

## BHSA Team Chase Sub-Committee

# Minutes of the Annual Team Chasing Conference

held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022 at 10.30am, at Stratford Racecourse

### 1. Introduction & Background

Philip Cowen, Chairman, welcomed everyone. He explained that the British Hound Sports Association (BHSA) was a new organisation replacing the Hunting Office and taking over the governance of Team Chasing from the MFHA under its recently adopted Constitution and Rules (Section B10 (2)). The National Committee was in effect a sub-committee of the BHSA committee, primarily to oversee the best interests of the sport as a whole through its host hunts as event organisers. The Chairman also introduced Oliver Hughes who is the new Managing Director of the BHSA.

The Chairman explained that the BHSA Team Chase Committee is made up of about 50% Event Organisers and 50% Riders, Owners and Sponsors. He also explained that the Annual Conference was an event open to everyone in the sport, not merely the event organisers, to attend to discuss past successes and areas offering room for improvement, together with ideas for future initiatives and for the National Committee to provide their annual update to everyone involved in the sport.

### 2. Apologies.

Apologies had been received from Tony Berry, Emma Burton, Tamara Fox, Reg Hopkins, Debbie Topping, William Grant (all current or former National Committee members), Paul Dunn (Meynell & S Staffs), Stuart Radbourne (Avon Vale), David Selby (Belvoir), Rupert Sturgis (Duke of Beaufort's), Jill Taylor (Essex & Suffolk) and Andrew Clarke (Course Builder).

### 3. Minutes of the Annual Conference 2019 [2020 & 2021 Cancelled due to Covid].

The Minutes of the last Annual Conference held in 2019 had been circulated previously and were also attached to the Agenda.

### 4. National Committee Matters

- **Brief review of Autumn 21 and Spring 22 Seasons**

The Chairman reported that the sport was in fine fettle and that there had not been any cancellations due to weather. Team numbers whilst down in the Open Class overall were up in both Intermediate (approx. 20%, to average 35 per event) and Novice (by approx. 40%, to average 56 per event). It was also reported that there had been some very competitive classes, particularly at Open level including the National Championship 2022 which was won by William Grant and his team. All events should target a minimum of 75 teams competing across all classes, but that was not being achieved by every event as yet – when based on Levy submissions. Huge credit is due to the organisers of the events who give up a huge amount of time. The sport is reliant on volunteers and is very much in the public eye. Three events stepped back, some permanently.

The Team Chase Committee had met in February and issued an update to all event organisers (and to the wider sport via subsequent social media summary) on 7 March 2022 to try and address some of the key issues, particularly relating to Health and Safety.

Paul Scott, Vice-Chairman, asked Ed Collins, who ran the new Kimblewick event for feedback from their new Kimblewick event: Ed reported that the Hunt was delighted to run a Team Chase event, that the Admin Guidance was easy to follow and that the weather had been good. He also said he got a lot of support from the Vice-Chairman and also Bryan Allen, the Course Inspector for their event. The importance of new Events engaging with the Committee as early as possible was stressed.

- **Key Areas of Focus**

- i. **Establishment of 3 Sub-Groups**

- **Course Construction, Safety, Risk including Medical & Veterinary**

The Vice-Chairman is to head this first sub-group which will include all of the Course Inspectors (Bryan Allen, Tony Berry and Debbie Topping). The Course Construction Guidelines are unchanged since about 2016 but were looked into thoroughly at that time. Along with the Course Administration Guidelines, the Sub Group will be looking at Safety at all levels, feedback on course data, way forward, rider ability, horse welfare. Netty Nevill, previous Committee Member who was then in charge of Course Inspections pointed out some items that she felt needed more attention on inspecting a course: groundlines, portable fences and wire. These had already been discussed at Committee level, who are committed to making sure that the Course Inspectors follow the guidelines.

It was felt that it is important to help Events to help themselves.

A one fit all medical provider was discussed but it was felt that as each Event had differing requirements this would not work and could prove more expensive.

Each event is asked to supply a return a form recording any falls and this is looked at the following year when the Course Inspection takes place.

If any competitors had comments on specific course issues at events, etc, these should be directed to Paul Scott in the future.

- **Event Administration**

This sub-group is to be headed by Philip Cowen and he commented that there are considerable challenges in the different ways Events are run – IT and the use of, timing equipment, production of results, website and content, prize giving, commentary, hat tags, number bibs, risk assessments.

