

MEETING OF THE RALLY LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15
JULY 2026 AT 10AM, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

A G E N D A

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

ITEM 2. HEALTH AND WELFARE

The Liaison Council will receive a presentation from Ms Fern McDonnell (Health & Breeding Manager) to discuss health initiatives at the Royal Kennel Club.

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2026 (copies previously distributed).

ITEM 4. MATTERS ARISING AND RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Liaison Council is invited to note that the Activities Committee, at its meeting on 24 March 2026, approved the following amendments to S Regulations from 1 January 2027:

Amendment to Regulation S(B)4.d – Run Offs

Regulation S(B)4.d

TO:

Tied scores for place awards - In the event that two or more dog/handler teams score an equal number of points, they shall be invited to participate in a run-off using a Bonus exercise appropriate to the level. The run off bonus should be stated on the course plan submitted to the Secretary and/or the Chief Steward. **Where none of the parties involved are available for the runoff, the order shall be decided at the discretion of the judge.**

(Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2027)

ITEM 5. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

The Liaison Council is invited to note a written report from Mrs Bradley following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 7 April 2026.

(Annex A refers)

ITEM 6. REVIEW OF CHAMPIONSHIP FRAMEWORK

The Liaison Council is invited to note an update on the Rally Review. The community feedback has been largely positive with some suggestions for improvement, which will be incorporated. Work is ongoing and the Liaison Council plan to submit the framework to the first formal RLC meeting of 2027 for implementation in 2028, to allow time for further consultation with the community.

(Annex B refers)

ITEM 7. PROPOSALS

Proposal to Amend the Timeframe for Show Licence Applications

- a. The Liaison Council is requested to consider an amendment to regulation S7 and S9.a, to return to the six week licence application timeframe for Rally competitions.

The change to six months was introduced on 1 January 2026, however concerns were raised regarding the impact of the timeframe on smaller Listed Status clubs.

From a survey issued by the Liaison Council, the responses showed that none of the rally societies wished the deadline for licence applications to remain at six months, with the majority of those organising new shows requesting that the deadline should return to six weeks. Although possible exemptions to the regulations were considered, returning to the six week deadline appeared to be the most viable option.

Therefore, the following amendments have been proposed for consideration:

Amendments to Regulation S7 and S9.a

Regulation S7. 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 **weeks** ~~months~~ before the start of any qualifying heats for the event.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Regulation S9.a. Application to Host a Rally competition.

TO:

The application to hold a competition must be submitted to the Secretary of the Royal Kennel Club and must be accompanied by the appropriate licence fee at least six **weeks** ~~months~~ before the proposed date of the competition.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Proposals to add an option for where competitors may remove their leads in Level 2 Bonus Exercises

- b. The Liaison Council is invited to consider a proposal to allow an option for the handler to remove their dog's lead between finishing the course and starting the bonus exercise.

The proposal was suggested by members of the Rally community due to concerns that judges may be judging how a handler removes their lead rather than the performance of the exercise.

The community are invited to note that under the new Rally framework all Level 2 Bonuses would be fully off lead, with the lead removed between the Finish and Bonus Start signs. Therefore, it is considered that introducing this as an option in the interim may be beneficial.

In a recent survey, which was open for one week in April 2026, the Rally community were asked if they would like the option to remove their lead before attempting the bonus. The survey received 70 responses, of which over 85% of the responses were in favour of introducing this before the new framework.

The Liaison Council is invited to note that, if recommended, this proposal should not impact the planned changes to Level 2 bonuses in the new framework.

Therefore, the Liaison Council is requested to consider the following amendments to the regulations:

Amendments to Regulation S(C). Exercises and Signs

Bonus Exercise 4

TO:

SIT - LEAVE DOG - CALL TO HEEL. This exercise requires two signs. At the first sign (A) the handler and dog stop with the dog sitting at heel. The handler may take the lead off or the dog may drag the lead. The handler walks to the second sign (B), which is placed approximately 2 metres from sign A. The handler will not turn to face the dog but instead, with his/her back to the dog, will call the dog to move to the heel position. The handler may turn his/her head slightly while cueing the dog to heel. The dog must come promptly and sit at heel. Once sitting, the exercise is considered complete.

