



## **Cofnodion Cyfarfod Cyffredinol Cymdeithas y Merlod a'r Cobiau Cymreig 2024.**

### **The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society 2024**

**held at the Theatre John Ambrose, Mold Road,  
Ruthin, LL15 1EG at 1.00pm, on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> of April.**

Present - The President, Dewi Evans, trustees of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society Council, staff, and 113 members who signed the attendance book.

Ed Gummery (Chair of Council) - Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. Croeso, welcome to this AGM. I am going to hand over now to Mr Dewi Evans our President to officially open the meeting. Thank you.

Dewi Evans- Annwyl gyfeillion. I would like to welcome you today to our Welsh Pony and Cob Annual General Meeting of 2024. It gives me great pleasure to be able to hold it here because when I became President last year, I thought of Ruthin as a venue for the AGM, because this is where the Clwyd Association started about 40 years ago. The first meeting I believe was held in the Ruthin Farmers Auction office in town. Since then, the auction and everything has moved out. And that's why and it's been a long time, I'm very happy that it is here. So, without saying anything else, I am going to pass over to Ed Gummery to carry on the meeting. Thank you.

EG - So again, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am going to run through a few admin issues. I am going to point out the fire exits. I mean they are obviously here but there is one hidden behind the curtain there. This meeting is also being taped, so unless somebody has any objections, we are going to do that. And is anybody else going to tape the meeting? No? No objections?

[No objections or declarations heard]

Thank you. For information, the minutes will be taken from the recording of the meeting so it's a very accurate reflection and that is why it's so important to wait for the microphone before speaking and then give your name. Can you also please turn off your mobile phones and put them on silent. And can I also remind everyone here present to please sign the attendance books, if you have not already done so. Members receiving awards are requested to stay behind at the close of the meeting please for photographs. And you will find that in the course

of the meeting that there are 2 roving microphones available. Please raise your hand if you have anything to say and a member of staff will come to you. Please can you speak clearly, say your name before speaking to assist us with doing the minutes later. Everybody who wishes to speak will be heard. Some non-members may be present representing proxy votes or in association with awards. Are there any objections to this from our membership? No?

[No objections seen]

Thank you. And I would also like to introduce Marie Phillipe from Geldards and also to Callum Ryan and his colleague from Azets our auditors sitting over stage left. So, I am going to turn to Agenda item one.

### **1. To receive apologies.**

EG - I have taken apologies from Mr Ifor Lloyd from the Derwen Stud. He sends his apologies for not being able to attend. Is there anyone else here that would have any apologies?

Yvonne Stewart- Stuart and Annie Franklin

EG - Thank you Yvonne.

Peter Rutheford - Helen Williams

Tanya Baldwin - Steve Everitt

Ceri Fell - Justin and Heidi Davis.

EG - Lovely thank you. Sadly, we had a number of our members that have passed away, some past President's as well and Chairman of the board since the last AGM in April. The Society sends to sympathies and condolences to all their families and friends of those departed members. As a mark of respect, I would like to ask you all to stand for a minute's silence please.

[Minutes silence is observed]

EG Thank you. So, turning to agenda item number two.

### **2. The confirmation of the AGM minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2023.**

EG - The Verbatim minutes have already been proposed, seconded and approved and we will now go through the minutes page by page for matters arising.

So, page 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17.

[All pages passed with no matters arising]

Can I ask the President Mr Dewi Evans to sign those minutes.

### **3. To receive correspondence.**

EG - As of the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, which was the deadline, no correspondence was received. So, moving swift on to agenda item 4.

**4. To receive a report on the automatic election of four members standing for nine vacancies to serve on Council for the period of 2024-2027 as per Article 25V (a) of the Articles of Association of the Society.**

EG - To do so, I invite Callum Ryan from Azets to present the scrutineers report for the election of four members to serve on Council for that period 2024-2027. Thank you.

