



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL HELD AT
10.30 AM ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT

Mrs A Boulter
Ms D Cox
Mr J Higgins
Miss L Holmes
Mrs L Holmes
Mrs S Hyde
Mr M McCartney
Ms K Russell
Ms C Williams

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs S Garner	Board Member – Activities Committee Chair (Until para 27)
Miss D Deuchar	Senior Manager - Canine Activities
Miss T Collins	Obedience & Rally Liaison Advisor

GUESTS

Ms C McNamara	Head of Health & Breeding (Until para 19)
Mrs H Lawrence	Head of Education and Dog Training (Until para 29)

ITEM 1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

1. The office provided information about the role of Obedience Liaison Council Chair. The Chair would attend the Activities Committee meetings to represent the views of the Liaison Council and it was noted that correspondence to the office on behalf of the Liaison Council should be received via the Chair.
2. Mr Higgins was proposed and seconded for the role of Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr Higgins was duly elected for the role.

IN THE CHAIR MR J HIGGINS

ITEM 2. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL

3. It was confirmed that if the Chair was unable to attend a meeting, the Vice Chair would act as Chair in their absence. The Vice Chair would also be requested to attend Activities Committee meetings if the Chair was unable to attend.

- Ms Williams was proposed and seconded for the role of Vice Chair. There being no other nominations, Ms Williams was duly elected for the role.

ITEM 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- No apologies for absence were received as all representatives were present.

ITEM 4. HEALTH AND WELFARE

- The Liaison Council received a presentation from Ms C McNamara (Head of Health & Breeding) which explained important health initiatives at the Royal Kennel Club.
- A question was raised regarding how the new health initiatives were envisioned to translate into the breed ring. It was believed that the Nose to Tail Veterinary Assessments would provide important information and criteria, which would then be used to inform the Breed Standards on acceptable health standards and body shapes. The impact on the Breed Standards would then need to be reflected in the breed ring and judging.
- It was noted that many changes could be implemented. The Royal Kennel Club was aware of the huge responsibility on judges and wished to support them through the changes.
- The Liaison Council queried what it could do to help support the new health initiatives. It was considered important to get the message out that the Royal Kennel Club had launched the Breeding for Health Framework to improve dogs' quality of life and overall health. The office wanted to encourage people to speak to the Health team and join breeder consultation groups for discussions and understanding by emailing health@royalkennelclub.com
- Concerns were raised about the CMA Report into veterinary services which was released in 2025. It was reported that veterinary prices had risen very quickly in recent years and it was queried whether the Royal Kennel Club was aware of the matter before collaborating with veterinary practices.
- The Liaison Council was advised that the Royal Kennel Club had a broad network of independent community vets and a strong relationship with the British Veterinary Association. It was noted that although the Royal Kennel Club was not involved in the conversation about veterinary fees, the relationship with the British Veterinary Association would be helpful in achieving the best prices for customers.
- The aim was to maintain prices for health schemes for breeders, and review the DNA testing services to find the best deals and prices so that the

Community felt well serviced. Any future health schemes would be investigated accordingly.

13. It was queried whether the progeny of DNA health tested dogs would need to be tested again, even if the parents had clear test results. The office confirmed that there was a policy called 'hereditary status in perpetuity', which meant the parents were tested and the offspring were provided with that hereditary status in perpetuity.
14. The Health team were in consultation regarding a new policy which recommended retesting the dogs to provide a new result for progeny. Breeders would retest, which meant the data no longer relied on hereditary status of dogs. Re-testing allowed the ability to check and protect the integrity of the data.
15. The Royal Kennel Club held 1.6 million health test results, which helped to inform the guidance provided to breeders. Therefore, it was important to keep the results up to date and accurate to reflect the breeds.
16. The office acknowledged that there were complexities involved in health testing, different breeds had different needs and requirements. The Health team were looking to answer questions regarding when it was appropriate to test and for which breeds. The tests for each breed may also have different levels of severity for different conditions. The matter was under investigation and would be reviewed often.
17. A concern was raised regarding docked dogs not being able to compete in competitive obedience at Crufts. The office confirmed that it was not a Royal Kennel Club decision, the DEFRA law stated that dogs were not allowed to compete at shows where the public paid an admission fee. The only exemption had been for Agility dogs, as DEFRA believed it displayed the dog's working ability.
18. It was noted that the Royal Kennel Club contacted DEFRA regarding the matter specifically for Competitive Obedience and heelwork to music in 2024 and 2025, however the decision had remained the same. Therefore, the Royal Kennel Club was not able to allow docked dogs to compete at Crufts. It was confirmed that it had been law for years and also applied to medically docked dogs.
19. The Liaison Council endorsed the new framework and requested to be kept updated.
20. It was agreed that it was important work. Ms McNamara was thanked for her time and informative presentation.