- **Commercial interests, including National Sponsorship**

Philip Cowen and Paul Scott will head this sub-group jointly. There are a number of issues, the most important one is that any National Sponsor does not conflict with an Event's local sponsor (which has caused some potential national sponsors to be discounted). Team Chasing does not get the same support from the general public that other events, such as point-to-pointing, get.

- ii. **Future Committee representation at each event**

- **Course Inspectors**, with their role to remain as previously.
    - **BTC event assistance and liaison** - The Chairman reported that each Event will have a representative from the National Committee allocated to them as well as a Course Inspector.

- iii. **General communications**

- **BTC Secretary's role**

The Chairman reported that Belinda Walkinshaw had resigned from this role in 2021 and he thanked her, in her absence, for the huge amount of work undertaken in her time as BTC Secretary. Her absence during Autumn 2021 had been keenly felt by the sport.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman also both thanked Emma Burton who had helped the National Committee and Event Organisers as Team Chase Secretary throughout the Spring 2022 season.

Following Emma's resignation from the post, the National Committee had now decided to appoint a new individual to the role to help with specific aspects of communication, and liaison with event organisers. A detailed Job Specification has been created and two candidates had come forward. It was reported that Annie Leyland will take up the position during August in time for the Autumn Season. Annie has had a limited previous involvement with Team Chasing through the Atherstone Event. The Chairman stressed that it is unfair to expect Annie to be an 'agony aunt' to the sport.

- **Confirmation of Event dates etc**

Agreeing dates is always a problem in order to get a good structure both geographically during each season, and to fit in with landowners wishes, etc. It is hoped in the future to confirm all Spring dates by 1 January and Autumn dates by 1 July. The Annual Conference would be in May or June annually.

- **Rules & Course / Admin Guideline changes**

Rules and Course Guidelines had been reviewed and there are no changes.

## 5. **National Committee – Retirements & New Appointments**

The National Committee represents a good balance across the sport of Event Organisers, Riders and Owners. Retirements since 2019 were William Fox Grant, Rosie Vestey, Reg Hopkins and Belinda Walkinshaw. The Chairman thanked them all for their help and support in different aspects of the sport.

A list of existing committee members had been circulated, with retirement dates for each member. It was also noted that there was one vacancy and the Chairman reported that the four people had been put forward for that position previously, but that it will only be filled once the composition of the 3 sub-groups had been determined by the Committee to ensure good balance and representation within each Group.

The Committee will confirm the individual members of the sub-groups mentioned in **Key Areas of Focus** above in due course.

## 6. **Autumn 2022 Calendar (inc 5 events hosting Open classes)**

The Chairman reported that, with the exception of the Duke of Beaufort's, the Autumn dates had now been finalised and circulated to the meeting. (*Postscript:* The Duke of Beaufort's date was confirmed later in the day as Sunday 9th October.) The Belvoir are definitely running an Open Class this Autumn. The Cotswold, the last weekend in October, is again running over two days including a 'Mini Event' on the Saturday. The Open League will conclude at the Essex and Suffolk event in early November. It was noted that the dry Summer may have an impact on ground conditions for Autumn events.

## 7. **Promotion of the Sport**

The Chairman invited Jane Carley, who is responsible for our Press and Media both online and print to report:

- i. **PR and Press Communications, including Website, Social Media**

Jane reported that Horse & Hound are now doing seasonal roundups only – mainly on the Open events but also on some new events and also special features – starting with Safety in the Sport. Jane sends features to various magazines and any suggestions or leads would be gratefully received.

- ii. **Website**

It was suggested from the floor that BTC could take on the reporting on the Intermediate and Novice classes on their website.

The Chairman reported that just before Covid the aim had been to revamp the website which was originally produced over eight years ago. The Event Admin Sub Group will take future responsibility for the website. Currently Jane and the Chairman spend a lot of time keeping it

up-to-date but hoping the new BTC secretary will improve matters further. There is also a current technical glitch relating to the visibility of the results from 2021 and 2022.

**iii. Social media**

Online media can include articles on hat safety, podcasts, etc, and it is important to promote positive stories.

**iv. BTC – the brand, and our identity, inc the logos**

Very important that the BTC logo is used and is available from the Committee.

**v. Individual event websites. Encouraging use of social media by individual events.**

Most events now have their own social media channels, which is an essential feature of local/regional marketing.

