MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL HELD AT 10.00AM ON TUESDAY 25 AUGUST 2026 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT

Mrs J Bale *(until paragraph 92 only)*
Mrs T Davis
Miss A Gilchrist *(until paragraph 99 only)*
Dr R Miller
Miss R Sargent
Mrs D Tedds
Mrs T White

IN ATTENDANCE

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

GUESTS

Miss F McDonnell	Head of Canine Wellbeing *(For item 4 only)*
Mrs H Lawrence	Head of Education and Dog Training *(For item 5 only)*
Mr P Slade	YRKC Competition Coordinator *(For item 5 only)*

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies had been received from Miss N Jones, Mrs J Gardner, Mr C Harley and Mr J Hallam.

ITEM 2. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Liaison Council noted that there were no matters arising or results of recommendations from the Board.

ITEM 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

ITEM 4. HEALTH AND WELFARE

4. The Liaison Council received a presentation from Miss F McDonnell (Head of Canine Wellbeing) on the new Breeding for Health Framework, which had recently been launched on 15 January 2026, and the new Find a Breeder scheme that had recently been launched by the Royal Kennel Club.

5. A query was raised about the influence of the show ring on breed health and the importance of educating judges. It was noted that the Breed Watch initiative provided points of concern for individual breeds and guidance to judges on what to look for in the ring, but that there was considerable scope for improvement.

6. It was explained that health initiatives had historically been managed by the Health and Welfare team, but that work was ongoing to collaborate with the Judges Education team to include that as part of the Judges Education Programme.

7. The Liaison Council praised the collaborative approach and the efforts being put in to improve communication between teams.

8. A query was raised about the Royal Kennel Club's involvement in breeding licences, as these were issued by local authorities. It was noted that each local authority had their own process and that not all breeders have to be licensed, dependent on a range of criteria, including the number of litters and annual profit.

9. It was highlighted that the Royal Kennel Club had some existing relationships with local authorities and that the Royal Kennel Club Public Affairs team was working to strengthen connections with them to assist with that.

10. The Liaison Council thanked Miss McDonnell for her time.

ITEM 5. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB & DOG TRAINING

11. The Liaison Council noted a verbal update from Mrs H Lawrence (Head of Education and Dog Training) and Mr P Slade (YRKC Competitions Coordinator).

12. It was highlighted that a Young Royal Kennel Club training camp had been planned for summer 2027, with a venue already secured, and that work was also ongoing to expand the remit of trainers to increase the frequency and availability of training days.

13. The Liaison Council discussed opportunities to further align the Young Royal Kennel Club with the wider agility community. It was agreed that a meeting between the Young Royal Kennel Club team and the Liaison Council would be arranged to discuss this alignment and identify opportunities for further collaboration.

14. A query was raised regarding proposed regulation changes for the Young Royal Kennel Club, which would support greater alignment with the existing agility qualification procedure. It was noted that further work would continue to ensure that the matter was supported.

15. The Liaison Council thanked the Young Royal Kennel Club team for their proactive approach and the opportunity for further engagement.

ITEM 6. PANEL UPDATES

16. The Liaison Council noted verbal updates from the following panels:

Judges/Trainers Panel

17. The Liaison Council received a verbal update from Mrs Tedds on behalf of Mr Harley.

18. It was noted the Agility representatives on the Activities Judges Sub-Group were working through the Course Time Matrix for the Micro height ready for its introduction on 1 January 2027 and that a meeting had been arranged with the office to discuss it.

19. It was noted that work was in progress to create CPD type videos to assist in judges' education, alongside additional work to help manage the Royal Kennel Club Judges social media page. The assessment of judges was continuing, and work had also been ongoing to further develop the tools available on the Academy and improve the accessibility and ease of locating the available information.

20. The Liaison Council raised concerns that it was often difficult for show organisers to identify available judges, particularly with the guidance in the Code of Best Practice for Agility Judges and Stewards & Guide to Agility Equipment which stated that soliciting judging appointments was not acceptable.

21. The office confirmed that shows could request judges via social media, and judges could indicate their availability in response but the final decision on appointments remained with show management.

22. It was suggested that including a more comprehensive list of judges at all levels on the online 'Find a Judge' facility would provide show organisers with a useful and accessible resource for identifying judges quickly and easily and could encourage a wider range of judges to be appointed.

23. The process for approving judges from overseas was also raised and it was noted that some individuals were not aware of the appropriate process for obtaining Royal Kennel Club approval.

24. The office confirmed that it was the overseas society that sought permission and not the individual and it was noted that due to the process some permissions may have been granted by the office without the individual judge being aware.

