careers in racing can often be a choice for those looking to switch careers.

Sam also asked a question on where the greatest shortages lay when it comes to racing's workforce. Zoe answered that traditionally getting Stable Staff and especially Work Riders was trickiest given the horse handling skills required, noting that yards had previously filled such roles with international employees. Zoe also noted recent issues post-Covid with finding hospitality staff and grounds team employees.

James Evans MS asked about the relationship that Careers in Racing had with schools in Wales and whether they work with local authorities to get into them to speak to students. Zoe gave some examples where a local link up had worked well (eg. Bridgend College) but said that it is only a small team that has limits in terms of how many events they can attend, although the volunteer Career Maker programme can help with that. **James suggested that the group may wish to write to Jeremy Miles about employment opportunities in the horseracing sector for the Scoop newsletter that is sent round to schools and colleges by the Welsh Government.**

Llyr thanked Zoe for her presentation and asked her whether she'd had any contact with Coleg Cambria in Northop within his constituency that tend to do land based vocational courses, which Zoe confirmed she hadn't. He then asked whether she thought there was scope to improve college provision for Equine Studies in Wales in a similar fashion to what has been done in Scotland with the

Scottish Racing Academy. **Zoe will provide further information on the Scottish model so the Group can assess whether its practicalities in Wales.** It was noted that the land-based colleges in Wales do not always work well together.

Lastly, Peter Fox MS noted that his son had previously worked on the Grounds team at Chepstow and gained critical experience which he took onto future roles. He offered to put Zoe in touch with Coleg Gwent in his constituency which has an Equine Centre where students can learn horse care and handling skills. **He requested for the presentation slides to be shared with the group.**

### **Updates provided by the BHA**

Jack Barton ran through a number of updates on the subjects of:

- [British Racing Governance](#)
- [The use of the whip in British racing](#)
- [Welsh Business Rates Consultation](#)
- Written updates provided by the Welsh Racecourses on their 2022's so far which can be found at the bottom of this email
- Following discussions with ARC, Jack confirmed that there are a number of spots available for Members of the CPG to attend this year's Coral Welsh Grand National at Chepstow on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> December. **It was agreed that Members interest would be gauged in a follow up note after the meeting.**

### **Other points of discussion**

Peter asked about how Dai Walters was doing. Jack said the latest update he'd had about his condition was that he was still in ICU but that he'd look to get some more up to date information across to the group. **Peter suggested it might be worth trying to sort him out with a get well soon card from the Group. Jack said he'd look to source a contact for Dai so that this can be arranged.**

How the BHA will be following up on last week's debate, which all members present felt had gone well given the supportive tone of the Minister's response and been a useful use of parliamentary time. Sam mentioned that we should continue to keep the Members of the group up to date on any successes that members of the Welsh Racing Community have so that 90-second statements can be used to celebrate these achievements.

A brief discussion of Sustainability in Racing and whether there's scope for racecourses to help with targets around use of renewable energy and improving biodiversity. **Jack to track down more information on what is already in place at Welsh tracks on this theme.**

### **Wrap Up**

Llyr thanked everyone for attending meetings in 2022 and asked Jack if there were any plans for meetings in 2023. Jack said that he'd met the owner of Yorton Stud in Powys at the Welsh Racing Awards earlier in the month and that was a potential option for next year. It was recommended that a date for this is arranged well in advance given the travel involved.

**Attendance:** Set against 2019 – for first 10 meetings of the year up to November is an increase of 2.5% for 2022, which is remarkable under the circumstances. With Bangor-on-Dee being a small National Hunt track that races throughout the year, we have very strong local support and a large percentage of the racegoers come to watch jump racing.

**Prize Money:** We increased the Prize Money substantially for owners, trainers and jockeys in 2022 from May and have increased again for 2023. The aim being to produce decent numbers of runners and therefore competitive racing to assist with income from funding but also to offer the racegoer the best event we can. We feel it is necessary to try to maintain the balance within the industry.

**Energy increases:** These are going to triple in 2023 for Bangor-on-Dee Racecourse with an estimated figure of a £100k increase. Also, the increased cost of food and fuel etc is something we want to try to keep under control and not pass on to the racegoer if we can possibly help it!

### **Chepstow & Ffos Las 2022 Update**

- Chepstow's highlight of the year is yet to come – the Coral Welsh Grand National on December 27<sup>th</sup> will be the first with spectators for 2 years (as we all know). Crowd of 10,000+ expected. It's the 50<sup>th</sup> year that Coral have sponsored the race which makes it one of the longest running sponsorships in UK sport. 58 entries – five from Paul Nicholls plus all other major yards represented – Willie Mullins, Gordon Elliott, David Pipe, Joe Tizzard, Dan Skelton, Harry Fry, Alan King, Venetia Williams. It's live on ITV.
- Chepstow's October Jump Season Opener attracted a crowd of 7500 on the Saturday – so very positive. Huge challenges getting the course prepared because of the extremely dry summer and the ground staff watered 24 hours a day for three weeks prior to the meeting to ensure safe jumping ground.
- Hospitality and attendances across the year have stood up well given we are facing a 'cost of living' crisis. Hospitality is sold out for both December fixtures.
- On the flat, Chepstow (along with Doncaster) were the first course to host a meeting after The Queen passed away – on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September. We arranged a special tribute before racing.
- Ffos Las welcomed 8000 spectators for the Kaiser Chief's playing live after racing in May. The Welsh Champion Hurdle attracted a crowd of 2500 and it was great to see an Irish trained winner Effernock Fizz.