

CORAL 
ROMFORD GREYHOUND STADIUM

OWNER'S REP MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 21ST JANUARY 2026





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Attendee:

Gary Bolton - Stadia Director
Karen McMillan - Stadia Manager
Mark Arkell - Racing Manager
Jess Day - Communications Manager - Minutes
Jamie Bovis - David Lee's Rep
Mark Elliott - Tommy Batchelor's Rep
Mat Wren - Gemma Evans' Rep
Andy Dangerfield - Katie O'Flaherty's Rep
Penny Burr - Paul Burr's Rep
Kelly Searle - David Mullins' Rep
Alan Massey - Martyn Wiley's Rep
Dean Tennant - Paul Young's Rep

Mark opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Paul Burr's Kennel:

1. Why can't we have another trial session before Tuesday or after Monday to make up for no trials on Friday?

Monday is a planned maintenance day plus the vets have other jobs. We wouldn't rule out Tuesday in the future but as it stands Wednesday and a whole day on Thursday is plenty.

2. Can we have extra prize money for second place?

Unfortunately this is not in 2026's budget. All tracks have the same money for 2nd place and if we change at Romford, this has to be followed through at Hove and Monmore which adds up a lot annually. Idea of adding extra to 2nd place but reducing every other place so the same amount of money is used per race - left with kennel reps to discuss further and bring up again at the next meeting.



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Katie O'Flaherty's Kennel:

1. Are there any plans for the bond to be paid for new greyhounds?

This is not in our plan for 2026. We have done it at sales meetings previously but not on a general basis as it stands. Also to note, we have been approached about another sales meeting - keep your eyes peeled for a confirmed date.

2. Is there going to be a regrading?

We don't feel we need to do one at the moment as greyhounds are being dropped much more quickly in grade.

3. Could you clarify race scheduling of a greyhound/allocating races? Particularly in recovery time and in fairness of opportunity.

Firstly the lack of wide runners will always factor into this as they will naturally get more runs. Also, certain grades at the moment are struggling with particular seeds (ie A10 middles). There are an endless amount of factors including trainer availability, the number of runners each trainer comes with (we aim for a minimum of 4 runners per trainer and with 16 trainers this is a challenge), bad kennellers, not all trainers can be in late races on a Saturday AM due to them getting back in time for the Saturday PM, four day rule, greyhounds being every 7, 10 and 14 days, greyhounds open racing which we are not always informed of.

Martyn Wiley's Kennel:

1. Have Entain signed off on the proposed works to improve both the track's watering and drainage systems, and if so what is the planned timescale for these works to be completed?

Yes, this has been signed off by Entain however there is not an exact timescale as we are waiting on the company for confirmation.



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2. Why are dogs being graded with 50 spots to find on the clock then waiting 2 weeks for a run, then do it all over again?

The short answer is there will always be a dog waiting for a run. We have a lack of wide runners, so again, it depends on seeds. We have a bracket system we try to be consistent with when it comes to grading. For example, pups and bitches coming back from seasonal rest are usually dropped a grade and we don't typically upgrade greyhounds without a win (of course human error does occasionally occur). A dog's fastest time will be on their card for 12 weeks.

3. Why do you not increase open race prize money in line with trending costs?

We have tried extra prize money before with opens, and it does not guarantee additional entries. Some trainers go to their set tracks and it is disappointing when we see our trainers filling other track's cards. We, Romford, have the most open races in the country and we had the likes of Magical Luka travel over from Ireland to run in the Coral Romford Puppy Cup last year. Most other tracks do not have 12x opens every week and if they do, they do not always fill.

Gemma Evans' Kennel:

1. Is there a blanket rule for grading greyhounds by their times, or is it taken on an individual basis?

We aim to stick to local guidelines as well as our bracket system, and stress that consistency is key. Everyone has an opinion and we cannot please everyone unfortunately - at the end of the day we will do what we feel is best for you and your greyhounds.

2. What happens to the prize money for vacant traps?

The money is not free money. Some of it goes into extra races and other than that the money is used. Last year we supported trainers and owners with the retired greyhounds going to the USA scheme. It costs £1500 to send a greyhound to the USA, we charged owners £500 at the start of 2025, then this dropped to £300 and we paid



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the rest - some of this would've been vacant trap prize money. We must thank you all for your support with rehoming. There are still spaces for dogs in the USA!

3. What changes have been implemented since the last meeting?

- *More 6 bend races - we aim for one a meeting. Still struggling with 8 bend races.*
- *Hand watering - now have higher moisture readings.*
- *STRI test - Aim to be all in the green.*
- *Big prices within graded races have come down.*
- *New trainer - Welcome Debbie Hurlock.*
- *Welfare Days - encourage all to join us.*
- *Track preparation has changed - more water used.*
- *Our Power BI database gives us a year's worth of statistics.*
- *Greyhound's weights are now shown.*
- *No to annual owner's meetings - A rep per kennel means things don't get personal.*
- *A1s & S1s - More than last year.*
- *We now have A12 & S6 races.*
- *Sweepstakes on big finals nights.*
- *Awkwards and DQs are more consistent.*
- *Changes have been made but ultimately we have a successful business as it is so we do not need to be too drastic.*

4. If there is a clear bias (for example the first 6 races are won by railers, without wide runners in the frame), is the track treated differently as a reaction to try and account for said bias, or is the treatment of the track standard throughout the card?

