

Musselburgh Racecourse – a meeting next week will not save Friday Night at the Races

Further to yesterday's article about the future of [Musselburgh Racecourse](#), it now seems that racing will not be allowed to proceed next week.

The British Horseracing Authority (BHA) confirmed last Friday that the Musselburgh Joint Racing Committee (MJRC) which runs the course had not met the conditions set by the BHA for the renewal of its racecourse licence by the 30 June 2017 deadline.

It now seems highly unlikely that the race meeting on 14 July 2017 will proceed as scheduled since the committee will not meet the officiating body's demands in time.



The statement from the BHA said : “This is despite frequent ongoing discussions with the MJRC initiated by the BHA on the issues of concern since late in 2016. Accordingly, Musselburgh racecourse's licence has, for the time being, lapsed. While discussions continue – and it remains open to the MJRC to reapply for a licence at any time – it is very much in the hands of the MJRC to meet the necessary licence conditions so that racing can continue at Musselburgh.

“The BHA understands the need to give horsemen, racecourses, betting operators and the public as much notice about future fixture changes as possible.

“While the MJRC can reapply for its licence at any time, for

the next scheduled fixture to go ahead at Musselburgh on Friday 14 July, the BHA requires a licence to be in place by 6 July in order to give certainty to everyone concerned.

“That means, should it wish to continue with the fixture on 14 July, the MJRC must provide an unequivocal commitment to meeting the licence conditions by close of business on 6 July.

“Should that not be forthcoming, the BHA will confirm cancellation of the fixture at that time. In the event that it becomes necessary to cancel this fixture, the BHA does not plan to rearrange it as it falls outside the structure of core, funded fixtures and because there is a high volume of racing available at other tracks throughout this period.

“The race meeting on 14 July is a third, Friday evening fixture programmed by the BHA primarily to attract more racegoers. We do not feel we could achieve such an objective with a fixture arranged at very short notice.

“The next scheduled fixture at Musselburgh after 14 July is Tuesday 25 July. If the MJRC has not made a successful application for its licence by close of business on 14 July, the BHA will take the necessary steps to reallocate this fixture to ensure that there remain two afternoon fixtures on 25 July.”

This statement shows that the undertaking by East Lothian Council leader Councillor Willie Innes to convene a meeting of

the committee on **Tuesday 11 July 2017** means that the race fixture on 14 July will not go ahead.



Miles Briggs, Conservative MSP for Lothian and Convenor of the Parliament's Cross Party Group on Scottish Horseracing & Bloodstock Industries said: "I share the concern of constituents in Musselburgh and across Lothian more widely at the apparent threat to the future of racing at Musselburgh. This a very serious and regrettable state of affairs.

" I called publicly back in April for all efforts to be made to reach an agreement that would allow the BHA to issue the necessary licence and it is deeply disappointing that this has still not happened. Even at this late stage I urge East Lothian Council to resolve this matter with every urgency to ensure that July's racing can go ahead.

" The loss of racing at Musselburgh would be totally unacceptable and a hammer-blow, not just to the hard working racecourse staff, but to the economy of Musselburgh and Lothian. Musselburgh Racecourse is a massive asset for this area and attracts a huge numbers of visitors and it helps underpin a very significant number of local jobs. All elected representatives for the area need to put the pressure on to ensure we see a positive resolution without yet further delay and the necessary compromise from all parties involved."

The Edinburgh Reporter understands that all hospitality suites for 14 July are already fully booked and around 800 tickets have been purchased. We presume that these will have to be refunded to purchasers if the meeting does not go ahead.

The problem is an ongoing one, but the latest issue came to light in April this year when the BHA only issued a temporary licence to the racecourse which all parties knew would expire on 30 June 2017.

Councillor Innes was elected on 4 May 2017 at the council elections, although he was not appointed chair of the MJRC until after that. The former Chairman John Caldwell was not re-elected in May and so a new chair had to be found from among elected members.

The racecourse is owned by the council who lease the facility on a full commercial rent to the body which runs it.