Jane and the Chairman both stressed the importance of a positive message and sensitive and sensible comments. Social Media, etc., should not be used to criticise our sport or our events as this does not encourage greater participation or support from volunteers.

**8. Financial Matters**

**i. Team Chase annual accounts y/e 30th April 2022**

The Accounts for the 2021/22 season had been distributed to the meeting and the Chairman reported that financially we are back to where we were at the end of the 2018/2019 season prior to the impact of Covid. The current accounts also include figures for the Spring 2021 season, which was late due to Covid and could not be included in the 2020/21 accounts. The Promotion Levy received for Spring 2021 amounted to £2,250. The Promotion Levy is an individual contribution from teams, not events; although collected by the events on the sport's behalf. It is put towards the website, publicity and other one-off costs. The Chairman commented on the challenges of working with the funds that we have. It was noted that the Capital and Sponsorship account showed a surplus in excess of £5,000 for the year to April 2022 which was a significant improvement on the previous two years. Working cash funds were now about £15,000 of which at least £10,000 had historically been retained as a buffer for extraordinary events and occurrences.

**ii. Promotion Levy receipts, and iii. Recognition & Course Inspection fees**

The Chairman reported that the Committee were happy with the level of fees and these would not change at the moment.

**9. The Open League 2022, and future of the Leagues in 2023 and beyond.**

During the past season only the Open League was run, not the Intermediate as per the note from March 2023 issued to all events. This will be reviewed by the National Committee in December. It was felt that running the League brings the whole season together. The Chairman requested that all thoughts and ideas relating to future national sponsorship of either the Leagues or other aspects of the sport should be directed either to him or the new BTC Secretary in the first instance.

**10. Additional points for discussion:**

- **Novice Speed classes** – A good discussion took place with many opinions for & against. The current BTC position will remain that Novice speed classes are NOT recommended but this will be discussed further by the Safety Committee. This raised a further issue of 'Bogey Times' and going forward events will be asked for a wheeled distance of all courses and this should be provided to the course inspector when the inspection takes place.
- **Horse & Rider falls** – Again a good discussion took place regarding elimination following rider falls, all opinions would be taken forward and this will be looked at by Safety Committee.

- **Repute & Disrepute - Regulation, Discipline, Reprimand & Reporting** – a light touch approach in the past, but under review and future action will be considered or taken where necessary.
- **Number Bibs** – Events should make colour/rider clearer. Events can use own as long as safe with air jackets. However paper inserts in to rider's own bibs are now the RECOMMENDED approach.
- **Arrangements for National Championship 2023 onwards** – The Committee are asking Event Organisers for any proposals for the National Championship (Open level only), for up to three-years from 2023 onwards. The Championship must be held in the Spring, and would be preferred (but not essential) towards the end of the season. An expression of interest has been received from the Worcestershire and other proposals must be received by close of play on 12 August.

## 11. Other Key Areas:

- i. **The National Rules; ii. Course Layout and Construction Guidelines; iii. Administrative Guidelines; iv. Display of rules at events** – all discussed already. It is important that both the National Rules and the Individual Event Rules are displayed.
- v. **Body Protector and hat tag arrangements**, - these continue to apply.
- vi. **Risk Assessments and other general matters of Health & Safety** -
- vii. **Event administration – preparation and distribution of schedules, centralised entry systems (including finance), processing team changes, quality programmes, class timings, accurate commentaries, timeliness during events, prize-givings, producing results, fence analysis data etc.**

## 12. Any Other Business / Questions

The idea of Training Days, Intro Team Chases and a centralised entry system were discussed and would all be taken forward by the National Committee.

Event Schedules should be available a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the event. Recommended that Entries are open 4/6 weeks before the event. Closing date should not be too far in advance.

It was suggested we had a charge for those regular teams who were participating in the League (to go to British Team Chasing), to give them priority when entering events. Difficulties of administration of such arrangements for event organisers were also noted.

It was queried whether there were any plans to contact landowners of those events no longer running to see if they could resurrected: Contact had been made with two but not keen. The Chairman said that contact had also been made with one former event and one potentially new event to run but not until 2023. It was confirmed that every avenue is explored to keep events running where possible.

National committee take the view that events should be run by Hunts – showcase the sport for the benefit of hunting.

9 August 2022