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## TOWCESTER SIGN BOOKIES DEAL

By Press Association Sport Staff

Towcester and its bookmakers signed an agreement on Tuesday which enables the bookies to continue to use their list positions for the lifetime of the racecourse.

List positions, the spots where each bookmaker can stand and trade in the racecourse betting rings, have come under scrutiny in relation to how long they should last. The Government established a working party in 2008 to broker a solution.

The Towcester development is a breakthrough, although the Northamptonshire course is the only track in Britain not to be a member of the Racecourse Association, which announced in 2007 that the list positions would not be recognised by the year 2012.

Other British racecourses are still at the discussion stage with bookmakers.

The Towcester agreement also includes revised commercial terms between the racecourse and the bookmakers.

Gerry Sutcliffe MP, the Minister for Sport, said: "I am pleased that Towcester has reached a deal with its on-course bookmakers on the tenure of their list positions.

"I congratulate the racecourse and the Federation of Racecourse Bookmakers in securing a deal which clearly meets the needs and secures the future of both parties.

"Of course this is an important development in the overall dispute. It demonstrates to me that, with goodwill and perseverance, deals can be done for the benefit of everyone.

"It is also clear that the issue is a multidimensional one; it is not simply a question of 'how long'. All the boxes need to be ticked before agreements can be reached.

"But there are 60 other racecourses in the United Kingdom and there is no certainty, and this must be remedied as far as I am concerned.

"This is a matter that has received a good deal of attention in both Houses and I want to see that an equitable solution is reached.

"I remain committed to this. My department is facilitating discussions, and I believe it

is right that we do so.

"In addition to this, all options remain under review, including the legislative option. It is an important step forward today, but we must not be complacent. There is still a long way to go."

Barry Johnson, FRB representative and the owner of number one list positions in Tattersalls and on the rails at Towcester, said: "We are very happy with the arrangements surrounding the duration of tenure and new betting areas at Towcester.

"The deal, which includes an increase in access charges from bookmakers, is symptomatic of the spirit of partnership that we enjoy with Towcester.

"I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Lord Hesketh (chairman) and his management team on their approach.

"We must, however, protect all bookmakers and we are in ongoing discussions with the RCA, who we hope can deliver on this."

Lord Hesketh added: "We are delighted to have reached this landmark agreement.

"What we have endeavoured to ensure is that people who come racing at Towcester enjoy a vibrant and competitive betting ring with a variety of bookmakers offering attractive prices."