

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RALLY LIAISON COUNCIL HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 9.30AM, VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

PRESENT

Mrs R Bradley
Ms T Butler
Dr K Daly
Mr A Dornford-Smith
Miss A Jackson
Mr S Lindsey
Mrs S Sanford

IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar Senior Manager Canine Activities
Miss A Morley Activities Liaison Manager
Miss T Collins Obedience & Rally Liaison Advisor

GUESTS

Mrs S Garner Board Member – Activities Committee Chair (Up to Item 10)
Mrs H Lawrence Head of Education and Dog Training (Item 5 only)

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

1. The election for Chair took place via email prior to the meeting. Mrs Bradley was nominated and seconded for the role and was duly elected.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS R BRADLEY

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

2. The election for Vice Chair took place via email prior to the meeting. Mrs Sanford was nominated and seconded for the role and was duly elected.

ITEM 3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

ITEM 4. HEALTH AND WELFARE

4. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the presentation from Ms C McNamara (Head of Health & Breeding) to discuss health initiatives at the Royal Kennel Club had been deferred. The slides were to be shared with the Liaison Council and the presentation had been rescheduled for the July 2026 meeting.

ITEM 5. YOUNG ROYAL KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

5. The Liaison Council received a presentation from Mrs H Lawrence (Head of Education and Dog Training) to provide an update on the Young Royal Kennel Club (YRKC) and Dog Training schemes, including representation of Rally at the YRKC Summer & Autumn Spectaculars.
6. The YRKC planned to undertake further work to encourage more young people to get involved in Rally. It was confirmed that the slides would be shared with the Liaison Council after the meeting, and that feedback would be welcomed by the YRKC Team.
7. It was raised that more geographical range would be helpful to encourage competitors, it was difficult for Scottish YRKC competitors to travel to the YRKC Spectaculars which were held at the Royal Kennel Club building, Stoneleigh.
8. The YRKC team were aware of a Scottish Camp in July 2025 which held YRKC Obedience qualifiers. However, as the number of YRKC Rally competitors were so small, qualifiers would not be available at the Scottish Camp for 2026. It was suggested that a special rally event could be held at the Scottish Camp and training could take place, the Liaison Council agreed to contact the competition secretary to enquire about the matter.
9. It was raised that low YRKC entries at Crufts had been a result of a clash between the Inter-Regional competition and the YRKC competition, therefore the YRKC members were required to choose between the two. It was explained that although the times of the classes did not clash, they were both on the same day. The scheduling along with other events was difficult, however it would be reviewed in future to try to avoid the issue.
10. The points system was queried, as it was felt that the points submitted did not reflect the level the YRKC members were competing at. A concern was raised that the points system was almost biased to those that attended more competitions but did not achieve a qualifying score, versus those that potentially got qualifying scores at Level 6, for example. It was confirmed that the YRKC were working towards a two tiered final for the future, a Level 1-2 final and Level 3-6 final. Therefore, it was hoped that the points gained would be more aligned with the level the competitor was competing at.
11. It was queried when the new Autumn Spectacular would be communicated to the public, as the earlier it was announced the easier it would be for competitors and families to plan the time and travel required to attend. It was confirmed that the new event had been scheduled for October 2026, however

it had only been approved recently and would be announced as soon as possible.

12. It was raised that Rally online video events could be helpful to encourage YRKC competitors. It was more accessible and flexible for competitors as limited travel was required. It was agreed that online events were a good idea and could be looked into.
13. It was questioned whether ideas for new training awards could be suggested by the Liaison Council. The office welcomed ideas and feedback, the Liaison Council could suggest ideas to the YRKC and Dog Training Team for them to consider and investigate matters further.
14. Mrs Lawrence was thanked for the presentation and agreed to return to the July 2026 meeting to provide a further update.
15. At the September 2025 Activities Committee meeting, the Committee was requested to consider allowing YRKC Obedience judges to be able to compete on the same day which they judge the YRKC classes, within agreed parameters. Although the matter was referred to the Obedience Liaison Council, the Committee wished to open judging and competing on the same day to all activity disciplines for consideration. Therefore, the Liaison Council was requested to gather views of the community and investigate other circumstances of when it might be acceptable for someone to judge and compete on the same day.
16. The Liaison Council was requested to work together with the Accredited Trainers to look into the matter for Rally and come up with a workable solution. It was important that competition organisers were not compromised when considering the criteria and noted that it would be helpful for remote areas. It was suggested that a proposal could be worked on, with consultation from the community, for the summer Activities Committee meeting.

