

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING TRIALS LIAISON COUNCIL  
HELD AT 10.30 AM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY  
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

**GUESTS**

Mrs S Garner      Board Member – Activities Committee Chair (*For items 1-5 only*)  
Ms C McNamara      Head of Health and Breeding (*For item 4 only*)  
Mrs H Lawrence      Head of Education and Dog Training (*For item 5 only*)

**ITEM 1.      TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR FOR THE  
COUNCIL TERM FOLLOWING A SECRET BALLOT CONDUCTED  
VIA EMAIL PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

1. It was noted that the Chair would attend the Activities Committee meetings to represent the views of the Liaison Council and that correspondence to the office on behalf of the Liaison Council should come through the Chair.
2. The office also reiterated the need for confidentiality on discussions and outcomes, until such time as the minutes of the meeting could be published.
3. The office confirmed that Mr Taylor was duly elected following the secret email ballot prior to the meeting.

**IN THE CHAIR - Mr C Taylor**

**ITEM 2.      TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE CHAIR FOR THE  
COUNCIL TERM FOLLOWING A SECRET BALLOT CONDUCTED  
VIA EMAIL PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

4. The office confirmed that Miss Hall was duly elected following the secret email ballot prior to the meeting.

**ITEM 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

**ITEM 4. HEALTH AND WELFARE**

6. The Liaison Council received a presentation from Ms C McNamara (Head of Health & Breeding) on the new Breeding for Health Framework launched on 15 January 2026.
7. A query was raised about the education of judges, particularly in breed showing and it was clarified by Ms McNamara that this was currently sat with the Judges Education Programme Review. It was advised that the Breed Standards and Stud Book Committee would review breed standard of breeds that had some conformational concerns. It was hoped that this would provide clear guidance on what would be deemed unacceptable conformation within the breeds.
8. Clarification was sought about the breed numbers used in the presentation. It was confirmed that there were 100 pedigree dog breeds with less than 100 registrations per annum and so a Small Populations International Working Group had been established to support them with 97 breeds in the UK signed up to be part of that, and it was hoped that a list of these could be published in due course.
9. There were also 30 breeds with conformation concerns or challenges that needed to be addressed within an extreme conformation conversation, and this number was evolving as it was worked through with the veterinary group designing the new veterinary assessment for breeders to measure conformation of adult dogs prior to breeding.
10. A query was raised about the level of breeder engagement in the new initiatives following the disbanding of the previous Assured Breeder Scheme. It was acknowledged that the Assured Breeder Scheme was disbanded at the end of 2024 and it had become clear during the following year that many breeders felt they did want to be distinguished and defined from those who were not committed to breeding long term.
11. It was confirmed that a Breeder Experience Survey would be launched in April and consideration would be given to a breeder membership or scheme in place of the Assured Breeders Scheme that met the needs of breeders. In 2025 the Health Standard had been launched as well as the welfare standards introduced at the beginning of 2025.
12. Ms McNamara was thanked for her time and informative presentation.

## ITEM 5. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

13. The Liaison Council noted a verbal update from Mrs H Lawrence (Head of Education and Dog Training).
14. Mrs Lawrence raised that there was historically very little connection between YKC and Working Trials and queried what could be done within the Working Trials Community to get more young people involved.
15. The YKC Summer Spectacular was mentioned, and it was confirmed that Mr Taylor and Mr G Martin were going to attend on behalf of Working Trials. It was noted that while this did clash with the Scarborough Trials, Mrs Davis, Mr Theobald and Mrs Tohme were also happy to volunteer to attend.
16. The date for the YKC October Spectacular was also confirmed as 31 October and it was noted that volunteers for the YKC events were not restricted to Liaison Council members so support from the community would be welcome.
17. It was suggested that YKC members could be invited to attend Working Trials events around the country in order to encompass those who may be unable to attend Stoneleigh for the YKC Spectacular, and that an allocated mentor could help to answer questions and explain the discipline further.
18. Mrs Lawrence was thanked for her time and informative update.

