



## **Warwick Racecourse aims to become leading small Jumps course with all-Jumps programme from 2015**

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014** – Jockey Club Racecourses today announced plans for a 17-fixture all-Jumps race programme at Warwick Racecourse from 2015 and a vision for the Midlands track to become regarded as one of the UK's leading small Jumps courses within the next five years.

With an all-Jumps focus, clear identity and a boosted race programme, the move is designed to help the course to thrive over the long-term, rather than continue to struggle to remain viable in its current dual-code capacity. The plan – developed by the local course management and racecourse committee with the help and full support of the wider Jockey Club Racecourses team – will see several million pounds invested in Warwick in the coming years, including through reservoir expansion, enhanced irrigation systems and prize money contributions. The current Flat course will be utilised to provide a spring or autumn course, in addition to the existing winter course.

The move follows a programme of consultation about the best future for the racecourse, which was the first to stage Jumps racing in Great Britain in 1831, effectively introducing the code to these shores. The consultation, which gathered the views of trainers, jockeys and owners, as well as Warwick Annual Members and racegoers, highlighted the significant differences in perception between the quality and purpose of Flat racing at Warwick in comparison to its more highly regarded Jumps programme.

Warwick currently stages 11 Jumps fixtures and 10 Flat fixtures. Jockey Club Racecourses has worked collaboratively with the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) to develop Warwick's new all Jumps programme, particularly in the conversion and transfer of fixtures. Having consulted with The Horsemen's Group and Racecourse Association, the BHA has approved the conversion of six Flat fixtures to Jumps at Warwick and four Flat fixtures transferring to Nottingham (x2), Carlisle and Epsom Downs, within the provisional 2015 Fixture List. The management at Warwick will work in consultation with BHA Course Inspectors on implementing the necessary changes to the track in order to accommodate the additional Jump fixtures.

The specific details will be confirmed as part of the publication of the 2015 Fixture List by BHA. With a total of 17 Jumps fixtures slated from 2015 – running August to May – Jockey Club Racecourses has pledged to increase its average prize money contribution across Warwick's Jump fixture programme for 2015.

Recent highlights over Jumps at Warwick include the Betfred Classic Chase, contended by the likes of Auroras Encore and West End Rocker; the Kingmaker Novices' Chase, won by Long Run and Finian's Rainbow; and the Leamington Novices' Hurdle (Neptune Investment Management Novices' Hurdle), won by The New One and Carruthers. Three of the last five winners of the Crabbie's Grand National – Auroras Encore, Ballabriggs and Don't Push It – raced at Warwick in the build up to their Aintree triumphs. In addition, it has been announced recently that a Novice Chase in January, the Hampton Novices' Chase, has been upgraded to Listed status by BHA.

Many industry commentators have expressed the desire for British racing to strengthen the quality of the Jumps programme throughout the year and en route to the major festivals. Jockey Club Racecourses intends for this move to help towards achieving this. The UK's leading racecourse group is governed by The Jockey Club's Royal Charter commitment to act solely for the long-term good of British racing.

**Ian Renton, the Jockey Club Racecourses Regional Director responsible for Warwick Racecourse, said:**

"Warwick can now benefit from a clear identity and, in the coming years, significant investment as a top quality small Jumps course. I have every confidence it will succeed because we are building on Warwick's existing strengths, which has been underlined by the industry's support for Jumps racing through the consultation we have carried out over the last few months. We want people talking about fantastic racing at Warwick and boosting the important role it plays in the British Jumps racing programme.

"We could invest further in the Flat track at Warwick, such as increasing the camber, but that work would just return the Flat course to a position where the course has been struggling. It's not a decision we've taken lightly but I feel we have left no stone unturned to ensure this is the right move for British racing in the long-term. It's time for Warwick not just to survive, but thrive."

**Nicky Henderson, leading Jumps trainer added:**

"I very much welcome the news and see it as a huge benefit to Jumps racing.

"Warwick is a very fair course that has good, competitive Jumps racing, especially in the novice chase and novice hurdle departments. The fences are nicely sighted, they can be a little challenging down the back, but they are of a good size. We run plenty of horses there and with good, competitive novice hurdles and novice chases the field sizes are always good.

"It is very positive that the current Flat course is being transferred as additional space to run the Jumps races, and to have the flexibility of that extra ground. The ground can get testing in the winter making the spring ground less desirable but it's a bonus that this issue will be resolved to allow for the space to run the extra fixtures that have been introduced during the spring and the autumn.

"Geographically it is very well situated for us in Lambourn and it is an inviting course for all sorts of horses. The prize money at Warwick has always been good and they run some good races there."

**Huw Williams, General Manager of Warwick Racecourse commented:**

"Here is an opportunity for Warwick Racecourse to make a statement of intent in securing its long term racing future which is very exciting and which the Warwick team is fully behind.

"While plans we explored to support the course with a hotel have been dropped, there is still much work to be done in growing the popularity of our racedays and strengthening our non-raceday events business, where we hope the local community can get behind their local racecourse."

ENDS

**Notes to Editors**

While Warwick's management team has taken every opportunity to diversify revenue streams in a highly-competitive leisure market, the course has struggled commercially as a dual-code track. Attempts to step-change its viability, through diversification of other revenue streams and planning applications, have not proved possible.

Warwick's stiff final turn has received criticism from Flat jockeys in recent years, including Ryan Moore after a fall. The course's 20<sup>th</sup> May fixture had to be abandoned after jockeys refused to ride beyond the second race, after expressing concern about the ground on the home turn. There had been a sudden downpour before racing commenced on top of firm ground.

Since then, four of the scheduled Flat fixtures at Warwick have been moved to Nottingham and Carlisle with two remaining fixtures left at Warwick. The first of these fixtures took place on 4<sup>th</sup> July, with all races five and six furlongs in distance and with ground that was no faster than good when racing commenced. There were no incidents on this day. Warwick will race again on August Bank Holiday Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> August.

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