Mrs Garner and Mrs Lawrence left the meeting at 10.42am.

ITEM 6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

17. The Liaison Council approved the minutes of the Rally Working Party meeting held on 24 July 2025 as an accurate record. It was confirmed that the previous minutes had been received by all Liaison Council members.

ITEM 7. MATTERS ARISING AND RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Amendment to Regulation S(B)2(1)

Performance and Scoring Guidelines and Competition Management

TO:

2. Course Design.

(1) There ~~should~~ **must** be a minimum distance of **2.5** metres between exercises. **This minimum can be extended where space permits excluding changes of pace.**

(Insertions in bold) (Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Amendment to Regulation S(B)1(f)

Regulation S(B)1(f)

TO:

Unless specified in the exercise description, exercises ~~are executed~~ **start** as the handler approaches the sign

(Insertions in bold) (Deletions struck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Amendment to Regulation S(B)4.d

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, ~~the team(s) with the fastest recorded time(s) shall be placed above those with slower times. In the event that one or more such dog/handler teams have equal scores and equal times or where at least one of the competitors has not had a time recorded,~~ they shall be invited to participate in a run-off using ~~the~~ **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.**

(Insertions in bold. Deletions stuck through)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Addition to Regulation S(B)2 Course design

Regulation S(B)2

TO:

(3) The angled recall and angled recall over jump exercises may each be used twice in a course to enable them to be laid in both directions, once to the left and once to the right.

(Insertions in bold. Subsequent points to be renumbered)

(Effective 1 January 2026)

Amendment to Regulation S19

Regulation S19

TO:

a. The host organisation shall provide printed awards to a minimum of fourth place in all classes.

- b. The host organisation shall also provide qualification certificates ~~and/or qualifying rosettes~~ to all dogs which receive a qualifying score **in standard classes at Open Rally competitions. The wording must clearly state the organising society or club, the date of the competition, the dog's Registered Royal Kennel Club name, the score gained and the judge's name and signature. The Certificate must state that it is a qualifying score. These certificates are proof of qualification which would be relied on in case of dispute for any future award.**
- c. Other rosettes and special awards may be offered at the discretion of the competition host, **these must be clearly stated in the Schedule.**
- d. In standard classes, rosettes and/or place cards may not be awarded to dogs that have received a non-qualifying score for any of the reasons listed in the non-qualifying scoring regulations.
(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through)
(Effective 1 January 2026)

Event Licence Applications

- 19. It was noted that the regulation to extend the licence application time frame from 6 weeks to 6 months had been approved from 1 January 2026. However, it had been raised that the change caused issues for smaller clubs and societies, which struggled to meet the application date.
- 20. The office confirmed that the Board had approved the suspension of regulation S7 & S9.a, therefore Rally clubs and societies were able to apply for licences 6 weeks before the proposed date of the competition.
- 21. As the suspension was not permanent, the Liaison Council was requested to consider if the regulation needed to become permanent or agree necessary parameters to allow clubs to apply less than 6 months in advance, where required. A proposal would need to be submitted to the July meeting for consideration.

ITEM 8. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

- 22. The Liaison Council noted a written report from Mrs Bradley following the Sub-Group's meeting held on 16 October 2025.

ITEM 9. INTERNATIONAL RALLY UPDATE

- 23. The Liaison Council noted an International Rally update. Mrs Sanford was thanked for compiling the information.

