

BLC NOTES – AINTREE RACECOURSE 21 JANUARY 2025

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bookmakers – Paul Dolan, William Colley, Chris Kirk, Richard Johnson, Simon Wallis, Andy Melia.

Aintree – Dickon White, Sherelle Bartholomew, Carl Pastor, Steve Clare, Darren Irving, Neil Pateman

2024 AINTREE TRADING UPDATE FROM BOOKMAKERS

Generally, bookmakers reported good levels of business and betting turnover at the non-Grand National race meetings, with the exception of the Boxing Day fixture.

The second Boxing Day fixture attracted a public attendance of slightly up on 2024 at around 5,500. The very poor foggy weather allied to the following working day were factors that impacted attendance and betting turnover. It remains a hope that within 5 years attendance on Boxing Day will rise to around 12,000.

Bookmakers reported turnover on the three-day Grand National meeting as good and to expectations. It was also reported that the feedback from bookmaker's clients, and also from bookmakers themselves, was very positive towards the more relaxed Grand National Festival, compared to others elsewhere.

Bookmakers betting in the New/Temporary betting areas reported very good business levels. Pitching in was smoothly achieved with the 1:1 Tatts/Rails mechanism used for each separate area, utilising the 'Royal Ascot' method as suggested at the 2024 BLC.

The Embankment enclosure had a disappointing public attendance. Several reasons for this were discussed, but it historically this is the final public enclosure to sell, directly after the Festival Zone. A number of potential reasons were debated. This remains a promotional priority for the racecourse, with the aim of achieving pre-Covid public admission levels.

WiFi and mobile phone connectivity was again reported as being excellent on each of the three days.

2025 OFF MEETINGS

16/5 Music Night - Red Rum Club - excellent advance ticket sales c. 7,500 attendance expected.

26/10 Family Raceday

8/11 Grand Sefton Day - incorporating Invades Student Raceday (c. 6,000+ students).

6/12 Becher Chase Day.

26/12 William Hill Boxing Day Raceday.

2025 RANDOX GRAND NATIONAL PLANNING & UPDATE

The Radox Grand National itself will maintain the reduced field size of 34, but this year there will be reserves. Race time likely to be 4.00 p.m. the fifth race, with two races remaining. Overall there will again be a seven race card on Grand National Day.

The Dubai World Cup is scheduled to take place after the Grand National, and that is expected to be shown on the large screens and CCTV generally.

Advance Grand National ticket sales are slightly slower than this time last year, but overall attendance is expected to match 2024.

The West Tip grandstand capacity is the same as 2024 (5,000). Very good advance hospitality sales throughout the course, with a sellout expected on Saturday.

There was a request to reduce The Embankment enclosure size along with the bookmaker number. This was refused by DW, who explained that there will be an additional promotional focus on The Embankment, aimed both locally and to include an Invade Students package c.3000+ alone expected. The aim is to build on last year's attendance level, therefore it would not be appropriate to reduce the size of the enclosure. An earlybird ticket package offer was suggested, and this would be considered. Additionally, it was requested that the Embankment AMF not be charged, as per 2024. DW agreed to consider along with expected attendance numbers.

Badges/Admission Tickets are now available to purchase on the bookmakers portal (link via the RBC website) after purchasing the AMF (Festival Zone £150.00, Embankment £110.00). Festival Zone tickets & DBB - Thursday £45.00 (DBB £315.00), Friday £65.00 (DBB £455.00), Saturday £95.00 (DBB £665.00). Embankment £55.00 (DBB £385.00). The DBB for each day of the Grand National Festival is 8x the gate admission price, charged at 7x online plus the bookmaker needs an admission ticket, which gets to the 8x.

Public facilities and temporary structures will be similar to the 2024 event, except that the Red Rum Garden (behind Garden Club & Bar Area) will be increased in size, and the adjacent Tiger Roll Suite will be on one level rather than a double decker as previously. A New Betting Area request was made, but it was explained that there would be insufficient space for bookmakers, and indeed that The Tote positions have been moved out to the periphery. However, DW agreed to review at this year's event and consider for the future.

There will again be 5 ATM machines available. Locations - West Tip; Equestrian Centre; Red Rum Gardens; Embankment.

Bookmakers may drop off kit on Wednesday 2nd April. Anyone wishing to do so must contact Darren Irving in advance. Kit can be dropped off, security checked, and left undercover in the Equestrian Centre between 1.00 p.m. & 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday 2nd April, at bookmaker's own risk.

As usual, Steeplechase parking will be available for bookmakers with shuttle buses to the centre course opposite grandstands. Car park labels will be available for advance purchase online from the Aintree Racecourse website. The first shuttle bus for bookmakers will depart from the steeplechase car park at 09.00 on Thursday and Friday and 08.30 on Saturday. CP to brief staff regarding allowing Embankment bookmakers closer proximity and easier access across the track into the enclosure.

Bookmaker pedestrian access to the racecourse will as usual be via Drive 3 from 09.00 on Thursday & Friday and 08.30 on Saturday. Bookmakers & staff admission tickets (email copy of DBB will not permit entry) will be scanned and equipment security checked at the entrance. Gates open for the public at 11.00 on Thursday, 10.30 on Friday & 10.00 on Saturday.

Pitching In times, will be : all days Festival Zone /County Stand 10.00 (Temporary Areas first). Embankment Sat 10.30.

It was confirmed that as per 2024 each of the four Temporary Betting Areas (front of Lord Sefton Stand 4 (2x2); side of Earl of Derby Stand 2; Parade Ring 6; Inside the Equestrian Centre 5) will be pitched in separately utilising the 1:1 Tatts/Rails mechanism.

The 5 betting positions by the Silver Birch hospitality (Tattersalls List) are expected to be in a similar location to 2024.

The racecourse will again provide black bags to each bookmaker for general litter.

Bookmakers are asked to keep their joint area clean & tidy and carefully store away kit boxes or extra kit, in order to reduce trip hazards.

All anchor points will be cleaned/power washed pre-event – CP to action

Darren Irving will issue bookmakers lanyards and transfer labels for County Stand bookmakers as required.

At the end of each day the usual exits, including opening up of the rear of the Equestrian Centre, will be available to bookmakers.

AOB

A discussion around Think 25 and age checking. Bookmakers were aware of and properly discharge their responsibilities, with ongoing staff briefing & monitoring etc.

Next meeting January 2026 TBA.