## ITEM 6. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

### Amendment to regulations I6 and I9

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

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold.)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

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 ~~weeks~~ **months** before the date of the working trial.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold.)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Amendment to regulation I.27.f

Regulation I.27.f

**TO:**

Lockouts are ~~not permitted for any of the Patrol exercises~~ **permitted for the Quartering the ground and Search and Escort exercises only**. There must be a run through of the complete Patrol test **except the Quartering the ground and Search and Escort exercise (if there is a Lockout of those exercises)** in the presence of the competitors before judging of the Patrol exercises commences. **If a handler has more than one dog to work in the patrol round section of the stake, then a lockout is not permitted.**

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold.)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

20. A concern was raised that some clubs may experience difficulty in complying with the requirement to apply for licences 6 months prior to the trial date. In particular it was noted that while Championship trials were typically scheduled well in advance with fixed dates, open trials were sometimes arranged or adjusted closer to the event date to accommodate availability of venues and issues with ground conditions and to avoid clashes with other trials.
21. The office confirmed that when data was reviewed prior to the implementation of the regulation change it had been identified that the majority of Working Trials societies did not historically apply for licences less than 6 months before their trial date. On this basis, it had initially been considered that the new requirement would be unlikely to present significant issues.
22. It was recommended that the Liaison Council review and consider options for a practical and workable solution which could be brought to the summer meeting if required.
23. It was also raised that an issue had occurred with the announcement of the regulation updates online, where the strikethrough had been removed, which presented some initial confusion in the Working Trials community.
24. The office confirmed that this has been a technical issue which had been addressed and would be closely monitored in future to hopefully prevent future issues.

**ITEM 7.      PANELS**

25. A discussion was held on the continued use of panels, and it was noted that the Equipment and Progression panel had previously been disbanded. It was queried whether there was potential to re-introduce this with the new Liaison Council but overall, it was considered that this would not be required with the new Liaison Council process, including the increase in community discussion prior to the meetings.

26. The Liaison Council noted that the PD Stake Panel had previously done a significant amount of work, and it was suggested that it would be beneficial for this to continue. The Liaison Council agreed that the previous members of the PD Stake Panel should be invited to continue and that this would be confirmed at the next meeting of the panel.

27. Subsequent to the meeting, the following list of panel members was confirmed:

**PD Stake Panel**

Mr R Cornwell  
D Ling  
Mr D Marchant  
L Marlow  
J Quick  
Mr C Taylor  
Mr L Theobald  
Mr J Wykes

28. A query was raised about the previous Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group, it was confirmed that the group had been disbanded in 2024 and that it was now covered by the Health Advisory Group. The office confirmed that items could be submitted to the committee if needed but that funding was very limited for activities and so any research required would need to be community funded.

29. A question was then raised about the Agility Obstacle Review which had been started by the previous Equipment Panel. The Liaison Council confirmed that data for that had been collected and was with the analysts for the data to be sorted and applied. It was hoped that the information would be available for publication in the near future.

**ITEM 8.      ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP**

30. The Liaison Council noted that there was no update from the October meeting of the Activities Judges Sub-Group.

31. Clarification was sought by the Liaison Council on the role of the Activities Judges Sub-Group. It was confirmed by the office that this was a panel of accredited trainers from all disciplines who met twice per year to discuss issues that affect judges or accredited trainers with recommendations generally going directly to the Activities Committee.

**ITEM 9.      CHAMPIONSHIP JUDGES**

32. The Liaison Council noted a reminder on the correct procedure for submitting applications for championship TD and PD judges. It was confirmed that

applications, including the necessary completed questionnaire, must be submitted to the office by potential new championship judges, or the society nominating them, and that the office would then arrange the assessment with the accredited trainers.

33. It was noted that the Liaison Council felt the information surrounding this online was unclear and would require updating to reflect the correct process. The office confirmed that website updates were being undertaken and that this would be added to the list.
34. A query was raised regarding whether application forms for new Championship judges were required to be submitted 18 months prior to the trial, or whether the assessment itself was required to be completed 18 months before the trial.
35. It was clarified that new judges, who had not previously judged a Working Trials Championship TD or PD Stake, were required to submit the application 18 months in advance while for existing judges who were current and active Working Trials Championship judges the application would need to be submitted 9 months in advance.
36. It was noted that, for new Championship judges, if the Royal Kennel Club was unable to facilitate assessment and approval by the Activities Committee within the required timeframe, the office would contact the Society to request an alternative judge. In such cases, allowances would be made to the timeframe as it was not possible to facilitate the initial request.
37. It was considered that there was currently a sufficient number of Accredited Trainers within Working Trials, but it was noted that any concerns regarding that should be referred to the Activities Judges Sub-Group.