Ms McNamara left the meeting at 11am

ITEM 5. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

21. The Liaison Council received a presentation from Mrs H Lawrence (Head of Education and Dog Training) to provide an update on the YKC and Dog Training schemes, including representation at Crufts.
22. It was noted that the Special Pre-Beginner Stakes had been a successful mix of the Bronze Good Citizen Dog Scheme and Competitive Obedience Pre-Beginner class. It had been a good transfer to entice people from the Good Citizen Dog Scheme into Competitive Obedience. 45% of entries were brand new competitors each year, the Royal Kennel Club hoped to encourage competitors to continue their journey and build a bridge from the Special Pre-Beginner Stakes into further activities.
23. The Young Kennel Club (YKC) team had identified some areas that delayed progression or caused issues within YKC Competitive Obedience, including class alignment with the standard classes and difficulty finding judges. The office intended to provide guidance and support for judges, which would be released later in the year, and encourage show societies to put on YKC heats.
24. The YKC team would keep the Liaison Council updated regarding any further updates for YKC Competitive Obedience. The line of communication for YKC feedback would be through Mr Higgins, as the Chair, through the office.
25. A query was raised regarding YKC and Special Pre-Beginner Stakes competitors who competed with a borrowed dog. It was confirmed that YKC and Pre-Beginner Stakes competitors were allowed to compete with a borrowed dog, provided the dog was not overqualified for the class. A handler and dog must be eligible to work Pre-Beginner class to enter the Special Pre-Beginner class.
26. The YKC Obedience competitions were open to dogs that were eligible to enter specific standard Kennel Club obedience classes. The eligibility for YKC classes had been outlined in the YKC Obedience rules: [ykc-obedience-2025-crufts-2026-v12.pdf](#).
27. Praise was received for the YKC representation at Belfast Championship Obedience Show. It was confirmed that the same representation would be provided in September 2026.
28. Mrs Lawrence was thanked for the informative presentation.

Mrs Garner left the meeting at 11.20am

29. The Liaison Council was requested to consider allowing YKC Obedience judges to be able to compete on the same day which they judge the YKC

classes, within agreed parameters. The Liaison Council supported YKC judges being able to work their dogs at the same show if the classes were small. It was agreed that the idea also could be extended to judges of other classes.

30. The Liaison Council was requested to work together with the Accredited Trainers to look into the matter for Competitive Obedience and come up with a workable solution. It was suggested that a proposal could be worked on for the summer Activities Committee meeting.

31. The Liaison Council discussed the matter under Item 13, as part of the Strategic 5 Year Plan.

Mrs Lawrence left the meeting at 11.30am

ITEM 6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

32. The Liaison Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 as an accurate record.

ITEM 7. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

33. The Liaison Council noted that the Board, at its meeting on 21 October 2025, approved the following amendments to G Regulations from 1 January 2026:

Amendment to regulation G32.d

Regulation G32.d

TO:

A judge's first three appointments for shows must be restricted to Novice. The next three appointments must be up to and including Class A. Before accepting an Open Class C appointment, a Judge must have completed at least ~~a further nine~~ **twelve** appointments **in total**. These must include a minimum of **three Novice**, three Class A and three Class B appointments. It is the individual's responsibility to retain proof of their judging appointments. (Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)
(Effective 1 January 2026)

Amendments to regulations relating to Introductory and Pre-Beginner Classes

Regulation G(A)9.a. Introductory.

