

BE Stakeholder Meeting Summary Notes for Publication/Sharing

22nd June 2020, 1.00pm

Washbrook Farm, Aston Le Walls NN11 6RT, by kind permission of Nigel and Ann Taylor on Microsoft Teams

Participants

Attended in person:

Fiona O’Hara (FOH) – Chair
 Jude Matthews (JM) - CEO
 Nigel Taylor (NT) – Board Director
 Jan Cottam (JC) – BEOA Chair, Organiser Goring Heath
 Tina Ure (TU) – BEOA Representative, Organiser Little Downham
 Mike Etherington-Smith (MES) - BEAG

Joined via Microsoft Teams:

Linda Allan (LA) – EHOA Chair
 Bruce Haskell (BH) – ERA Chair
 Alexandra Van-Tuyll (AVT) – EHOA Representative
 Helen White (HW) – ERA Grassroots Representative
 Malcolm Wharton (MW) – BEF Chair

In attendance:

Alexandra Bright - notes

Agenda point	Discussion Summary Notes
1.	Sport Resumption a) Update from BE on current position with Sport Resumption
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to resume British Eventing Affiliated Events had been received on Friday 19th June from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and had been communicated to the membership. • Permission granted based on the submission of high-level plans to safeguard all persons in attendance. • Protocols provided to Organisers due to run events in the first three weeks of the resumption calendar. • Communications to the membership were planned to explain what to expect covering pre-event preparations, entries process, on event procedures and results. • The eventing experience would be different, and it would be expected that the eventing community would act responsibly and respect the regulations. • Regulations/guidelines to be adapted in line with changing government restrictions and to adopt learnt best practices. • First six weeks of the resumption fixtures calendar had been published. • Calendar for the remainder of the season was a work in progress and would be published as soon as possible. • Necessary to judge the appetite from competitors through analysis of entries data and be reactive with the fixtures calendar with the aim of balancing event viability with providing opportunities for competitors. • Announcement of sport resumption date had initiated a surge in membership activity, which indicated that entries were likely to be reasonable. • “Decision to run date” would also be the ballot date for each event. Organisers asked to provide the latest date they could make the decision to go ahead with their event or not, taking into account their finances. Entries would open and competitors would understand that entries must be made in advance of the ballot date/decision to run date, and the organiser would make their decision to run based on number of entries received.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some events had already experienced challenges from their local councils. • Supporting documentation would be available confirming that events would be run “behind closed doors”. • Noted that the permission given by DCMS was for British Eventing events, and did not cover unregulated events. • Some venues advertising “training events”, which would be permitted (if compliant with government guidelines) during the second half of June, ahead of competitions. • Concerns raised that any organisers running unregulated events may jeopardise the sport resumption. • Noted that there is an opportunity to differentiate between the British Eventing product and unregulated events. • Plans for rewarding the loyalty of members who had retained/renewed their membership through the sport suspension and those who had purchased season tickets to be confirmed and publicised as soon as possible. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW felt strongly that the outcome should be published to members urgently.
2.	<p>Finances</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Update from BE on current financial position b) Can you confirm that the BE Accounts will be published by the end of June? c) BE’s financial strategy going forward- BE will publish financial targets for 2021 once approved by the Board d) Membership: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Update on current numbers ii. Strategy for retention of membership & being considered for 2021 e) What is being done to reduce operational costs?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) & e) The Board took a number of steps at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to safeguard BE’s financial position. Actions taken included making use of the government’s coronavirus job retention scheme and placing staff on furlough leave, planning for phased return to work, reducing staff costs through redundancies and hiring freeze and reviewing all future operational costs. BE’s financial position therefore greatly improved despite a significant drop in revenue. Confirmed that all necessary steps were being taken to ensure a financially secure future. No figures were given. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW requested further details to be provided. b) The publication of the 2019 accounts [which would usually happen in June] had been delayed until the outstanding abandonment insurance claim had been concluded. It had been the intention to publish, but BE had been made aware of a threat of legal action from an Organiser in regard to abandonment insurance. This created a potential contingency liability that would need to be noted on last year’s accounts and until more information was received, the potential liability could not be accounted for and therefore issuing the accounts had been delayed. Once BE have settled the abandonment insurance claim advice will be taken as to how to handle this in the accounts. It is noted that the threat is not from any of the seven events included in the abandonment claim. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW would look forward to publication of 2019 accounts as soon as possible. c) Looking forward to 2021 with the aim of turning a profit, the main areas of focus would be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increasing revenue (considering membership initiatives and new revenue streams/competition formats) 2) Re focus to streamline to providing core member services 3) Reducing cost of delivering sport and HQ costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main focus for increasing revenue would be to increase membership and horse season ticket sales. • Intention to provide a simplified quality product and for members. • Subsidisation of sport to be reduced. • All areas of the business would be considered.