The handler may also choose to remove their lead between the Finish and Bonus Start Signs.

NB: If this bonus is used at Level 3 or above there is no requirement to reattach the lead before attempting this bonus exercise.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Bonus Exercise 5

TO:

SIT - LEAVE DOG - TURN - RECALL - HANDLER FINISH. This exercise requires two signs. At the first sign (A) the handler and dog stop with the dog sitting at heel. The handler may take the lead off or the dog may drag the lead. The handler walks to the second sign (B), which is placed approximately 2 metres from sign A, turns and recalls the dog to the front position. The dog remains in the sit whilst the handler moves left to take up the heel position. Once the handler has moved to the heel position, the exercise is considered complete. This is not a walk around exercise.

The handler may also choose to remove their lead between the Finish and Bonus Start Signs.

NB: If this bonus is used at Level 3 or above there is no requirement to reattach the lead before attempting this bonus exercise.
(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Proposal to Remove the Maximum Hoop Height

- c. The Liaison Council is invited to consider removing the maximum height for a hoop, due to concerns raised by the community about the suitability of the hoop for taller dogs.

A concern has also been raised as the hoops used for Rally competitions are sourced from Hoopers suppliers. Therefore, if the Hoopers organisations choose to change the equipment specification, it could leave Rally judges, trainers, and competitors with a time period where they are unable to purchase Rally compliant hoops. Research shows that the manufacturers dimensions for one of the hoops in current general usage states the height at 95cm tall, which is taller than the current stated maximum.

To reduce any possibility of issues in the future and to support the taller dogs, the following amendment to the regulations has been suggested:

Regulation S16.h Facilities and Equipment.

TO:

h. For all jump exercises the jump may be replaced with a hoop. Hoops may be based or baseless and must be constructed in a safe manner. Hoops should measure **at least** 89-92cm tall, 85-90cm wide with feet protruding no more than 31cm either side of the hoop. Where conditions dictate, hoops may be pegged or held down by sandbags that do not impede the dog's entry or exit from the hoop.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Capped Classes Proposal

- d. The Liaison Council is invited to consider a proposal to reduce the minimum amount of entries for capped classes from 40 to 20.

The Liaison Council has received feedback from the community that societies would benefit from additional flexibility and assistance to grow their competitions. Competition organisers with smaller venues have noted some uncertainty about their ability to schedule all the standard classes once the new framework is introduced.

It has been suggested that reducing the minimum capping level would allow societies to utilise more cost-effective venues without compromising the number of standard classes that they can run.

At present, if the number of entries received exceeds 40, the class may be equally divided (to within one dog) by a draw and the class split into equal parts. Whilst there are no plans to reduce the number at which classes may be split, by reducing the minimum capping level to 20, it would enable societies to use a single competition ring to run multiple small classes. Therefore, it would give societies the confidence to plan their competitions at their existing venues.

The proposed change is to the minimum capping level only. If the proposal is recommended, show organisers would still be able to set a capping level above 20. Societies who currently cap their classes at 40 dogs would continue to be able to do so.

From a survey of competition organisers in May 2026, the majority supported the increased flexibility offered by reducing the minimum capping level. The survey received 49 responses, representing an extremely high take up from the current competition organisers.