CR - Thank you. As per article 25V (a) of the Articles of Associations for this election there were 4 candidates for 9 vacancies and therefore all 4 candidates in alphabetical order Mrs Ceri Fell, Mr Edward Gummery, Mr Richard Pittman and Mr Martin Waters are declared duly elected.

EG Thank you Callum. Congratulations to those who have stood and been elected.

**5. To receive nominations form the floor to appoint a further 5 candidates to fill the remaining vacancies to serve on Council for varying periods during 2024-2027 as per Article 25 (xi) to (xiv) of the Articles of Association of the Society.**

EG - Nominations will be proposed and seconded from the floor and a vote will be taken from members present including proxy votes. The following positions are available. The first vacancy will be for a three-year term, one vacancy will be for a two-year term and three vacancies for a one-year term. The successful candidates in the election should be those who obtain respectively the greatest number of votes cast. The next greatest number and so on in descending order until the number of vacancies has been filled. Candidates proposed and seconded will be invited to address the meeting briefly in alphabetical order, later in the meeting under agenda item 11. The ballot will then be carried out. So, it leaves me to invite nominations each to be proposed and seconded from the floor and agreement will be sought from the nominee. The other thing I need to remind the potential candidates and applicant standing from the floor is that I will need to take your full name and one of the requirements for the criteria of standing is that you must have seven years consecutive membership with the Welsh Pony and Cob Society. That means without a break. So, nominations please.

Elizabeth Russell - I take it that we are starting to propose?

EG - Yes please, yes.

ER - I would like to propose John Kirk.

Richard Pittman - Good afternoon. Mr Richard Pittman. I would like to second Mr John Kirk.

Owen Jones - I would like to propose Mr Geraint Thomas from the Telynu Stud.

Elizabeth French - I would like to propose Mrs Ann Bigley who has so much knowledge with the Welsh Breeds and also the business acumen that's needed to be on Council.

EG - I just need to go back to Geraint Thomas, the proposer there from Mr Owen Jones and we need a seconder for that proposal.

Gwyndaf Edwards from the Fronbach stud. I second Mr Geraint Thomas. Thank you.

[No name given] I'd like to propose Mr Phillip Lewis Rhydyfelin stud.

[No name given] I would like to second the proposal for Mr Phillip Lewis Rhydyfelin stud.

EG - Can I have your names please?

Edna Jones (Ynys Mon)

Rhian Roberts

MW - Excuse me could you wait 2 minutes please? Thank you.

EG - I do apologise can you repeat those names please the proposer and the seconder for Phillip Lewis. I apologise.

Rhian Roberts

Edna Jones

EG - We also had a proposer for Ann Bigley

Kevin Walker I would like to second.

EG - Sorry Kevin from Elizabeth French and it was just the, Kevin's is going to second that. Thank you.

MW - Right next one.

Matthew Howells. I would like to propose Mr Peter Rutherford from the Seiont Stud.

Gaynor Vaughan

MW - Just give us 2 seconds please so we can right the name down. Ready? Who is the seconder of that please?

Gaynor Vaughan. I would like to second Peter Rutherford of the Seiont stud.

EG - OK thank you that's five. Are there any other nominations? I am, just to make sure we get this right, I am just going to go through them. So, nomination one was proposed John Kirk, seconded by Richard Pittman and proposed by Elizabeth Russell. Nomination 2 was for Geraint Thomas. Proposed by Owen Jones and seconded by Gwyndaf Edwards. Nomination 3 was for Phillip Lewis, Rhian Roberts and Edna Jones. Nomination number four was Ann Bigley proposed by Elizabeth French and seconded by Kevin Walker. And nomination number five was Peter Rutherford. Proposed by Matthew Howells and seconded by Gaynor Vaughan. Thank you. Are there any more nominations?

RP - Should you check that they want to stand?

EG - Yes but I just want to go through the nominations first to see if there are any more first and then I will ask them individually if they want to stand. Ok so we have no more so John Kirk, are you happy to stand? Are you willing to stand and fulfil the seven-year criteria?