	<p>LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW requested further information to be provided on the financial strategy going forward.</p> <p>d) Membership and horse registrations were down at the start of the year as the weather had been so bad, COVID19 also impacted expected renewals and registrations. Memberships and horse season ticket sales had improved since the announcement of sport resumption. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW would like to see regular updates on current numbers (Members/horses).</p> <p>Consideration to be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider rolling 12 months horse membership (as opposed to seasonal). • Potential to inflate winter competition opportunities. • Rider Working Groups to make a proposal for the introduction of winter combined training. • Rule 2.7.2 to be reviewed to consider allowing Day Pay Members to take part in more than four competitions per year. Noted better value for the member to purchase full membership than five or more day passes. • Membership strategy required, to include strong marketing message to push for higher numbers. <p>Post meeting comment: Stakeholder consultation required.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Abandonment Insurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Update on current position with claim b) Can BE confirm the Abandonment Insurance premium will be unchanged for 2021? c) Would BE consider undertaking a review of Insurance for Members & Organisers? d) Would BE consider enabling better transparency for future policies?
	<p>a) Update on the progression of the insurance claim, noting that the negotiation involving multiple underwriters was not straightforward. A consideration in the negotiation is to have a commitment from the insurers that covid-19/pandemic cover would be in place for the remainder of the policy. Compensation (financial or otherwise) of any shortfall would be considered by the Board if necessary, although noted (Rule 4.12) that there may be circumstances where refunds are not provided. Intent to have the matter settled before the resumption of events if possible. Stakeholders thanked for their patience and appreciated it was difficult for members. Regional COVID-related problems that might impact the provision of sport were discussed but it was agreed these were very complicated issues. Further information would follow.</p> <p>b&c) The Board would review the concept of abandonment insurance for the future and would consider lessons learnt and feedback. It was not possible to confirm the cover would be in place for 2021. Also, important to consider that the covid-19 pandemic could not be foreseen or controlled by anyone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEOA discussing different methods of insurance. • BE Advisory Group and the Executive Team were also reviewing the arrangements and any ideas welcome. Stakeholders suggested there should be wider consultation. Stakeholders felt any review should include a knowledgeable person from outside of the BE organisation with insurance expertise. • Members feel the premium is high and therefore resulting in expensive Entry Fees; return on the policy also high. • Membership surveys indicated approximately 50% of members felt Abandonment Insurance was a benefit. • Not possible to offer an opt in/out product as the price would be much higher. • Important to clearly communicate how the insurance cover/refund policies would work if further lockdown restrictions were imposed. • Organisers to give consideration to their refund policies for competitors who had been advised to self-isolate/were experiencing covid-19 symptoms/had tested positive for covid-19. To be stated in the event schedule so competitors were aware at point of entry.