TO:

In this class, ~~only incentives in the form of a toy or rewards are allowed to be carried by the handler in the competitive ring and~~ may be given to the dog **before the exercise**, at the end of an exercise or in between exercises **within the reward area of the ring. The reward area must be distinct from the working area.** Rewards include food which must be carried in a small closed container during the exercises, **either in the handler's pocket or left on the**

reward table, and only verbal and physical cues may be used to keep the dog engaged. The judge will designate **the reward** an area in the competitive ring where food **or a toy** may be given to the dog by the handler.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Regulation G(A)9.b

TO:

To compete in the Introductory Class a handler or dog must not have gained a 1st place in any competitive obedience class, **placed 1st to 3rd in**

Novice and have not elected to progress on points from Introductory

(Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Regulation G(A)10.a Pre-Beginners.

TO:

In this class, ~~only incentives in the form of a toy or rewards are allowed to be carried by the handler in the competitive ring and~~ may be given to the dog

before the exercise, at the end of an exercise or in between exercises **within the reward area of the ring. The reward area must be distinct from the**

working area. Rewards include food which must be carried in a small closed container during the exercises, **either in the handler's pocket or left on the**

reward table, and only verbal and physical cues may be used to keep the dog engaged. The judge will designate **the reward** an area in the competitive

ring where food **or a toy** may be given to the dog by the handler.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Regulation G(A)9.e.i. Introductory.

TO:

e. The detailed test will be:

(1) Engagement - this will be marked throughout the test - the use of motivators and rewards before and between exercises which may include food, silent toys, tricks, and verbal and physical praise within the reward area of the ring. Toys and food in a ~~sealed~~ **closed** container, must either be left on the reward table, or be concealed in the handler's pocket during tests, where only verbal motivation may be used to keep the dog engaged. 10 points

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Show Licence Applications

34. From 1 January 2026, regulations G6 and G8 had been amended to extend the show licence applications from 6 weeks to 6 months. However, it was raised that it would be an issue for societies running winter obedience shows. Therefore, the Liaison Council was requested to consider the impact of the regulation amendment and discuss possible work arounds or exceptions for any societies which struggled to meet the application date.

35. The Liaison Council resolved to develop a proposal for the next Activities Committee meeting regarding winter shows and aimed to relax the lead in time for licences.

Amendments to regulations G6 and G8:

Regulation G6. 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)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Regulation G8. Application.

TO:

The application for a licence to hold an Obedience Show must be made to the Secretary of The Royal Kennel Club at least six ~~weeks~~ **months** before the proposed date of the show together with the appropriate licence fee.

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

36. It was noted that due to calendar restrictions at specific venues, some winter competitive obedience shows could not always secure venues 6 months prior to the event. The Liaison Council agreed that criteria needed to be established to allow licences to be applied for less than 6 months in advance where necessary, in order to support the societies and maintain the winter Competitive Obedience shows.
37. Due to societies being informed at the end of 2025, it had already been agreed that no societies would be penalised for late applications for the first 6 months of 2026. Societies had been emailed and were aware. It was confirmed from the data that less than 20 Obedience shows were affected by the regulation change, it also showed that some winter shows had applied within the 6 months' timeframe.
38. The Liaison Council noted that flexibility was necessary and information had already been collected from the clubs which hosted winter shows. It was agreed that the winter shows had been very successful and conversations with the societies had raised some important issues.
39. It was confirmed that the Royal Kennel Club's policy did not allow shows to be postponed, shows which needed to be cancelled then needed to reapply for the new date. The postponement of shows was due to be discussed at the next Activities Committee meeting.