JK - I will

EG - Mr Geraint Thomas. Are you happy to stand Geraint?

GT - Yes Mr Chairman, I am happy to stand.

EG - Thank you Geraint. And Mr Phillip Lewis

PL - Yes, I am happy to stand.

EG - Thank you. And Mrs Ann Bigley

AB - Yes, I'm happy.

EG - Yes Mrs Ann Bigley is happy to stand. And Mr Peter Rutherford?

PR - Mr Chairman I would be very happy to stand, Thank you.

EG - Ok so obviously the office will now sort out the ballot etc and you will be given the opportunity to say a few words. Dilwyn has just reminded me to say that depending on the... the reason why we are doing the voting is that depending on the amount of votes, will depend on the category of which you fall, the amount of availability, so for the amount of years that you will stand. As I said, there is one for 3, one for 2 and the remainder for one year. The votes will have a bearing on that. I am now going to turn to agenda item number six.

## **6. To receive the Audited Balance sheets and Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**

EG - I would like to invite the Chair of Finance Mr Martin Waters to submit the report to you the members.

MW - Right Ladies and Gentlemen shareholders of The Welsh Pony and Cob Society. For those of you who are lucky enough not to know me my name is Martin Waters and I have been given the task to be the Chair of Finance after Mr Wyn Jones resigned from the board on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023. Before we deal with the report, I would like to apologise of the late publication of our finance reports on our website. I am partially to blame for this due to a misunderstanding on the report that I write which goes out with the finance figures so I must apologise. It's partly me to blame for that. Right, we will go on to the report, the finance situation of The Welsh Pony and Cob Society. Our financial statements have been professionally reviewed by Aztec... Azerts. The gentlemen is over there. First of all, I would like to look at the investments. I would like to look at our investments first. We opened the year with £2,096,424. At the close of the financial year, we have £2,096,764. We have seen a return of 5.25% for the year compared will a loss of 8% last year. That is a positive. That is about the only positive that I have got in this report mind you ladies and gentlemen. They have given us a good income of £45,134, so we are very lucky to have our investments. Next comes the bad news. We have seen big losses over the past few years not just this year, these losses have been ongoing for a number of years and our operating costs and our operating income and this still shows a deficit. If it wasn't for the money contained within our investments, then we would be in severe financial difficulties. You can't get away from that. We really need to concentrate on our finances. The total operating deficit at the year-end of 31<sup>st</sup>/12/2022 was minus £59,902 excluding depreciation. The total operating deficit for this year end of 23 was minus £38,399 excluding depreciation. Although this is an improvement of £21, 503 it isn't good enough and if we don't take drastic steps, it will get worse. Some of the reasons behind this is that our membership have dropped year on year. 2021 we had 3735 members, 2022 we had 3722, 2023 we had 3534 it's dropping, and it's dropped in previous years as well. There is a slow decline in our membership. Transfer have dropped. 2021: 5739, 2022: 5113, 2023: 4746. That is 1000 transfers dropped over 3 years. Registrations 2021: 5026, 2022: 4645, 2023: 4352. That is a

drop of 664 over 3 years. And like I said it is a downward drop every year and we have got to try and stop this.