	d) Was not discussed. Further action required.
4.	<p>IT</p> <p>a) Update re: current position b) There are concerns the current Entries System will not cope when sport is resumed c) Will there be enough informed staff to assist with queries? d) How much is EARS costing to run? – Ongoing costs, Staff, Licences etc. e) Is there a finite position in respect of spend for the EARS project? f) Where does continued IT development fit into BE’s strategy for the future?</p>
	<p>a) Improvements were being made to the system in time for sport resumption with the main focus on EARS. The BE team were working with Miranda Collett and the EARS Working Group which included representation from Entries Secretaries, Scorers, BE Stewards, Organiser and Entries Agents. Explained the integration between EARS and Eventing Scores and the data exchange at various points in the entries administration process. The intention of the integration was to gain confidence from the user community while the remaining bugs were rectified. The new system would be capable of a lot more functionality than previous systems, so would offer a better experience once accepted. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW asked to be provided with further information and to be kept updated.</p> <p>b) Organisers of the first few events to run after resumption had been invited to use the BE Entries Secretary Service free of charge. This would ensure a smooth experience for competitors, provide the necessary support to events and offer a bespoke service, if required, working alongside the event’s own entries secretary. A training manual and videos would be provided to Entries Secretaries and interactive sessions would be arranged, according to what was required. Stakeholders questioned the readiness of the BE team and were told that they were largely ready. JM stated that the functionality of EARS could operate a whole event but was not being used by Organisers as yet, as no event has taken place since lockdown. All the necessary work had been done. There is ongoing communication with World Pay in an attempt to alleviate the fraud suspicion issues experienced by some card holders (an interim workaround is available). LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW felt that further action and consultation was required.</p> <p>c) Concerns raised that there would not be enough BE staff working to help users with their problems when entries opened. Confirmed that approximately £10k memberships/horse season tickets had been taken through the system over the weekend with no major problems. Stakeholders felt that problems were being experienced and requested further action and consultation.</p> <p>d&e) Project spend now ended and ongoing licence, maintenance and development costs are included in the “business as usual”/opex budget. Post meeting comment: Stakeholders require further information.</p> <p>f) This was not discussed. Post meeting comment: Stakeholders await further information.</p>
5.	<p>Communication / Representation</p> <p>a) Does BE have a strategy to improve communication to members? b) What are BE’s plans to improve the work of the Marketing Department?</p>
	<p>a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific areas of concern to be elaborated. • Disappointment with recent communications. • Accepted that during the period when the majority of staff were furloughed (including the communications department), communications were minimal. Explained that during that period, it had not been possible to send emails direct to members and that the website and social media were the only forms of communication available. • BE reported that people who had emailed or telephoned BE directly were generally very happy with the experience. • Reported that some members felt that some BE communications were too long and that they would prefer more frequent but shorter messages.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested that a regular newsletter would help members to feel involved. Implementation of a weekly update agreed; commencement date to be confirmed. LA, JC, BH, HW requested that their organisation’s contact details should be included in newsletters. • Reported frustration that parents of members on the youth programme were not receiving emails. Reminder that contact details must be correct on the member’s record (member responsibility). • Noted that it was possible for members to “opt out” of receiving communications from BE, in which case they would not receive any of the email updates. • Access to online schedules to be provided so that they could be edited. <p>b) This was not discussed.</p> <p>Post meeting comment: LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW request further action.</p> <p>Discussion on Stakeholder Representation described in Item 7.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Sport / Fixtures</p> <p>a) Risk Managed Calendar</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explained fixtures placed within the calendar with the objective of minimising the risk of abandonments. • Noted that any changes to the current process would need the support of the BEOA. • Feelings reported by Stakeholder Representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some events remain in the calendar longer than they should (with the support of the abandonment insurance cover). ➤ BE does not maximise on its benefits in comparison to unaffiliated events. ➤ Organisers producing poor standard events should not be tolerated within the BE brand. Stakeholders pointed out that Organisers are very keen to uphold standards. Officials need better training on evaluations. It was noted that Event standards had been discussed at the BE Officials meetings and at all regional organisers meetings as a priority. ➤ Consistency of event standards and the challenge/test of courses could be improved. ➤ The differences between BE and unregulated events was not always clear, as the standards of unregulated events was often very high. ➤ Costly BE regulations e.g. medical cover pushing up the cost of Entry Fees. Justification for stipulation of the annual moulage course for doctors required. The medical requirements were under review. All attendees felt strongly that a review was important, including stakeholder consultation. • Agreed that pre-covid-19, strengthening the BE brand was one of the Board’s main objectives, but currently resumption of safe sport had to be the top priority, with the key brand message underpinning successful resumption. • Agreed that feasibility and affordability should be examined when considering proposals in future. <p>Post meeting comment: Stakeholders would like to see “lessons learnt” from the Strategic Fixtures Review.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion on improving relationships. FOH suggested, whilst the current period of unrest continued, fortnightly meetings, to include the Chairs of the Stakeholder Groups and JM, plus meeting prior to the scheduled Board meetings, to include the larger group attending today. Dates to be confirmed. • It was suggested that the recent focus was too much on IT and not enough on the sport. • Reported that there was a growing discontentment amongst BE members and that the abandonment insurance claim delay had added to the concerns. • Expressed concern over the lack of Sport expertise on the Board. • JM reminded the group that Board composition included both elected and appointed Directors, and that unfortunately, the number of votes cast in elections was extremely poor. • Members [and all stakeholder groups] have the opportunity to be represented on the Board, by going through the standard procedures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Sport expect to see representation from both inside and outside the sport. BE board composition meets the UK Sport guidelines. • FOH stated the decision to amalgamate the Risk Management and Sport Committee had not been successful and had created a large committee with a difficult and too broad set of objectives. Risk Management and Sport Committee to be reviewed. • LA, JC, BH, HW reiterated the importance of stakeholder representatives being to be able to fully report discussions to their groups. • BE and stakeholders had shared objectives, and shared frustrations. • FOH explained the importance of having a well-balanced Board. Aside from the years of sporting experience on the Board, the assets of a chartered accountant, a lawyer and lots of experience in IT and business were cited, which had been of huge benefit [in terms of knowledge and cost savings] when navigating the company through the covid-19 pandemic, the abandonment insurance claim, and the inherited IT project. JC, BH, TU felt there needed to be more sport knowledge, which would be resolved by a different representation on the Board. • All parties felt that there must be a better way to galvanize more engagement from the membership, with better representation, dialogue and contribution to decision making. Such engagement could only be of benefit. • All accepted the need to be collaborative and work on forming a better relationship.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVT reported that some owners were not receiving emails. It was noted that where members have 'opted out' of BE communication they would not be receiving any email. LA, JC, BH, TU, AVT, HW requested that Opt-in/out messaging is made clearer. • Stakeholders reported that some people who felt they were very experienced in the sport were not getting enough information, which had caused them to be suspicious. It was felt that all stakeholder groups could help with positive communication. • Requested further "Ask BE" sessions as they were felt to be constructive. Arrangements to be made asap once staff had been reinstated.
8.	<p>Close of Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendees were thanked for their time. • All committed to ongoing communication, transparency, support and collaboration.