ITEM 10. REVIEW OF CHAMPIONSHIP FRAMEWORK

24. The Liaison Council noted the Rally Review, which outlined the rationale and suggested courses of actions for the introduction of Foundation Level and Level 7.
25. It was confirmed that the Framework was still undergoing consultation with the community, therefore it had been agreed to extend the time frame. The annexes would remain available on the Royal Kennel Club website for as long as required.
26. The Liaison Council discussed the best communication methods to share ideas and gather feedback from the community. The Liaison Council had already set up a Facebook page for discussion: [RKC Rally Liaison Council | Facebook](#)
27. It was suggested that the meeting dates and links could be published in the Royal Kennel Club Journal to help people find the information. While the Liaison Council members were available at rally competitions to discuss ideas, it was also suggested that other measures could be considered to help make the information available to those who did not have social media. However, it was noted that information and communication should be digital to reduce regional variation.
28. It was raised that although the community was aware of the rally review, it was the first time that they had been provided the full details and the opportunity to comment. It was noted that there had been a lot of information for the community to digest within a short space of time, hence the extension. For future proposals, the new Liaison Council process allows for ideas to be discussed further in advance to gather feedback before submission to a meeting.
29. The Framework and review hoped to add more opportunity to Royal Kennel Club Rally and it was acknowledged that it had received broad support from the community, with only small changes and clarifications required. It was highlighted that the Framework was for competition regulations only, it did not impact training clubs hosting social events.

ITEM 11. PROPOSALS

Proposal to Clarify S(B)4.d – Run Offs

30. The Liaison Council considered an amendment for clarification to regulation S(B)4.d relating to run offs, which was effective from 1 January 2026. The Liaison Council wished to clarify what happened if all the teams involved either declined to run off or were no longer present at the competition.
31. It was confirmed that if only one person turned up to the run-off, then the absent competitor would have forfeited the place. Competitors were able to

decline the run-off, if necessary. If both competitors declined the run-off, then the judge would decide the order of placings.

32. Therefore, the following amendment was **recommended** for approval:

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)

Proposals to Implement and Support the New Framework

33. The Liaison Council had intended to discuss the proposed amendments to the S regulations to support the new framework, however, as noted in Item 10, further consultation was required. Therefore, the proposals were deferred until they were ready to progress.

ITEM 12. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Data Repositories

34. The Liaison Council discussed the possibility of setting up an open data repository, especially for judges and competition results.

35. It was suggested that the database could store information such as a list of rally judges, with their qualifications and contact details, which would be used by show organisers to assist them in finding judges for their competitions. A repository of competition results had also been suggested, which would be useful for handlers, competition organisers, and the Royal Kennel Club, if required.

36. The Liaison Council was of the view that the rally community and the Rally Liaison Council members encompassed various IT skills, which they were willing to volunteer to assist with the project. Therefore, incurring no additional cost or staff time required from the Royal Kennel Club.

37. Collection of data was queried as a rally competitor had attempted to create something similar previously, however they received limited engagement from the community. It was confirmed that data collection was on a voluntary basis, provided by the handler, judge, or competition organiser. It was hoped that the

database would grow amongst peers and be considered a safe space as no third parties would be involved. The office agreed to get confirmation from the Legal Team regarding data storage.

38. It was noted that any data would belong to the Royal Kennel Club, however any General Data Protection Regulation compliance would be the responsibility of a data controller appointed by the Council.
39. The Liaison Council was in agreement with the idea as the suggested repositories fulfilled the requests of the rally community, aided the work of the Liaison Council, and benefited the Royal Kennel Club by having the data more available.
40. Therefore, it was agreed that the principle should be **recommended** to the Activities Committee and the Board, prior to further work being undertaken.

Requirements of the Rally Veteran Warrant

41. The Liaison Council considered whether a reduction in the requirements of the Rally Veteran Warrant would be helpful to encompass all competitors in a range of geographical areas and encourage handlers with older dogs to continue competing.
42. The issue had been raised as there was only one competition a year in Northern Ireland with a Veteran class. It was noted that the Northern Ireland community would be required to travel to the mainland with a dog to achieve the warrant, which was costly to competitors.
43. An alternative of running Veteran only competition was suggested, however it was dependent upon the number of Veteran dogs available.
44. Whilst the Liaison Council was sympathetic to the problem, the Veteran Warrant was still new, and it was believed that time needed to be allowed for it to bed in and for classes to grow.
45. It was emphasised that announcing competitions and dates further in advance would make it more likely, and easier, for competitors to plan their year and book time off work to attend.
46. An issue was raised regarding rally competition dates clashing, which also effected the number of entries overall. As discussed under Item 7, the Liaison Council was due to discuss the licence application time frame and it was suggested that whilst investigating the matter, it could also consider whether

to restrict licences, so they were not held on the same date or restrict the distance between competitions.