I addressed the board in the leadup to our last AGM about my concerns but the board at the time did not want to take the necessary steps to deal with such a large deficit. As you know after our last AGM, we had a diagnostics report done. This highlighted areas that we needed to look at. A vote was taken to proceed with the cost savings highlighted in the report. This led to a split within the board which was a shame really and a number of trustees felt they had to resign which is very disappointing. With the remaining board members and the trustees that joined during the year and led as far as I'm concerned by a very pro-active Chairman, we set about the financial issues. It was very unfortunate that with the decline in our core business, we decided to reduce our staff. We found that we were top heavy. Two managers for seven staff. We have reduced this be it late in the year and now it's one manager over seven staff. You know there is no business that runs two managers looking over seven staff. It isn't a very nice thing when you reduce staff but sometimes it is out of your hands. After spending some time with Gemma, the lady that took over and our office manager, and sitting to my left Chris, our finance officer, we soon uncovered some mismanagement of our finances. Just to name 2 savings. We were paying a monthly mobile bill of £400 ladies and gentlemen which we reduced within a month to £94. We have been paying that for I don't know how long. There was an overspend on our journal of around £8000. You know that is just not good enough when you are losing money, you know it's like with a house, you have just got to cut your cloth to fit. The sales, we had a problem with the sales. We found that there had been poor decisions when writing contracts and the time that they have tied. We have had contracts written which weren't the best contracts, and for five years. Nowadays, when you are writing contracts, two years is maximum and then revisit a contract. We have been tied up in contracts, poor contracts for five years. It's not good enough ladies and gentlemen. And we found that, and the sales being one, printing of the journal being another and a franking machine the other. We had a franking machine that was costing us £619 a quarter and for some reason, I don't know who was behind this, but it was seen fit to have a new franking machine that cost us £2245 a quarter. Now, you know, that beggar's belief. It just beggar's belief to be honest. Just take into the above what I have gone through now into account, we should make savings to break even, or produce a small profit at our next AGM. Ladies and Gentlemen by doing this is enable us to use the income, because our income at the moment from our investments, is propping up our business. But if we tie up all these loose ends up, to turn around, upskill our staff, promote our wonderful breed by visiting schools and ponies, you see that's what we need to do, we need to be going out, we need to be pushing our breed, we need to be going out with our youngsters, getting them on board and trying to promote our breed. If we talk to a thousand of them and we only have three interested, that is three extra members in the future, you never know. By doing such promotions, we hope to stop the decline and see our memberships start to increase. I hope this has given us an insight into our financial situation and the way in which we hope to turn it around. But we need help and like I have said, we are in dire straits and I'm sorry. Also, and what I am going to be put to the board next week is that our costs, our fixed costs, we will have to link them with RPA. We need to link them, it's so long, we have left them go. Any business, you can't help it, but inflation has got to be linked with your costs. So, I will be putting that to the board next week. I know that is not going to be palatable for a lot, but we have got to increase. But I don't believe in jumping it like we have done in previous years. If we linked it with inflation, we wouldn't need to jump it and it would gradually go. So, if there is any questions? I will try to answer them, if I can't, I will make sure that we get back to you.

Elizabeth Hampson – So, Martin, you have caught me off-guard there a little bit but as a previous trustee, I was one of those people that did the deal when it came to the sales. And

as far as I am concerned the only thing that was built in for five years, was securing the Royal Welsh Showground. Could you tell me what else was for five years please?

MW - Well that was the biggest thing, that cost us, I think, off the top of my head without the figures here, it's £19,000. And by the time, and what was said we were doing it for the first 3 years and then Brightwells would take it over, sorry McCartneys... Brightwells is going back years now, showing my age now. McCartneys would take it over, and then I thought myself then, that we would see that extra money. But McCartneys sit down and tell us that we didn't agree at the time, when they agreed to take it over after the 3 years but then we have to sit down and agree how much percentage we get back. So, he said it's common sense, I am not going to give you more percentage, that I have got to pay. So, in the end the sales, it's not a lot but the Sales have cost us money.

EH - I disagree.

MW - Well you can disagree.

EH - I disagree. I disagree with what you are saying and if you want any information regarding that, as somebody who has sat on there, I am happy to help you with that. But absolutely what you are telling the floor here is not correct.

MW - It is correct Liz. I am very sorry.

EH - No it's not I am sorry.

MW - I am telling you it is correct. I was in the meeting and Gemma was in the meeting. Is Gemma here? Is the office manager here?

EG - She is doing the ballot papers.

MW - Gemma was in the meeting I'm telling you. Cemaes? Is Cemaes behind me? Is that correct?

CE - Yes.

MW - There we are it is correct Liz I'm sorry. I am sorry to tell you, but it is correct. Right moving on

EG - Any more questions?

