

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING TRIALS LIAISON COUNCIL
HELD AT 10.30 AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2026**

PRESENT

Mrs P Bann
Mrs C Davis
Miss J Hall
Mrs C Ling
Mr C Taylor
Mr L Theobald
Mrs A Tohme

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Senior Manager Canine Activities
Miss A Morley	Activities Liaison Manager
Mrs E Osborne	Activities Liaison Advisor

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. No apologies for absence had been received, as everyone was present.

ITEM 2. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Liaison Council noted that there were no matters arising or results of recommendations from the Board.
3. The minutes of the previous meeting were discussed, and it was raised that, although the minutes recorded that the number of accredited trainers within Working Trials was considered sufficient, the Liaison Council was of the view that there remained a shortage of accredited trainers for PD.
4. Concern was expressed that not all accredited trainers were regularly attending assessments, resulting in an increased workload for those who were undertaking the majority of the assessment commitments.
5. It was acknowledged that the matter would be discussed with the current list of accredited trainers in the first instance to identify the issues and ensure everyone was committed to the role.

ITEM 3. PD PANELS

6. The Liaison Council received and noted a verbal update, along with a written report circulated by the PD Panel prior to the meeting.
(Annex A)

ITEM 4. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

7. The Liaison Council noted that there had been no update from the April meeting of the Activities Judges Sub-Group as no Working Trials matters had been discussed at the meeting.
8. Clarification was sought about membership of the Activities Judges Sub-Group and it was confirmed by the office that membership was approved every year by the Activities Committee and that this was usually done at their summer meeting. Working trials had one representative, accredited trainer Mr J Wykes.

ITEM 5. PROPOSALS

To submit a proposal or discussion item, the community was invited to use the online form so the Working Trials Liaison Council could discuss and review any suggestions prior to the next meeting in 2027. Submissions were accepted at any time of year via the online form: [Liaison Council Agenda Item](#).

Proposed amendment to Regulation I(B)12

9. The Liaison Council considered a proposed amendment to ensure that the Quartering the Ground exercise remained that of quartering the ground and not of sendaways or redirection.
10. A discussion took place regarding judges' discretion during the exercise. Reference was made to previous occasions where handlers had been stopped by the judge after the dog had passed close to the handler whilst continuing to search, despite the dog having received no direction from the handler.
11. It was noted that it could be difficult for a judge to determine whether a dog was actively searching or simply exercising itself and that clear direction should be given by the judge as to the accepted search area and proximity to the handler. It was raised that refresher seminars for judges had been beneficial to ensure a more consistent approach but that recent seminars had largely been attended by newer judges.
12. Consideration was also given to whether judges should be able to award marks for the completed section of the exercise where appropriate, but it was recognised that the above regulation referred only to finishing the exercise and not the awarding of marks.
13. The Liaison Council considered the proposed wording relating to the requirement for the dog to 'return close to the handler'. It was noted that the phrase could be considered vague and open to interpretation. To provide greater clarity, Mr Theobald proposed that the word 'close' be removed so

that the requirement would read 'return to the handler'. The proposal was seconded by Miss Hall.

14. The Liaison Council voted on the amended proposal and unanimously **recommended** it for approval.

Regulation I(B)12. Quartering the ground

To:

The missing person, protected consistent with safety, must remain motionless in a seated or standing position out of sight of the handler but must be accessible on investigation to the dog when 'winded'. The protected steward must not be lying down. The judge should satisfy himself that the dog has found the person and given warning spontaneously and emphatically without being directed by the handler. A dog that bites the hidden person must be heavily penalised.

Excessive commands when the dog is quartering the ground must be penalised. The dog should have a positive attitude when searching for the protected steward/s. Dogs that do not respond to directions and return to the handler must be treated as having finished the exercise.

(Insertion in bold.)

Proposed amendment to Regulations I6 and I9.

15. The Liaison Council considered the proposed amendment to shorten the time frame in which societies must apply for a licence to hold a working trial.
16. A short discussion took place, and a unanimous vote meant the following regulation amendments were **recommended**.

Regulation I6. Societies are required to apply for permission to hold Special Events.

To:

Applications should be submitted to the Royal Kennel Club by email at least six ~~months~~ **weeks** before the start of any qualifying heats for the event.

(Deletions struck through. Insertion in bold.)

Regulation I9. Application.

To:

The application for a licence to hold a working trial must be made to the secretary of the Royal Kennel Club, and must be accompanied by the appropriate licence fee, at least six ~~months~~ **weeks** before the date of the working trial.

(Deletions struck through. Insertion in bold.)

Proposed amendment to Regulations I22.c.(13) and I27.b

17. The Liaison Council considered the proposed amendment to the above regulations which would allow judges to compete at the same trial they were judging, where applicable.
18. The Liaison Council noted that the wording of the agenda contained an error, as it referred to competing on the same day rather than at the same trial. It was confirmed that competing on the same day would not be plausible and that the proposal related to competing at the same trial in a different stake to the one they were judging.
19. It was noted that in both public consultation and in consultation with Trial Managers, the majority were in favour of the proposal.
20. It was acknowledged that the proposed changes would give societies the discretion to decide whether judges could compete, meaning Trial Managers would not be required to accommodate judges competing if a society chose not to permit it.
21. A concern was raised that judges sometimes exercised their own dogs on control fields or used them for run-throughs, and that this could potentially be viewed as practice. It was acknowledged that, should that become a concern, wording could be added to societies' contracts to clarify that judges should not use their own dogs in that manner if they wished to compete at the trial.
22. A query was raised as to whether a trial period would be beneficial for the proposed amendments or if the changes would be implemented from January 2027. Following discussion, it was agreed that a trial period was not necessary, as the proposed regulation would provide societies with the option to permit judges to compete rather than making it a requirement.
23. Following a unanimous vote, the Liaison Council **recommended** the proposal.