Therefore, the following amendments to regulation S5. Classes at Rally competitions have been suggested:

Amendment to Regulation S5.c.(3)

TO:

c. Capped classes

(3) The capping level must be set at a minimum of ~~40~~ **20** entries received. There is no maximum level at which a cap may be set. Capped classes may be split ~~into two or more divisions~~ in accordance with Regulation S20**ik**.
(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Eligibility and Progression Proposal

- e. The Liaison Council is requested to consider a proposal regarding class progression, which suggests that the handler and dog teams would remain in a Level until they gain their Excellent title. However, they would be able to choose to progress upon gaining their Level title.
A survey regarding Rally class progression was conducted in September 2025, which received 120 responses. From reviewing the survey feedback provided, the following amendments to the S(A) regulations relating to Levels, Classes and Eligibility have been suggested:

Amendments to Regulation S(A)1. Levels

TO:

1. Levels

Rally handler/dog/**handler** teams compete in their lowest eligible class from Level 1 to Level 6; ~~t~~They may also compete at the subsequent level. ~~Progression to the next level does not require either wins or places. Progression is dependent upon gaining three Excellent scores, under three different judges, or six qualifying scores under four different judges.~~

Levels 1 - 4 have a qualifying score of 175 ~~out of 200~~.

Levels 5 & 6 have a qualifying score of 180 ~~out of 200~~.

In all levels a qualifying score of 190 or above equates to an excellent score.

~~Scores equivalent to these qualifying scores (or greater) earned at Limited Rally competitions do not count towards Progression, Rally Level titles or Excellent.~~

~~In all levels a qualifying score of 190 or above equates to an excellent score.~~

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Amendments to Regulation S(A)2. Veteran

TO:

2. Veteran

Rally handler/dog/**handler** teams where the dog is 7 years of age or older may compete in Veteran as well as, or instead of, their lowest eligible class. Veteran has a qualifying score of 175 ~~out of 200~~.

A qualifying score of 190 or above equates to an excellent score.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Addition to the Regulations as S(A)3. Validity of Scores

TO:

3. **Validity of scores**

Only scores equivalent to, or greater than, qualifying scores earned in standard classes at Open competitions count towards progression, rally titles, Excellent titles and Rally Warrants. Scores earned at Limited Rally competitions do not count.

(Insertions in bold. Subsequent regulations to be renumbered)

(Effective 1 January 2027)

Amendment and Renumbering Regulation S(A)3. Eligibility

TO:

2 4. Eligibility

a. Standard Level Classes

When entered for a competition in a standard level class, a dog must be entered at the level for which it is eligible. The dog may also, if desired, be entered in up to two additional classes including one further standard level class at the subsequent higher level. ~~one additional special class, or two additional special classes. A dog may be entered in special classes only, up~~

~~to a maximum of 3 classes. Special classes do not count towards progression.~~ Once a dog has earned any level or excellent title, it is no longer eligible for any lower level.

b. Veteran classes

A dog which is 7 years old or over on the day of the competition may be entered in just the Veteran class. It may also be entered in Standard Level classes and special classes to a maximum of 3 classes in total.

c. Special classes

A dog may be entered in special classes only, up to a maximum of 3 classes in total. Special classes do not count towards progression, **titles or warrants**.

Level 1

- Open to all dogs which have not achieved a ~~Level 1~~ or Level 1 Excellent title **or where their handler has not chosen to progress on a Level 1 title, except those that have achieved a title from a higher level.**

Level 2

- Open to all dogs which have achieved a ~~Level 1~~ or Level 1 Excellent title **or where their handler has chosen to progress on a Level 1 title**, except those that have achieved a ~~Level 2~~ or ~~Level 2 Excellent~~ title **from a higher level**. Dogs eligible for and entered at Level 1 may also enter at this level.

Level 3

- Open to all dogs which have achieved a ~~Level 2~~ or Level 2 Excellent title **or where their handler has chosen to progress on a Level 2 title**, except those that have achieved a ~~Level 3~~ or ~~Level 3 Excellent~~ title **from a higher level**. Dogs eligible for and entered at Level 2 may also enter at this level.

Level 4

- Open to all dogs which have achieved a ~~Level 3~~ or Level 3 Excellent title **or where their handler has chosen to progress on a Level 3 title**, except those that have achieved a ~~Level 4~~ or ~~Level 4 Excellent~~ title **from a higher level**. Dogs eligible for and entered at Level 3 may also enter at this level.

