

PONTEFRACT BLC MEETING
MONDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2026

Present:

Jon Mullin – Pontefract Racecourse

Mark Ryan – Betting Ring Manager

Jayne Robinson – BRBA – Bookmaker

Joe Huddleston – Bookmaker

Richard Johnson - Bookmaker

Bob Kirk – Bookmaker

Chris Kirk – Bookmaker

Sam Bown – Bookmaker

Steve Robinson – Bookmaker

Introductions were made at the start of the meeting and it was confirmed that there had not been a BLC at Pontefract for about 20 years.

Jon Mullin introduced himself as the new clerk / manager having taken over a year ago from Richard Hammill who had held the post for over 20 years.

Rails bookmakers – In 2019 the rails were moved back quite significantly and since Covid their move has had a negative impact on the rails bookmakers in respect of the number of bets taken and people coming out to the bookmakers. A number of those in members complain that it is too far to walk and days which are cold and or raining the footfall to the rails bookmakers is very low. The only way to access the rails bookmaker is round the side of the building as the walkway down the stand has been blocked off. There was unanimous agreement that the rails have been moved back too far.

The discussion regarding the rails were between the track and Chris Hudson, who at the time was the President of the BRBA. It appears that at no time were any of the rails bookmakers who held pitches at that time, consulted about the proposed move. The cost of the move was £14k and half of this cost was met by the Rails Association. It had been believed that the Rails were moved back further than the agreement however, Jayne shared plans that had been provided by Norman Gundhill previously, which made it clear that the rails had been moved back in accordance with the plans which had been agreed at the time.

There was a change to the Tatts ring and 6 pitches on the front line alone were lost and a lower Tatts created. The upper part of Tatts from the Tunnel from the parade ring is now quite a small area.

Jon explained that one of the driving factors for the move was on some days, namely Ladies Day and the Friday night meetings, there was insufficient room in the Members area and any move back would result in a decrease of capacity in Members by 150 – 200 people. Exact

figures for members attendees were not available due to those who have the private boxes. On the days mentioned the ticket sales are close to capacity and also on the Sundays, though it was noted the Sundays are not good days for the rails bookmakers.

Tatts bookmakers have a designated number of 47 but Mark informed that the most who attend is 31.

Bob informed the meeting that some bookmakers had sold pitches since the move due to how poor the Rails had become and either left Pontefract or bought pitches in Tatts. If there were to be a move back of the rails he then questioned whether those bookies would receive some remuneration for what they had done.

Those present went to have a look at the area in front of the rails which is in the main a large empty area near the finish post. Jon has given some thought to configuring the pitches differently on a quiet day but no immediate solution was evident.

The suggestion is that the rails move forward on the quiet days with bookmakers using ring joints and be in the designated area on the busier days. Further consideration will be given to this

Betting in General – Jon asked about betting in general in the rings given that so much is done on line.

2026 Fixtures – There is an additional fixture on 2nd June. This will be £10 entry and access all areas.

It was noted that Pontefract own all their races with non being owned by the BHA. In 2026 there will 5 listed races which is great for an independent track.

The OAP fixture has been a successful move and will be held in April and will be £5 entry when booked in advance. This is a popular day.

It was noted that the last couple of fixtures of the year have dropped off. The last day in October used to be a very busy day but the last few years this has not been the case.

The Sky Bet Sunday is back at Pontefract in August. This was a busy day and was missed last year.

Friday before May Bank Holiday is as usual a popular music night with Boylife playing this year. There will be additional bands on the Sundays as before.

Most days will have a 7 race card except for the Friday night and ladies day in August. Disappointment was expressed that these 2 days, which were the busiest, had only 6 races. Jon accepted the wish for a 7 race card on these days but also felt that 6 races would attract bigger fields.

There is no chance of Pontefract getting a Saturday meeting due to the expense.

Attendances increased in 2026 but it was raised that numbers of children attending were now included in the figures.

Car Parking

Jon has been reviewing the car parking arrangements and feels that the current area where bookmakers park could be put to better use. He has suggested that bookmakers could use an area on the track where the catering vans are situated. The catering facilities that are currently there will be moved nearer to the members area. Initially Jon wanted bookmakers

to be parked up 2 hours before the first race but after discussion felt this did not need to as long on the quieter days. It is unlikely that this will start before 2027 but may well have a trial prior to the end of the forthcoming season.

Other proposed changes.

The jockey car park will continue to be in the middle of the track but the owners and trainers will move from there and their entrance will be changing. This move was felt to be necessary after issues last year.

The sports cafe bar will become the owners and trainers bar and the current owner and trainers bar will become their lounge.

There will be some changes to the members bar access. Jon showed a photo of Gazebo bar that will be in place on the members lawn to enhance the members' experience.

Pontefract will be replacing the members badge with a season ticket. This has met with some objections from race goers but the experience for these people should be no different.

Bookmaker Badge Fee – As in previous years bookmakers will be given the opportunity to be badges for the full year at 85% of the full cost. It was raised that Ripon also does this arrangement for the clerks badge – Jon will look into this.

Next Meeting – This was arranged for Monday 1st February 2027.