Judges Course Walking

47. The Liaison Council considered the possibility of allowing a more experienced judge to walk a course, in order to provide mentoring and support to new judges.
48. It was raised that the judge asked to walk the course and provide feedback should not be a competitor in the class. It was also suggested that it be limited to judges qualified at the level concerned or a higher level only.
49. After some discussion, the Liaison Council was of the view that the item would undermine the chief steward and possibly undermine the authority of the new judge. It was believed that if mentoring was something that Rally judges wanted then it could be referred to the Accredited Trainers.
50. It was confirmed that the Accredited Trainers were working towards making the seminars more practical based. It was also suggested that practice judging days could be held by Accredited Trainers to help judges build confidence.
51. It was queried whether there was a regulation that prevented a judge from walking another judge's course for assistance. It was confirmed that it was covered under regulation S(B)3.e, as follows:

e. Walk-throughs

Only handlers entered in the class may walk the course.

52. After some debate, the Liaison Council agreed not to progress with the discussion item. However, if there was a need for mentoring in the community, it could be discussed with the Accredited Trainers to investigate further.

Management of the Rally Information Booth at Crufts

53. The Liaison Council considered the management of the Rally information booth at Crufts. The booth was located by the Obedience Ring in Hall 5 and some information about the role was explained.
54. The Manager of the Rally Booth would be required to liaise with the event coordinator and the office to request the number of tickets required, arrange volunteers, make sure the stand was set up and arrange for it to be taken down, and be able to act in any emergencies. It was also important to ensure

resources were available to hand out to the public, the office provided flyers for access to the digital rally beginner guide and Find a Club and Find a Show. Often a list of competitions and schedules were made available, and it was suggested that a flyer promoting the Liaison Council Facebook page could be useful.

55. It was confirmed that the booth usually required four people per day, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The volunteers would require a good level of knowledge about Rally and were provided with an entry pass and car parking.

56. It was agreed that Mrs Bradley was to manage the stand for 2026, with support from Ms Butler. However, any recommendations of individuals to take on the role for 2027 were welcomed. It was noted that the Team Managers would find it difficult to balance both roles.

ITEM 13. FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

57. The Liaison Council reviewed the strategic five-year plan and considered further details and prioritisation.

58. It was queried whether the strategic five-year plan needed to be aligned more with the ten-year plan listed as part of the Framework. It was confirmed that the documents could be combined and listed as an overall strategic plan to consider the big picture elements required to progress the discipline.

59. The Liaison Council was pleased with the increase and uptake in awards. The office confirmed that 60 dogs had been awarded a Rally Warrant title in total. Over the last six months, the following awards had been achieved:

- 11 Rally Warrants
- 9 Rally Veteran Warrants (Bronze)
- 6 Rally Veteran Warrants (Silver)

60. The Liaison Council agreed to work on the document and submit an updated strategic plan to the July 2026 meeting.

ITEM 14. CRUFTS JUDGES

61. The Liaison Council considered possible Crufts judges for the Inter-Regional Rally Competition in 2028 and future YKC Rally judges.

62. Recommendations were suggested and a ballot was conducted by Mrs Bradley.

ITEM 15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Listed Status Applications

63. A concern was raised about issues with Listed Status applications. It was raised that details required for the application form were not always available to clubs, such as the venue and first aid requirements. The office confirmed that the concerns would be fed back to the relevant team to investigate further.

Clarity for Rewards during Linked Exercises

64. The office requested confirmation regarding touch rewards and linked static exercises. It was confirmed that a touch reward was only given at the end of an exercise, not within exercises. For example, in a linked exercise such as Sit, Down, Sit followed by a Sit, Stand, a competitor was allowed to touch reward at the end of the Sit, Down, Sit and then touch reward at the end of the Sit, Stand, without having to take a step between to separate the two exercises.

65. It was also highlighted that competitors were not allowed to reward their dog after part A of a two-part exercise, the whole linked exercise needed to be completed.

The Rally Working Party

66. The Liaison Council wished to express its thanks to the previous Rally Working Party and appreciated the time and effort put in to develop the discipline.

ITEM 16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

67. The Liaison Council noted the date of the next meeting:

15 July 2026

The meeting ended at 12.30pm

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*