



UPPER SOUTH ISLAND REGIONAL FORUM
PO Box 31-209
Christchurch

Meeting Report - USI Regional Forum 17th December 2025

Present: John Hartnell, Liz Shand, Gary Moir, Chris Morrison, Peter Larkin, Laurence Hanrahan, Nigel Armstrong, Chris Brown, Glenn Hames, John Denton, Russel Latimer, John Woolcott, Johnny Reedy, Erin Fox, Ben Smith, Brad Mowbray, Mark Jones, Clare Tibbs, Tony Thomas, Pip Langford

HRNZ: Grant Jarrold, Matt Peden

Apologies: Sara Famularo, Hamish Scott, Doug Stuart, Greg Topp

Agenda order:

1. HRNZ Chair GJ

Recent Board meetings covered

- World Drivers Championship wrap up – very successful in terms of feedback from participants
- Breeding initiatives – will Entain assist in helping to fund, question has been raised
- Breeding – mares covered/booked for service this year are up. 1st time in 25 years
- Auckland property matters - discussion
- Waikato BOP re changes in management and Board plus other speculation. 100% dispelled that HRNZ were blocking any moves re property sale relating to Cambridge
- Project Stamina and the Terms of Reference have been circulated. Steering committee formed – Harness has representation. Clubs will have the ability to have their input/say as will HRNZ re individual clubs
- Risk Management analysis. Entain outcome/performance post the 5-year guarantee and Auckland's financial plight very much top of the list
- I.T. systems – outdated. Cyber risk and privacy are a serious concern. HRNZ looking at common platforms such as used by NZTR for code share opportunities and utilisation e.g. licenses
- Post greyhound scenario. NZGR have approximately \$10m in cash reserves
- Board and vacancy fulfilment – JH talked to this later in the meeting
- Look North will be a strategy focus, the board are closely monitoring

2. HRNZ Racing and Wagering update MP
 - Cup Day slightly ahead year on year however higher than 2024 average winner SP impacted recycling of money – nearly double at just over \$12.
 - Show Day – down year on year by approx. \$600k. Waverly gallops soaked up a bit this year Vs a void last year after Trentham was cancelled and harness benefitted.
 - Focus on upcoming Auckland and Waikato BOP meetings, noting that all Cambridge pacing slots have been sold for 2026 however trotters currently at 4 but continues to progress
 - Sulkies, post Auckland incident is a big focus. Looking to institute annual WOF Vs current bi-annual checks, particularly weld scan and monitoring
 - 2026/27 racing dates. First draft out next week. Will see four Additional Canty dates added
 - Winter racing in upper NI will reduce – not enough horses for 2 meetings, being closely monitored
 - Ratings group appointees will increase from 3 to 4 with Brad Mowbray (NZTDA) joining to provide greater Canterbury input and overview
 - Kaikoura – it was noted that horse utilisation over Kaikoura Cup week was up year on year.
 - Oamaru – discussed the possibility of adding an Oamaru grass track meeting at this time and dispelled the view that cost of travelling to this venue from in and around Canterbury could potentially impact the nominations
3. Ratings & handicapping - covered earlier by MP
4. Project Stamina - covered earlier by GJ
5. Triple S Data project
 - The roll out of the project was discussed
 - Handling new TS data requirements was noted, as was the need to address the extra cost to Clubs. MP accepted an offer to attend a Methven event Methven and witness 1st hand how easy or not it is to implement
6. Younger emerging punters are data sensitive and are looking for this type of information
7. Tote Staff double dipping
 - Glenn Haines talked to the issue regarding Kaikoura's tote staff cost in particular travel and Public Holiday being claimed twice, noting same potential for



Addington on Show Day, GH called for a thorough review prior to the next contract roll over

8. Greyhounds exit and equine code future focus, what is next.
 - GJ talked to this. Safety and welfare programmes are top priority for HRNZ
 - Imperative that the Harness industry manage their social licence obligations well
 - It was noted that the loss of wagering GBR from Greyhounds is ~ \$11m therefore not a huge impact overall

9. Summer racing – promotions and wagering incentives
 - MP talked to this. He noted that On Course presenters on Sundays will be wound back
 - It was noted that Richard Stokes and HRNZ's marketing team are there to assist clubs, please get requests in early, be proactive
 - Entain – First Four pools at Mot/Methven will not be happening at this point

10. Nominations – horse numbers
 - MP said that 11-14 horses /ace is the sweet spot. Anything over this doesn't improve T/O
 - Fields above 15 won't happen in the future
 - Potential to add more races to the programme to offset smaller fields is determined by stakes funding availability, a work in progress

11. Slot races
 - Mark Jones noted that they're becoming owner dominated
 - MP said that they needed to be sold earlier
 - MJ has lots of ideas to improve this racing concept, indicated he was keen to work with HRNZ
 - Slot syndication was also discussed, how to drive greater involvement of stakeholders, rather than single slot ownership

12. Race programming – Timaru
 - Unhappy with their 8-race programme and HRNZ trying to direct horses to Marlborough circuit when Timaru understood that owners and trainers want to race locally
 - MP said that they'd been talking to trainers and this was not the case as he was aware
 - Liz Shand challenged this. She had talked to 15 trainers who suggested that they were unhappy with the options on the table, Liz to discuss further with MP

13. Junior Drivers – apprenticeship programme

- Mark Jones talked about replicating something like the NZTR apprenticeship programme – a more formal structure that industry can get behind
- MP said that Natalie Gameson is progressing this and is the point of contact to further this discussion

14. Cadets & Driving masters

- Mark Jones talked about NZTR input and that HRNZ did not appear to provide harness cadets and juniors any clear pathway or sufficient active guidance
- MP said that this should be addressed to Natalie Gameson
- Chris Morrison offered his mentoring assistance as required

15. Breeding scheme credits

- Mark Jones noted that this is not working as linking the credit to the horse is driving race age horses off the track. Owners should be able to utilise the credits annually with other breeding stock, this would encourage better utilisation and keep the younger mares racing without any deterrent to breeding numbers

16. New Board Member

- JH talked about recruitment process via Brannigans, noting that Mark OConnor was reappointed to the Board Appointment Panel
- Said that key criteria from the National Forums industry perspective would be someone with both Harness Racing knowledge and business acumen. Urged all present to seek suitable candidates that would fit this criterion, ideally North Island based, though not a prerequisite.
- GJ talked about potential scenario of the new person having to be voted in now and voted in again at the AGM which didn't make sense, so looking to work a better solution for the incoming board appointee

17. New Club Constitutions

- How many have implemented – it seemed most
- Liz Bishop helping and monitoring registrations and lodgements

18. Club funding

- Gary Moir said that current club funding falls well short of true cost, perhaps only 60% of actual direct costs in Timaru's case. Many clubs will/are potentially becoming unsustainable



- As an example, NZTR pay South Canterbury JC double what Timaru get from HRNZ per meeting
 - A conversation with Liz Bishop needed to understand the matrix used to ascertain funding requirements for each club, and
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19. Nelson - Erin Fox thanked MP and John Denton for their efforts in helping Nelson
20. Rangiora meeting – the recent meeting was very successful – not enough carparking on site indicating strong community support
21. Turnover figures all clubs and Vs the previous year are no longer being shared
- MP said privacy issues/use of excel spreadsheets were not the right way to be doing these. HRNZ looking to move to PDF format and updated reporting structure, it is a work in progress

Meeting closed approx. 8.50 pm with JH wishing all a successful and enjoyable holiday racing outcome.