40. Along with the criteria for winter shows to apply for their licences less than 6 months in advance, the Liaison Council could also submit recommendations regarding postponements if it was considered that the matter would assist show societies.
41. It was agreed that Ms Cox, Mr Higgins, Mrs Holmes and Ms Williams would work on the criteria and create a proposal for the next Activities Committee meeting due to be held in March 2026.

ITEM 8. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

42. The Liaison Council noted a written report from Mrs K Allen following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 24 October 2025.
43. It was explained that the Activities Judges Sub-Group (AJSG) members were all Accredited Trainers who were approved annually by the Activities Committee. Competitive Obedience had two representatives on AJSG and a report would be provided to the Liaison Council for updates as a standard item on the agenda.
44. A query was raised regarding some background on the assessments of Championship judges. It was confirmed that judges were assessed based on the criteria listed in the G regulations.
45. Judges were asked to provide a list of future appointments on their application. Once reviewed by the office, an assessment would be arranged by the office and the judge would not be notified in advance about when the assessment would be undertaken. An assessment would only take place where appropriate B or C Class appointments were available.
46. The questionnaire form for judges to apply to become a Championship judge can be found on the website: [Obedience secretary info | Royal Kennel Club](#) located under 'How to run a show', under the dropdown section entitled 'selecting a judge'.
47. Applications for new Championship judges were mostly recommended through a Championship appointment by a show society, however self-nominations to become a Championship judge were also welcomed.
48. The connection between Activities Committee, AJSG and the Liaison Council required some clarity. It was confirmed that AJSG could refer to the Liaison Council for consultation or recommend amendments to the Committee directly, it would depend on which items needed further assistance and review from the Liaison Council and community. As judging was a large item within the Liaison Council's Strategic 5 Year Plan, it was considered beneficial for the Liaison

Council to work closely with the Obedience representatives on AJSG and the Obedience Accredited Trainers.

49. The Accredited Trainers, with the AJSG, were in the process of updating the Judges and Chief Steward Guidance documents. It was clarified that the updates were taking place to bring the guidance in line with the 2026 regulations, no new regulation amendments were proposed. It should not have further effect on the Obedience community, as it was only clarifying regulations which were already in place. Specific clarification regarding run offs were to be included. The guidance was discussed at the last AJSG meeting and the updated document would return to the AJSG's April 2026 meeting for review.
50. It was also noted that the Royal Kennel Club would be advertising for new Obedience Accredited Trainers after Crufts.

ITEM 9. REVIEW OF SHOW ENTRIES & JUDGING

51. The Liaison Council noted a review of the entries and judging at Competitive Obedience shows throughout 2025 conducted by Mrs Boulter.
52. Mrs Boulter provided some background information into the review and data collected, which initially intended to help understand the issue of the lack of C Class judges. However, it was also considered extremely useful data which could be used as a baseline to understand more about entries, judges and shows as a whole.
53. Mrs Boulter was thanked for her hard work, it was felt that gathering data on Competitive Obedience was very helpful in managing issues and providing statistics for reviews. Mrs Boulter confirmed that she would continue to collect the data for the forth coming show season.
54. Mrs Holmes offered to assist Mrs Boulter with data collection and analysis going forward. It was agreed that a Data Sub-Group could be created. Together they would be able to gather a range of statistics to help inform the Liaison Council on any discussions and decisions.

ITEM 10. ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETITIVE OBEDIENCE SURVEY

55. The Liaison Council reviewed the results of the Competitive Obedience Survey, presented by Ms Williams. The survey had been released on 2 November and received nearly 650 responses from the Competitive Obedience Community with a range of experience levels.
56. It was established that specific priorities had emerged as a result of the survey, which included encouraging new competitors, encouraging smaller one day

shows, supporting judges, and the Liaison Council building a rapport with the community.

57. The results were discussed by the Liaison Council prior to the meeting and were used to inform the Liaison Council's Strategic 5 Year Plan. It was agreed that the summary of the results would be shared with the Competitive Obedience community after the meeting and are listed as Annex A.