#### **ITEM 10. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

38. 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 July. Submissions were accepted at any time of year via the online form: [Liaison Council Agenda Item](#).
39. A discussion was held about the new process of submissions and clarification was sought on the use of the online submission form.
40. The office confirmed that the form could be used at any time and submissions would come directly to the office. If a submission item could be actioned by the office it would be dealt with as necessary, other items would be passed onto the Liaison Council via the chair so that public consultations could be held.

41. A query was raised about the deadline for submissions for the meeting agenda and it was confirmed that submissions could be received at any time up until 6 weeks prior to the meeting, and that these must come via the chair and should have had a full public consultation and majority agreement prior to submission. It was hoped that this would speed up the process and ensure an open channel of communication between the office and the community.

Mr R Cornwell on behalf of the PD panel  
Proposed amendment to Regulation I(B)12

42. The Liaison Council considered a proposed amendment to the above regulation to ensure that the exercise remains that of quartering the ground and not of sendaways or redirection.
43. Concerns were raised that while the proposal had been discussed with some members of the community, it may not have been discussed with a number of those who could have been affected by the change.
44. It was clarified that a poll with as many PD competitors as possible was undertaken prior to the submission of the item to the agenda, but concerns were raised that some people remained unaware of the proposal until the agenda was published.
45. It was agreed that a wider consultation would need to be held before the proposal could be considered, including those who may be training but not yet competing in the PD Stakes.
46. The Liaison Council confirmed that it had launched a Working Trials Liaison Council group on Facebook as well as having a section on the Working Trials Info website. It also planned to approach Working Trials secretaries to try and establish members of the community who do not use social media and Mrs Ling and Mrs Davis volunteered to arrange calls to those people as needed to ensure they could be involved in the conversation.
47. It was agreed that a further consultation and discussion would take place and the proposal would be deferred to the next meeting. It was confirmed by the office that this would not affect timelines as any change to the regulation would not come into effect until January 2027.

**ITEM 11. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

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

## **ITEM 12. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN**

49. It was suggested that the YKC involvement discussed in Item 5 could be included as part of the Strategic 5 year plan and the need to encourage more people into the discipline was raised.
50. A brief discussion was had about the potential of additional training days throughout the year to encourage people into the discipline and, in particular, those who expressed an interest at the demonstrations and have-a-go sessions at Crufts. Some concerns were raised that numerous people had attended initial training sessions but had not continued in the discipline.
51. It was queried whether the 5 year plan could be amended to a 3 year plan to reflect the Liaison Council term and the office confirmed that it was open to the Liaison Council to create a document that reflected their strategic aims and timeframes.
52. Mr Theobald volunteered to review the previous strategy document and create a new layout and 3 year strategy in consultation with the rest of the Liaison Council.

## **ITEM 13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

53. A concern was raised regarding the election of Liaison Council members being conducted by the Royal Kennel Club rather than through a public voting process. It was explained that all Liaison Councils had undergone a review as part of wider structural changes. These changes were implemented to move away from a club nominated model and towards a more skills-based approach, with the aim of achieving greater transparency, a wider range of experience, and improved communication with participants at grassroots level.
54. Applications for Liaison Council membership were opened to all individuals, with the intention of attracting candidates with diverse skills, experience, and perspectives who could positively contribute to the development of the discipline. Those selected demonstrated a genuine desire to be involved and to help improve the discipline.
55. A query was raised regarding a discussion at the most recent meeting of the Activities Committee where the issue of competing and judging on the same day was raised. This had previously been considered not to be relevant for Working Trials however concerns were raised that finding judges could sometimes be a challenge for trials managers.
56. It was decided that the Liaison Council would take the issue away to discuss further and come up with a workable solution for future meetings if it was required.

57. A question was raised about Trial Licences and whether it was compulsory for these to be displayed at the trial. The office confirmed that it was not necessary for these to be displayed but should be available if requested.
58. A query was raised about the Royal Kennel Club Championship Working Trials, and it was noted that the regulations currently stated that the responsibility for organising the championships each year would normally be delegated to a working trial society approved to hold championship working trials.
59. It was acknowledged that the 2025 Royal Kennel Club Championship Working Trials was organised by a dedicated organisers committee and the office confirmed that this arrangement had been put in place on a trial basis.
60. It was agreed that clarification would be sought from the Activities Committee as to whether responsibility for future Royal Kennel Club Championship Working Trials should remain with an organisers committee and therefore whether regulation amendment was required.

**ITEM 14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

61. The Liaison Council noted that the date of the Liaison Council's next meeting would be on 1 July 2026 via Microsoft Teams.
62. The meeting ended at 12.50

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