Regulation I22.c.(13) Schedules.

To:

~~A regulation which prohibits judges at the trials entering a dog which is recorded in their ownership or part ownership.~~

If applicable, a statement that:

- 1. Judges may compete in any stake at this trial except the stake at which they are officiating at the discretion of the Trials Manager. (This option does not apply to judges of Championship PD/TD)**

OR

- 2. Judges may not compete in any stake at this trial**
(Deletions struck through. Insertion in bold.)

Regulation 127.b. Judging

To:

Judges at **Championship PD/TD** Working Trials may not enter a dog which is recorded in their ownership or part ownership; or handle a dog at the trial at which they are judging.

(Insertions in bold.)

ITEM 6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

24. The Liaison Council noted that no discussion items had been received for the meeting.

ITEM 7. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

25. The Liaison Council reviewed the strategy document, and it was noted that the Jumps Research Panel report had been received prior to the meeting by the Liaison Council but that the report had not been seen by the office.
26. It was reported that discussions had taken place with the researchers and that, while preliminary results had been received, the findings were noted to be highly complex, and therefore the data was being worked through to produce a more accessible and useful report for the wider public.
27. A PowerPoint presentation was being prepared to explain the implications of the findings for competitors and their dogs, and a query was raised as to whether the Royal Kennel Club Stoneleigh building could be used as a conference venue for an Autumn presentation for all those who wished to attend.
28. The office suggested that this may be more appropriate via an online Teams presentation as many people would not be able to attend in person, the diary for Stoneleigh was exceptionally busy and the budget was unfortunately limited. The Liaison Council queried whether a summary could be reported in the Royal Kennel Club Gazette.
29. The Liaison Council noted that training was not mentioned on the 5 year strategy document and that this was a particular concern for the future of the discipline.
30. It was suggested that all societies should be looking to participate in providing training to help protect the discipline. Many people had enquired following the demonstrations and 'Have a Go' sessions at Crufts, so it was considered that there was a need to promote these training opportunities in order to encourage those who showed an interest.

31. It was raised that there had been some opportunities to offer introduction to Working Trials sessions free of charge at local dog training clubs and that those had been very well received. However, it was also noted that often people started initial training but did not commit long term so work needed to be done to ensure people continued.
32. The Liaison Council noted that stewarding workshops had recently been held by some members and that articles had been created and distributed to various publications for the centenary of the recognition of Working Trials in order to increase awareness of the discipline.
33. The office confirmed that there would be potential for Trials Managers seminars in the future but that this would depend on demand and workload.

ITEM 8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Championship Judge Assessments

34. A query was raised regarding the process of nomination for championship TD or PD judges discussed at the previous meeting. The office clarified that application forms must be submitted at least 18 months prior to the trial as the office then had to arrange the assessment.
35. Clarification was sought as to why forms needed to be submitted a full 18 months before the trial date and the office confirmed that an assessment needed to be completed by an accredited trainer and a suitable judging appointment was required for that. It was acknowledged that judging appointments in Working Trials were infrequent, resulting in limited opportunities for assessments.
36. It was requested that the procedure for appointing championship ticket judges was made clear on the website including confirmation that the office organised the assessment.
 - The office agreed to look into the information available on the website in order to increase awareness of the process.

Cancellation Policy

37. A query was raised regarding the Royal Kennel Club cancellation policy, and a concern was voiced that the current cancellation procedure did not clearly address the situation where a multi-day Championship Working Trial was abandoned after one or more days, with one competitor leading at the time of abandonment.
38. Clarification was sought as to whether, in such circumstances, the leading competitor could be awarded the win and potentially qualify for the title of Working Trials Champion, despite not having competed against all eligible competitors in the stake.

39. It was agreed that clarification would be beneficial to avoid the risk of a title being awarded and subsequently withdrawn and the office confirmed the matter could be taken forward for review at the next available Activities Committee meeting.
40. Liaison Council Members were reminded that queries of this nature could be submitted to the Royal Kennel Club office by email as they arose, rather than waiting for a Liaison Council meeting and that any matters such as this should be submitted through the Chair to ensure they were managed through the appropriate process.

ITEM 9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

41. It was noted that the date of the Liaison Council's next meeting would be announced in September 2026.
42. The meeting closed at 12.00pm.

THE ROYAL KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC AIMS

- Champion the wellbeing of dogs
- Safeguard and enhance the future of pedigree dogs, addressing breed-associated health issues
- Protect the future of dog activities together with our grassroots network
- Become relevant to more dog owners to increase our impact
- Deliver an excellent member experience and widen our community
- Ensure we are financially secure and sustainable