58. The Liaison Council thanked Ms Williams for the helpful survey and analysis.
(Annex A refers)

ITEM 11. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

59. No proposals were received for the meeting.

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

ITEM 12. DISCUSSION ITEMS

61. No discussion items were received for the meeting.

ITEM 13. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

62. The Liaison Council was invited to develop a new Strategic 5 Year Plan, to align with the needs of Competitive Obedience. The updated version had been developed by the Liaison Council from the online survey conducted with the Competitive Obedience Community.

63. A draft document had been created by Mr Higgins and Ms Williams for review by the Liaison Council, with four core strategic objectives identified. The Liaison Council presented the document, which clearly set out the main aims and priorities informed by the online survey.

64. The Council intended to share the draft after the meeting to gather further feedback from the Competitive Obedience Community. Following consultation, the draft would be presented again at the June 2026 meeting.
(Annex B refers)

65. It was acknowledged that a Data Sub-Group, consisting of Mrs Boulter and Mrs Holmes had also been formed (Item 9), which would help inform the task groups established in the Strategic 5 Year Plan.

Strategic Objective One: Engagement with the Community

66. The first objective revolved around engagement with the Competitive Obedience community. As discussed under Item 10, the Liaison Council had already undertaken a successful survey to gather the initial views of the community and wished to maintain a two-way communication channel.
67. An Obedience Liaison Council Facebook page had been created, which allowed the Liaison Council to communicate effectively with the community and allowed the opportunity for feedback: [Obedience Liaison Council | Facebook](#).
68. It was raised that Crufts was a good opportunity for the Liaison Council and the Royal Kennel Club to promote the discipline to the public. It was noted that Mrs D Lavender had agreed to continue to manage the Obedience information booth, which was located next to the Obedience ring in Hall 5. The Liaison Council would liaise with Mrs Lavender for any additional information.
69. The office confirmed that the Crufts Obedience information booth contained helpful documents such as how to get involved with links to the Find a Club section of the Royal Kennel Club website, and information about competitions including some show schedules. The regulation booklets were not sold at the Obedience information booth, the booklets were sold at the Dog Activities Stand in Hall 3.
70. It was agreed that Mrs Boulter and Ms Williams would work on the engagement objective together, with support from the whole Liaison Council. It was keen to create different routes for visibility, such as surveys, videos, and social media presence.

Strategic Objective Two: Supporting and Encouraging Judges and Stewards

71. The Liaison Council had initially combined both the judges' issues and show development into one objective. However, as the discussion developed, it was agreed that the issues were very broad and should be split into two separate objectives.
72. It was agreed in the plan to address the current judging crises by aiming to increase the number of available judges. Some ideas included investigating the qualification requirements and the possibility of judging and competing on the same day, where appropriate and within agreed parameters.
73. It was confirmed that Miss Holmes and Ms Cox would lead the judges objective, with assistance from the whole Liaison Council. It was necessary to work closely with judges at all levels and Accredited Trainers to assist with the matter.

Strategic Objective Four: Development of the Obedience Tests - Test and Learn Pilots