MW - Any other questions? Thank you.

Good afternoon, Jo Filmer here from Longhalves Stud. Looking through the accounts, firstly I would like to ask Council but what are you actually... or what are we offering members? It's all very well saying that we need to reduce, reduce, reduce but in order to encourage membership, surely, we need to be offering something to encourage our members? The Journal being reduced, I think from a personal perspective is disappointing. And looking through the accounts without the £29,000 of legal and professional fees and the £44,000 of repair costs, I am not quite sure how those are made up because it is not detailed. If those were not there, you would have had a trading surplus. Would I be right in saying that?

MW - Could you repeat the last couple of. You said £16,000 was legal fees the rest were...

JF - No, no, no You have got £29,000 of legal and professional fees.

MW - The professional fees are for...

JF - And £44,000 of repair costs. I am not quite sure what the details of that is. And if those were not there, then we would have had a trading surplus.

MW - Right we'll go through the legal fees first if you could just wait.

Chris Hodgson - You are quite correct Mrs Filmer to say that the legal and professional fees, but they include professional fees as well which included the diagnostic report.

JF - Is there a breakdown?

CH - Not at the present moment. I would like to look at that in more detail if that is ok because...

JF - Am I right in saying that without those two large sums £29000 and £44000, the Society would be in a much better position.

CH - The legal fees off the top of my head were about £16000 for last year. So, the £29 000 includes the diagnostics report of about £7000 net and also includes the professional fees with our website designers, Fanatic, over the year. But it is very difficult to answer these questions on the spot when I haven't had time to prepare answers for you.

JF - Yes, I appreciate that. I am not trying to catch you out, but I am just wanting an explanation.

MW - Obviously any savings, and the legal savings, the money we pay out on legal fees, and its year on in year on out is crazy. You are right. Any savings is a bonus but we still got to make sure, like I said, if we were operating, if we were breaking even, then we would have the extra money that the investments make on top of, if we could save on the costs that you just said, we could really be out there doing what we should be doing, is promoting this wonderful breed of ours to get more members, to see it increasing and we will be in a lot better financial situation. And that is what we are trying to do. But if you want, we will give you a breakdown of those figures.

JF - Thank you very much.

Yvonne Small - Just a couple of things. You said about this new franking machine which cost thousands every month, who authorised this?

MW - Well I have only just come into this position, and we will look into it but that is what I have been left with, but I don't know. I can't answer that.

YS - So whatever suggested it initially, it must have been approved.

MW - Like I have said, I have got to look into it. I can't answer it 100%. I've got to look into it.

YS - It shouldn't have been allowed to happen, should it?

MW - No it shouldn't have been allowed to happen, should it? It's mismanagement, I did say that.

YS - I just want to make that clear. You said there was an overspend on the Journal of £6000 or I can't remember.

MW - £8000

YS - What was that for?

MW - Just to publish it an everything, just to get it out.

YS - So have you changed publishers then?

MW - We were tied up again in a contract with the publishers, we are about to get out of that contract thank God, it will save us thousands, but we didn't, we only... we lost I think this year, it was £200. The adverts really paid for it this year, so we didn't make a loss.

YS - So are you changing publishers then?

MW - Yes, we are looking at everything.

EG - Which is why the Journal is a little bit thinner this year because we have cut it down to try and break even on the Journal. The contract, the actual contract hadn't even been completed, properly filled out. So, we were under obligation to go with the person that was doing the... is doing some of the work for us now. But we have now found an additional printer, that will actually cover the cost of that and also some on the mailing at a lot less price. But obviously we can't bring that in until next year because although it's only a verbal contract, we have had to honour part of that.

YS - Yes. Last thing legal fees. What were they for?

MW - Well that varies. One of them was about bronze statues, is it?

EG - We have had a litigation case going on in relation to claiming the Society misrepresented sales of some bronze statues twenty years ago, I don't know if you remember it? We had statues made of every single section and the claim has been made that we misrepresented that and there is now a litigation case going about that.