25. Additional concerns were raised that some judges may be judging without the appropriate qualifications. It was noted that any concerns regarding this should be raised as soon as possible with the Royal Kennel Club.

Show Organisers Panel

26. A verbal update was received from Mrs Davis and it was noted that the Show Organisers Panel had been working predominantly on producing a more tailored risk assessment which was to be discussed later in the meeting.

27. It was noted that there had been recent discussions regarding the methods used by the Royal Kennel Club to communicate and concerns were raised that not all show organisers were able to keep up with updates when posted on social media. The office agreed that updates related to show organisers could be sent via email if it would be more beneficial.

28. A concern was raised regarding incident books, particularly relating to conduct matters, and it was noted that show organisers felt they were not being kept informed and, in some cases, did not hear back once these had been submitted.

29. The office confirmed that work was being carried out to update the incident books and that it was hoped that these could eventually be moved online to improve the process and ensure everyone could be kept better informed.

30. The subject of banned dogs was raised, and concerns were shared that show organisers did not have a list of banned dogs and that not everyone checked the Royal Kennel Club Journal in order to keep up to date on them. The office confirmed that Show Processors were informed of banned dogs and so it was unlikely that those dogs would be able to enter.

Equipment Panel

31. A verbal update was received from Mrs Bale, and it was noted that there had only been eight submissions via the online equipment report form from judges in 2026, covering various items of contact equipment. It was raised that it may be beneficial to amend the equipment submission forms to include equipment reports from all agility participants and not just judges and the Liaison Council supported that suggestion.

32. It was raised that QR codes could be used at shows to increase the use of the form if that was opened to all and that some shows had previously used them for feedback forms with great success.

33. A concern was raised that the wording of 'Incident Book' was off putting particularly when it was not related to a genuine standalone incident. It was suggested that it could be amended to 'Feedback Form' and the office confirmed that a review of the Incident Form process was underway and that the suggestion would be considered.

34. It was noted that it was necessary to double check the equipment list for Micro before its introduction on 1 January 2027 in order to ensure that no equipment had been missed in review or could be a welfare concern.

35. The subject of the Tyre was raised, and it was noted that work was still ongoing regarding the permitted angle of swing under the regulations.

36. A discussion took place regarding the continued use of older-style long jumps, including those that had been amended to add padding on top.

Mrs Davis declared a conflict of interest, as a show organiser who used that style of long jump.

37. It was noted that clubs had previously been given time to transition to the newer requirements, recognising the cost involved in replacing equipment, but that sufficient time had now passed and clarification may be required.

38. It was raised that some smaller clubs and show organisers supplied their own equipment and there was still concern about affordability for those clubs who had previously purchased those styles of long jump in accordance with advice from previous Agility Liaison Council members.

39. Concerns were also raised regarding the suitability and weighting of some long jump designs, particularly in adverse weather conditions, and it was highlighted that while some shows had used concrete weights to support marker poles, that was a safety concern and should not be permitted. It was also considered that in some cases marker poles could appear similar to weave poles causing confusion for dogs.

40. The Liaison Council agreed that further consideration was needed regarding the transition of material requirements for long jumps, alongside further consideration of the regulation wording for long jumps in general moving forward.

41. The wider issue of equipment consistency across rings was also discussed and it was agreed that uniformity across all rings would be considered best practice. The Liaison Council noted that the issue had been more prevalent in obstacles that the dog made contact with, for example tunnels and contact equipment and it was raised that rather than focussing on suppliers, it would be preferable for the focus to move to materials to remove a degree of variation for the dogs.

42. It was acknowledged that the subject needed further discussion and the Equipment Panel agreed that the matter would be taken away for a more comprehensive review.

Young Royal Kennel Club Panel

43. A verbal update was given by Mrs White and it was noted that a new Young Royal Kennel Club Chair and Vice Chair had recently been announced, it was raised that the Young Royal Kennel Club Panel was keen to hear more from both the Chair and Vice Chair particularly regarding how they wanted to steer the Young Royal Kennel Club in the coming years.

44. It was noted that a survey had been circulated by the Royal Kennel Club to all members, and to parents where applicable, to gather views on what they would like to see from the Young Royal Kennel Club moving forward. A Crufts feedback survey had also been undertaken, and the results for both were being reviewed.

45. A concern was raised regarding safeguarding and while it was noted that there was an online form and further information regarding the matter on the Royal Kennel Club website, some show organisers felt something quick and easy to reference while at a show would be beneficial.

46. The Young Royal Kennel Club Panel had begun work on a process map that could be shared with show management. This was in the initial stages, and it was noted that it would be circulated within the Agility Liaison Council and the office for approval when ready.