Level 5

- Open to all dogs which have achieved a ~~Level 4~~ or Level 4 Excellent title **or where their handler has chosen to progress on a Level 4 title**, except those that have achieved a ~~Level 5~~ or ~~Level 5 Excellent~~ title **from a higher level**. Dogs eligible for and entered at Level 4 may also enter at this level.

Level 6

- Open to all dogs which have achieved a ~~Level 5~~ or Level 5 Excellent title **or where their handlers have chosen to progress on a Level 5 title**. Dogs eligible for and entered at Level 5 may also enter at this level.

Veteran

- Open to all dogs aged 7 years or over on the first day of the competition. (Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

Addition to the Regulations as S(A)5.

TO:

5. Progression

Progression is dependent upon gaining the required number of qualifying or excellent scores under the defined number of different judges. Dogs must progress upon gaining an Excellent title, the handler may choose to progress upon gaining a Level title, however, once a dog has progressed, it cannot return to the class that it progressed from.

(Insertions in bold. Subsequent regulations to be renumbered)

Trial Proposal to Enable Judges to Officiate and Compete on the Same Day

- f. The Liaison Council is requested to consider enabling a trial period to enable judges to compete in Rally competitions on the same day that they are officiating.

As there is strong support for the idea from the Rally community, it has been suggested that the concept is trialled, enabling a full picture of the impact on Rally competitions to be assessed.

Regulation S20.1 states that:

Judges at a Rally competition must not enter for competition a dog which is recorded in their sole ownership, or handle a dog, at the competition at which they are judging. A dog recorded in part ownership with the judge may be entered for competition in any part of a class other than the part which the judge is judging.

The trial proposal suggests a relaxation of rule S20.1, along with the implementation of specific guidance.

(Annex C refers)

ITEM 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Judges Progression

- a. The Liaison Council is requested to discuss a paper regarding possible changes to judges' progression. The paper lists changes which have been

suggested to support both new judges as well as judges progressing to new levels by focusing on practical education.

(Annex D refers)

Eligibility for Special Classes

- b. The Liaison Council is invited to discuss amending regulation S2.b to clarify that special classes are not restricted to dogs of 12 calendar months of age.

It has been raised that confirmation may be required to clarify that dogs aged six months and over may compete in appropriate special classes, which do not include jump exercises, while maintaining the existing age restriction for classes that may involve jumps.

Regulation S2.b states the following:

S2 Eligibility

- b. Only dogs of six calendar months of age and over on the first day of the competition are eligible to take part in Level 1, 2, or 3 classes. Only dogs of 12 calendar months of age and over on the first day of the competition are eligible to take part in Level 4 or higher classes or special classes which incorporate jumps or similar exercises.

The current wording was written prior to hoop equipment being introduced and was not reviewed at the time of the hoop introduction. It is believed that the regulation can create confusion for competitors and societies when scheduling and entering special classes suitable for younger dogs.

The Liaison Council is requested to consider whether to amend the regulation by adding clarification to the end of the first sentence to clarify that dogs between 6 and 12 months may enter special classes which do not include jump exercises.

It has also been suggested that an addition to regulation S5.b (Special Classes) could be made to state that schedules should clearly indicate where a special class may incorporate jump exercises. If so, to state whether they are restricted to dogs over 12 months of age or detail any provisions for dogs under 12 months entered in these classes.

The suggestion hopes to ensure that schedules clearly identify classes where jumps may be included, therefore helping competitors make informed decisions about their entry, aid course design parameters for judges, and help organisers to provide clarity in their schedules.

ITEM 9. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

The Liaison Council is requested to review the Five-Year plan and to consider whether any further details or prioritisation is needed.

(Annex E refers)

ITEM 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the Liaison Council's next meeting will be confirmed by September 2026.

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*