We now publish the trap statistics for the previous month in the racecard and Trap 1 leads the way - many factors come into this. Changes are only implemented due to weather and moisture levels.



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5. Are there any new initiatives or incentives for 2026 to bring new owners into the sport or for pre existing owners?

Yes, we have lots of initiatives like the Greyhound Ownership Board - thought of by David Lee - which has proved to be a success. We have reduced celebration package deals and prices for owners which encourages them to come and visit us. Constant racecard adverts which promote syndicates (previously advertised the Underground Greyhound Syndicate and Jeopardy Racing Syndicate) - get in touch if you'd like to advertise your syndicate! The Romford Junior's races have parents asking lots of questions and getting involved in ownership and our social media promotes our trainers as well as the greyhounds day in, day out. We have a new Owner's Pass system which is being looked into - early stages. Owners chose the Paddock Restaurant for our January Owner's Night which meant more owners could join us - it is a shame not all trainers took us up on this.

6. Are there are any changes planned to the snack bar to offer a wider variety of food for customers?

We are open to suggestions and ideas but need feedback in order to put something new on the snack bar menu.

Tommy Batchelor's Kennel:

1. Reserve greyhounds - What is the point in having them if they are hardly ever used? I thought if they were put a reserve it meant they were definitely going to be out within the next two runs.

This is not a rule and unfortunately if their slot is missed, they may have to wait a little longer.

2. Owners lounge - can the downstairs Trap 7 area be turned into an Owners-Only Lounge?

This has been tried and tested before and it did not work - not enough owners used it consistently and our customers ended up missing out on sitting down when the



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chairs weren't being used. Unfortunately we just do not have the space to facilitate an Owner's Lounge and with the snack bar being downstairs too it would cause confusion. To counteract not having an Owner's Lounge we open our doors slightly earlier for owners the majority of the time, and whoever gets there first reserves seats for their group anyway.

3. Can we meet our dogs after their race? The one bar out the gate is no better than before.

The bar was taken out as a test and to be honest we have not heard much noise about the gate for a while, plus, owners were never as adamant to see their greyhound after their race when we raced over the other side of the stadium. Just to remind you, we restrict access beyond the blue gate in the interest of greyhound welfare. It is not because we don't trust owners to see their greyhound, it is because we welcome thousands of customers week in, week out - many of them under the influence of alcohol - and our security staff as well as kennelhands would not know who is an owner/who is not (especially large syndicate members). Anyone could say they are an owner and be let through the gate and if anything were to happen to one of your greyhounds, what would you say then? Who's fault would that be? Not enough owners bring their Owner's Pass to validate if they're an owner or not so it is fairer for us on the whole to shut off access completely, and you can greet your greyhound through the gate whilst you're at the track and visit/walk them at the kennels on a day of your convenience.

4. Advanced Cards - Is there a reason cards are being released later?

They are not being released later, maybe as a one off but not consistently. On Monday's the Friday card is advanced and so on, so forth throughout the week. We actually release our cards earlier than previously done to help you book into the restaurant on a Friday/Saturday night.

5. Parking - It's difficult to get a parking space on a Friday/Saturday night. Can some spaces be allocated for owners until the day before racing?

The fear is people would book spaces and then not show up, we would then be



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potentially losing customers by turning them away. Saturday is too busy to do this and to be honest, on a Friday by the 2nd race, majority of the time we still have spaces remaining so it's not something we're looking to implement as of now.

6. Track condition - The track currently seems way too fast, with the track record not long ago being broken, and we are led to believe this causes an increase in injuries.

Track records are normally broken on a fast track. The weather massively factors into this and more water is being used now than ever. The night in question was sub zero temperatures so we couldn't use much water.

7. Quantity of runners per meeting?

It's been touched upon already, but it's a huge jigsaw puzzle, not as simple as you all think. We are also pushing for 6 dog races enormously at the moment.

8. Inconsistencies within grading make it hard to win Dog/Bitch of the Month awards? Individual greyhounds mentioned.

Sometimes this is down to human error - everyone makes mistakes. We try to be as consistent as possible, for example sweepstake greyhounds will be upgraded accordingly etc. Dog and Bitch of the Month statistics were handed out to Owner's Reps.

AOB:

- *Thinking of removing requests for Boxing Day and Owner's Nights as too many moans if we can't accommodate them and doesn't please everyone.*

Thank you for attending!