47. It was noted that work was also ongoing to engage with the higher age groups within Young Royal Kennel Club with the hope of encouraging as many as possible onto the volunteer pathway.

Measurers Panel

48. A verbal update was given by Mrs White, and it was confirmed that a survey of measurers had been completed and the Measurers Panel was collaborating with the office to update the current list of active measurers and senior measurers. It was hoped that this would help to improve communications between the Royal Kennel Club and measurers moving forward.

49. It was raised that a full measuring review would be beneficial and that a review had not been completed since around 2015. The request was noted by the office, and it was highlighted that a budget request would need to be submitted for 2027.

50. A query was raised about the challenge measure and whether it would be possible to amend the regulation to enable senior measurers to request a challenge measure as well as Championship judges.

51. A concern was raised regarding Micro measures, and it was noted that there was still some confusion around the different timeframes and scenarios. A table had been produced as guidance on different scenarios, and it was raised that it may be useful to re issue that guidance on the measurers' social media pages to ensure everyone followed the process correctly. The office confirmed that there was also a list of FAQs on the website for anyone who was unsure.

International Agility Panel

52. It was noted that there was no update from the International Agility Panel as there were no matters affecting agility in the UK.

ITEM 7. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

53. The Liaison Council noted a verbal update from Mrs Tedds on behalf of Mrs Gardner following the April meeting of the Activities Judges Sub-Group and that had been included as part of the Judges Panel report listed in item 6.

ITEM 8. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS AND REPORT

54. The Liaison Council noted a verbal update from Miss Gilchrist regarding the results of the Agility Liaison Council Community Survey (January 2026).

55. It was noted that the survey had remained open for 6 weeks and that approximately 600 returns had been received.

56. Key themes from the survey were identified as welfare, communication, transparency and trust, grassroots support and competitive ambition. It was noted that the community were keen to work in partnership with the Liaison Council to ensure a positive, sustainable future for the discipline.

57. The Liaison Council noted that there were some priority areas raised by the survey including Judges Training, Grading Structure and Progression and the Standardisation of Equipment as well as Communication and Engagement. It was confirmed that those areas had been used as focus points to form the Strategic 5 year plan reviewed under item 13.

ITEM 9. RISK ASSESSMENT

58. The Liaison Council reviewed the risk assessment for agility shows and it was noted that a number of revisions had been made by the Show Organisers Panel in consultation with show organisers.

59. A short discussion took place, and it was noted that some show organisers considered that agility presented additional issues compared with other disciplines and therefore required a more tailored risk assessment.

60. It was confirmed that both the Liaison Council and show organisers were satisfied with the document and had no further comments. A query was raised about how this would be progressed and the office confirmed that it would need to be referred to the Activities Committee for consideration.

61. Following a unanimous vote the Liaison Council **recommended** that the document be taken forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Activities Committee.

ITEM 10. NUMBER OF SHOW LICENCES

62. The Liaison Council revisited the proposal to restrict the number of show licences and considered the potential benefits and implications of introducing such measures.

63. Concerns were raised regarding the high number of shows being held, and it was noted that there had been sixteen shows on a single weekend in

July 2026, and that this had resulted in some shows experiencing very low-class entries.

64. It was queried whether a restriction on licences would be necessary alongside a full grade review or whether it may be better to concentrate on one or the other in order to measure their individual impacts.

65. It was noted that limiting licences for individual clubs and societies could disproportionately affect areas with smaller agility communities where a small number of clubs ran multiple shows. Geographical restrictions were suggested as potentially a more appropriate approach.

66. Emphasis was placed on the importance of show organisers ensuring their shows were viable and communicating effectively with other clubs and societies in the area to support entries.

67. Concerns were raised regarding the practicality of determining which clubs would be granted licences if geographical restrictions were introduced, and a query was raised over whether this would operate on a first-come, first-served basis or by other means.

68. The Liaison Council agreed that any proposal for restrictions would need to be discussed further as part of a wider review, to assess its feasibility and potential impact.

ITEM 11. PROPOSALS

69. No proposals were received for the meeting.

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

ITEM 12. DISCUSSION ITEMS

71. The Liaison Council noted that any items submitted by members of the public, which were not discussed at the meeting, or had not been communicated back to the submitter, had not yet received sufficient public consultation. It was noted that those items would continue to be consulted on with the intention of them being brought forward for consideration at future Liaison Council meetings.

Course Changes Between Classes

72. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether guidance should be introduced that recommended that courses be substantially different where the same dogs were likely to compete in multiple classes.

73. The Liaison Council noted that 85% of those who responded supported the change and it was raised that this may be better placed in the guide for judges rather than in the regulations.

74. Following a unanimous vote the Liaison Council **recommended** the discussion item be taken forward to the Activities Judges Sub-Group to discuss appropriate ways to implement the guidance.

