

HTMLC Strategic 5 Year Plan V.1

Commencing 2026

The following document has been created in consultation with the Heelwork to Music Council in order to detail the strategic aims of the Council and the actions to be taken to achieve these over a 5-year period. This is a working document, which will continue to be developed as part of wider consultation and engagement with the Heelwork to Music community.

Version One has been informed by consultation with members of the heelwork community through a survey with 133 responses and engagement with LC members.

Respondents identified five key priorities for the future of the discipline: increasing the number of shows (48.1%), encouraging new competitors (42.7%), improving judging consistency and transparency (39.7%), improving accessibility for beginners (31.3%), and supporting clubs and show organisers (27.5%).

Our overarching aim
To improve and develop Heelwork to Music while promoting the discipline and prioritising dog welfare.
Strategic Objective One: Strengthen Communication and Engagement
53.2% gave a neutral score (3 out of 5) when asked how well they felt the community was represented and heard in our survey. 31.6% gave a negative rating (1 or 2 out of 5). 15.1% gave a positive rating (4 or 5 out of 5) Objective: Improve transparency, trust, and collaboration between the HTM community and the RKC. Ensuring the community can participate in decision making. Actions: • Increase regular communication with the community through updates, discussions and proposals. • Publish clear proposal documents for consultation and feedback. • Invite HTM club committees to joint meetings to encourage open dialogue. • Distribute a PowerPoint presentation to committees outlining current priorities and developments. • Produce and share an explainer video to clarify the Council's role, objectives and ongoing work. • Provide regular opportunities for community members to give feedback and share ideas, for example "Meet the LC" at shows. • Publish updates that show how feedback has influenced decisions.

Strategic Objective Two: Prioritise Dog Welfare and Discipline Development
<i>Over two-thirds of respondents considered alignment with international HTM practices at least moderately important, and respondents identified welfare considerations as an area for ongoing development.</i> Objective: Ensure all developments within HTM place dog welfare at the forefront while educating competitors on how to give their dogs the best experience at a show. Actions: • Embed welfare considerations into all rule changes and discipline development decisions. • Explore and potentially implement an International Welfare Mark to demonstrate commitment to best practice. • Introduce two new heelwork positions to align with European standards and modernise the discipline.
Strategic Objective Three: Create Clear Pathways into the Discipline and increase participation opportunities for everyone.
<i>Improving beginner accessibility and attracting new competitors emerged as two of the community's highest priorities, while almost 85% of respondents expressed support or potential support for the introduction of a beginner award.</i> Objective: Make it easier for participants to enter, progress and remain within HTM. Actions: • Develop a structured pathway for newcomers, including guidance from beginner to competition level. • Consult the community on the introduction of pre-starter awards including a tricks award/scheme to support early progression. • Increase the number of qualified trainers to improve accessibility and support. • Support clubs wishing to establish new RKC shows, particularly in underrepresented regions. • Work with YKC to increase YKC competitors. • Develop mentoring or buddying opportunities for newcomers to shows.
Strategic Objective Four: Improve Judging and Appointment Processes
<i>Nearly 40% of respondents identified judging consistency and transparency as a priority area, making it one of the most frequently cited development themes within the survey.</i> Objective: Ensure fairness, clarity and accessibility in judging opportunities.

Actions:

- Review and update wording relating to soliciting judging appointments to ensure clarity and consistency.
- Promote transparency in how judging appointments are allocated.

Work with accredited trainers to improve consistency of judging and understanding of scoring.

Strategic Objective Five:

Enhance Resources and Information

Respondents identified difficulty finding trainers and clubs, limited accessible information for newcomers, need for better information sharing, demand for more modern systems and resources.

Objective:

Provide accurate, accessible and up to date information for all participants and clubs, including making it easier for those who want to put on show.

Actions:

- Improve HTM materials available on the Royal Kennel Club website.
- Ensure lists of HTM clubs and trainers are regularly reviewed and kept up to date across the HTM and RKC platforms.
- Explore opportunities to support clubs in modernising entry and show processes, for example formats for music.
- Improve information for clubs and trainers on show/club management.