

**MEETING OF THE HEELWORK TO MUSIC LIAISON COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT
10.30AM ON MONDAY 20 JULY 2026 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

A G E N D A

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

ITEM 2. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is invited to note that there were no matters arising or results of recommendations from the Board.

ITEM 3. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

The Council is invited to note that there is no update from the April meeting of the Activities Judges Sub Group as no Heelwork to Music matters were discussed at the meeting.

ITEM 4. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS AND REPORT

The Council is requested to discuss the results of the Heelwork to Music Liaison Council Community Survey (March/April 2026).

The survey was conducted to gather insight from grassroots competitors across all levels of involvement in the discipline. Its purpose was to better understand the views of the Heelwork to Music community, identify what participants value most about the discipline, and establish the key priorities for the Liaison Council. The findings will help shape the Liaison Council's future work while informing communication, planning, and the ongoing development of the discipline.

(Annex A refers)

ITEM 5. PROPOSALS

The Heelwork to Music community is invited to share any ideas which might help to improve or develop Heelwork to Music.

To submit a proposal or discussion item, please use our online form so the Heelwork to Music Liaison Council can discuss and review the suggestion further prior to the next meeting. Submissions are accepted at any time of year via the online form:

[Liaison Council Agenda Item.](#)

Proposed amendment to Regulation L17.b.(iii) and L17.b.(iv)

Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council is requested to consider the proposed amendment to the above regulation to introduce a mandatory practical seminar in addition to the existing mandatory theory seminar before becoming eligible to judge and when judges renew their qualification.

Regulation L17.b.(iii) Judges approval

To:

Additionally judges must have attended a Royal Kennel Club Heelwork to Music Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar and passed the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination **and attended the practical judging seminar**. ~~From 1 January 2016 this will apply to new and existing judges.~~ The initial Regulations and Judging Procedure Seminar, examination **and practical seminar** must be classroom based.

(Deletions struck through. Insertions in bold)

Regulation L17.b.(iv) Judges approval

To:

All Judges must have attended a Regulations and Judging Procedure seminar every five years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure exam. From 1 January 2023 all judges must have attended a Regulations and Judging Procedure seminar, either classroom based or online, and must have passed the examination, every five years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination. **From 1 January 2027 all judges must attend a practical judging seminar, every five years since passing the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination.**

(Insertions in bold)

Rationale

The HTM Community Survey identified judging consistency and transparency as one of the highest priorities for review, with competitors highlighting concerns about variations in the interpretation of judging criteria and scoring. While the current mandatory theory seminar provides judges with a good understanding of the regulations, it does not provide practical experience of applying those regulations consistently in a judging environment.

Requiring all prospective judges to complete the practical judging seminar before becoming qualified to judge, and as part of the periodic refresher for all judges, would help establish more consistent judging standards. Practical assessment and discussion of scoring decisions would improve confidence in the application of the regulations, better prepare judges for appointments, and support greater consistency and transparency across competitions.

(Annex B refers)

ITEM 6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Barking Deductions

Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council is requested to discuss the current regulation which states that judges should deduct marks for 'excessive barking or noise'. While this allows judges' discretion, the term excessive is not defined and often results in differing interpretations between judges.

Feedback from competitors during the Heelwork to Music Liaison Council survey indicated that clearer guidance would improve consistency and transparency.

The Liaison Council is requested to discuss whether additional guidance, including examples of excessive barking and a more structured approach to deductions, would support fairer and more consistent judging while retaining appropriate judicial discretion.

(Annex C refers)

b. Welfare Marks

Following the public consultation, the Liaison Council is requested to discuss the potential of introducing a dedicated welfare mark into the Heelwork to Music scoring system, with the aim of making welfare-related deductions more transparent and helping handlers identify where improvements are needed.

Consultation showed broad support for maintaining a strong focus on welfare, but mixed views on whether a separate mark is the best approach. Concerns included implementation complexity, consistency of judging, and whether education would be more effective than amending the scoring system.

The Liaison Council is requested to consider whether a welfare mark should be pursued or whether alternative measures, such as enhanced education and improved judge feedback on welfare issues, would better achieve the intended outcome.

ITEM 7. STRATEGIC 5 YEAR PLAN

The Liaison Council is invited to review the Strategic 5 Year Plan and to discuss any progression.

(Annex D refers)

ITEM 8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the Council's next meeting will 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