74. The Liaison Council had discussed the idea of a 'Test and Learn Pilot', in order to gain an understanding of which elements of each class the community enjoyed most. It was also noted that existing Competitive Obedience tests did not adequately prepare competitors for progression since new exercises were introduced incrementally through the class structure. It was believed that, some competitors only started to teach a new exercise as they progressed and moved into the new class, which hampered progress and impacted the competitor's motivation.
75. It was suggested that special classes could be held to help prepare dogs and competitors before they moved into the next class. At Solihull's capped Obedience shows, it had trialed a Beginner plus, a Novice plus and an A plus type of class to aid progression into the higher level. The trial had been well received and gained positive feedback from competitors, especially regarding being able to practice exercises in a competition environment.
76. The Liaison Council queried whether similar trials could take place to test out a possible amendment to the classes or exercises before they were officially proposed to the Royal Kennel Club. Therefore, gaining feedback from the community's experience and engagement with the suggestion prior to its implementation.
77. It was agreed that it was a good idea and the Liaison Council queried whether permission would be required for trials to go ahead. The office confirmed that as long as the trials took place as special classes then it would be allowed. Trials in Special Classes could be undertaken at any time, a regulation change was not required.
78. It was raised that the Special Classes would require support from the societies, judges and competitors in order to be an effective trial.
79. Ms Cox, Mr Higgins and Ms Russell volunteered to investigate the Test and Learn Pilot together.
80. The Liaison Council resolved to endorse the draft Strategic Plan taking account of the discussion. Once amended, a further draft would be circulated with the minutes and shared with the wider Obedience Community for discussion.

Introductory Class Review

81. The Liaison Council raised that it also wished to look into a review of the Introductory class. It was hoped that an improvement to the class content and wider promotion of the class to societies would encourage more new people to compete in Competitive Obedience.

82. It was confirmed that the review would be investigated by Ms Cox, Mrs Hyde and Ms Williams.

Strategic Objective Three: Supporting Competitive Obedience Shows

83. The Liaison Council wanted to understand what additional support was required by existing clubs to continue to run their shows. Some ideas had emerged from the survey, such as encouraging smaller local shows or one day shows and developing the winter shows.

84. It was raised that the idea of an Obedience festival had been suggested before, however it had not been able to progress for various reasons. The Liaison Council was aware of the success of the Royal Kennel Club International Agility Festival, the Obedience Festival was a legacy item and it was confirmed that a feasibility study would be undertaken to review the idea again.

85. It was agreed that Mrs Holmes and Mrs Hyde would work together with the whole Liaison Council.

YKC & Judges

86. It was raised that YKC engagement was also important, initially the plan had included the matter as another objective. However, it was suggested that it could be implemented under the engagement objective instead, as Mrs Lawrence had presented the work being undertaken for YKC at the Royal Kennel Club in Item 5.

87. As previously acknowledged under Item 5, the Liaison Council had been requested to consider allowing YKC Obedience judges to be able to compete on the same day which they judge the YKC classes, within agreed parameters.

88. It was considered whether the concept could be expanded to other classes, if entries for the class, which the person was judging were below a specific number. The Liaison Council would undergo consultation with the Competitive Obedience Community to consider possible options.

89. It was raised that there was already a similar regulation in place which enabled Caller and Scribe stewards to compete on the same day.

Regulation G30.g Stated that:

Caller and scribe stewards used by judges at the show must not work a dog on the same day, with the exception that a caller and scribe stewards may compete in one class, other than the class in which they are officiating, provided that the class in which they are officiating has 25 entries or less. Caller and scribe stewards taking up this option will be exempt from any running order and may compete at a convenient time agreed by the judges concerned.

90. It was raised that some ticket classes receive under 25 entries, however the duration of the class was longer than Pre-Beginner or YKC classes, for example. It was also queried whether there would be more uptake for people to judge the lower classes if they were able to compete with their dogs on the day too, which could affect shows ability to appoint judges for the higher classes.

91. The Liaison Council agreed it was a principle worth considering, however it was of the view that more discussion was required on the limitations. Therefore, the Liaison Council agreed to go back to the community with possible suggestions for consultation, as the community had also requested for judges to be able to compete on the same day.

92. A proposal would be worked on for the YKC and a further proposal for judges more broadly. Miss Holmes volunteered to investigate the matter further, with the support of the Liaison Council. A proposal would be brought to the June 2026 meeting.

ITEM 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

93. A reminder was provided about collective responsibility and confidentiality prior to the publication of the meeting minutes.

94. The Liaison Council discussed further dates for informal meetings to reflect and work together within the assigned task groups.

ITEM 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

95. The Liaison Council's next meeting will be on 9 June 2026.

The meeting closed at 1.55pm

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