Measuring Method Review

75. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether consideration should be given to replacing the current measuring hoop system with a single piece of measuring equipment capable of accurately measuring dogs across all height categories.

76. The Liaison Council noted that 82% of those who responded supported the discussion.

77. The Liaison Council agreed that there should be no changes to height categories until Micro was established and further information on class numbers was available.

78. It was raised that the Liaison Council was advisory only and while they worked on community feedback and could recommend changes, they could not enforce them and final decisions remained with the Royal Kennel Club Activities Committee and Board.

79. Following a unanimous vote the Liaison Council agreed that the Measuring Panel could take the discussion away to consider and review the potential options.

Grade 1 Clarification

80. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether the wording of the Grade 1 progression regulation should be reviewed to clearly reflect the intended application.

81. The Liaison Council noted that 93% of those who responded supported the discussion and it was noted that there was also potential to include further information in the website's FAQs to support this.

82. Following a brief discussion the Liaison Council unanimously agreed that further thought should be given to the subject, and a proposal should be brought to a future meeting with clearer wording for the regulations.

Warm Up Jumps

83. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether guidance or a regulation should be introduced requiring at least one height-adjustable practice jump to be made available for competitors at licensed agility shows.

84. The Liaison Council noted that 76% of those who responded supported the discussion and it was raised that one show had previously offered contact equipment for use as a practice which had been well received.

85. It was raised that not all shows may be able to safely provide a practice jump, and it was agreed that this should be considered best practice, where possible and safe to do so, rather than being introduced as a regulation amendment. It was also suggested that guidance may be needed to prevent incidents and support health and safety.

86. Following discussion, the Liaison Council noted that providing a practice jump should remain at the discretion of the show organisers and not be mandatory but agreed that the Show Organisers Panel should take the discussion away to develop guidance for those shows that were able to provide one.

Microchips

87. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether show organisers should have the option to verify a dog's identity through microchip scanning at agility competitions, where this was considered necessary and practical.

88. It was noted that 89% of those who responded supported giving show organisers the option to scan microchips as part of show entry, 94% supported show managers having the option to scan microchips when it was considered necessary but 94% did **not** support show helpers having the option to scan microchips.

89. The use of microchip scanning to assist in reducing the incidence of rule infringement was supported by 82% of respondents.

90. The Liaison Council noted that microchip scanning was used frequently internationally but while microchip scanning could be beneficial to prevent incidents and ensure banned dogs could not enter competition, no database was available to record or check microchip results.

91. It was suggested that, as microchipping was a requirement for all UK dogs, show processors could introduce a required field for microchip numbers which could be checked by show organisers.

92. The Liaison Council agreed that more work would be needed before any option for microchip scanning could be introduced and it was confirmed that the matter would be taken away by the Show Organisers Panel for further discussion.

Mrs Bale left the meeting.

Weave Marking

93. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether the current marking criteria for weave poles should be reviewed to provide greater clarity, consistency and consideration of welfare.

94. The Liaison Council noted that 75% of those who responded supported the discussion and it was agreed that repeated attempts at the weaves were time consuming for judges and a welfare concern for dogs as multiple attempts could be considered mentally and physically draining.

95. It was noted that a maximum of three attempts before elimination was seen as sufficient and that it was best practice to start each attempt at the beginning of the obstacle.

96. Following a short discussion the Liaison Council agreed that the discussion item could be referred to the Judges Panel to develop further and produce a proposal that could be brought back to a future meeting.

Collars

97. Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council discussed whether the current wording and guidance relating to collars worn by dogs competing in agility should be reviewed to provide greater clarity and consistency.

98. The Liaison Council noted that 87% of those who responded supported the discussion and it was noted that there were some concerns that those wishing to use trackers while in the ring were potentially masking a problem rather than fixing the root cause of the issue.

99. The Liaison Council acknowledged that responsibility was always on the owner or handler, but it was agreed that if the community felt clarification was needed then the Liaison Council would take the discussion away to consider potential regulation wording and bring this back to a future meeting if required.

Miss Gilchrist left the meeting.

ITEM 13. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

100. The Liaison Council reviewed the Strategic 5 Year Plan and discussed progression.

101. It was noted that the five-year plan was divided into two parts: a two-year strategy reflecting the current Liaison Council and its term of office, and a five-year strategy providing recommendations for consideration in future Liaison Council terms.

102. Due to no longer being quorate, the meeting closed at 12:50. The Liaison Council agreed to discuss and consider any other business items via email.

ITEM 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

103. The Liaison Council noted that the date of the Liaison Council's next meeting would be announced in 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