YS - Is that from an individual or?

EG - Yes, it is yes. And obviously it went through solicitors, with the threat of legal action and court. And obviously we have had to involve Geldard's professional advice on it. To be honest it has been like a game of tennis and it sadly and painfully it has been costing us money. Geldards are obviously very happy! But we are very unhappy about it but I'm hoping, for the moment that it has drawn to a close. It has cost us.

YS - Is that the only sort of thing?

EG - The only sort of thing is the obligatory complaints on the Society that we sometime need legal advice.

YS - Do they always need legal advice?

EG - No, not always. No, no, Occasionally.

YS - Thank you.

EG - We try to keep it down.

MW - Let's hope we stop using them.

Shane Rogers. It was just a follow on from the membership really, I think looking at other Societies, they seem to offer more than we do as a Society, such as the NPS offering public liability. So, they are appealing to a larger group of people who would become members. Is that something that would be considered or more added value that could be offered for the membership to increase that?

MW - Well this morning, we had a lot of discussion with the Associations and there were things that were brought up about added, things that we could give for the membership, so we are going to take that back on board and we are going to come back to you about that.

EG - It is an agendered item when this new council form, we are looking at a committee to look at memberships specifically. There is a lot of ideas, thinking about show memberships, all different types of memberships, to asking the question what do you really get for your membership? And so, it is a big question, but it isn't black and white. There is a lot of grey there so it's a very difficult decision and one carefully or we might take away with one and give with the other. It could end up like that we could end up losing form it.

MW - Right Clare?

Good morning, Clare Willis-Burton Pentrefelin Stud. There are a couple of things and please don't take this personally.

MW - I wouldn't Clare. Broad shoulders.

CWB - We are very unhappy as a membership about the account's situation. We haven't had any time...

MW - I understand.

CWB...to peruse these accounts at all. We have got two representatives from the accountants, who we are paying a lot of money to sit there today, and we have got a Finance Officer. We have been asking questions from the floor and you are telling us that you can't answer them. Where is your preparation? You knew this AGM was coming up? You obviously had these accounts beforehand.

MW - We had an issue with putting the accounts together because the bank first of all. Do you want to take over Ed?

EG - I am going to have to answer this.

CWB - Please do thank you.

EG - I want to. Martin has actually been quite noble because whilst Callum... and I'm not throwing him under the bus, but he was sick this week. But before that our audit was delayed, put back a couple of weeks. And the reason for that was that we had a finance officer running around almost continuously trying to save our bank account. And we all know how difficult it is to get hold of a bank at the best of times. Because at the beginning of last year, some important mandates and some important bank information which was requested by our bank wasn't filled out, wasn't done. And despite reminders, we find ourselves slipping into November time before it was addressed, unbeknown to me, and what has happened it that we have had our SagePay closed down, we had direct debits going down. At one time, you wouldn't know this, you saw some notices go out to the membership on social media that we are having difficulties with payments, or the website whatever, but the reality was that the bank has closed us down. And we were not operating because of a very, very simple issue that had occurred the year before that hadn't been actioned. And so, we have had a knock on. I mean apologies from me also; we have a knock on now with the accounts and the delay so there is a degree of preparation issue. We have only just dealt with the accounts ourselves and Callum, I appreciate the flexibility of our accountants, but that was the reality. But they were flexible enough to put the programmed audit back two weeks to allow Chris to run around constantly on the bank to try and get things back up and running, so the actual system didn't fall.

CWB - So can you just tell me then, just for clarity. Why have we got two accountants' representatives here? What are they doing here if they can't answer the questions from the floor?

MW - Excuse me but Chris will answer this now.

CH - Yes, I can answer this. Our accountants are here as scrutineers, so they are here to count the votes, to make sure that somebody independent is doing that correctly.

CWB - That seems a very expensive way of doing the job. You know it's our money if that is all they are here for is scrutineers?

CH - Can I say that this is what we have been doing for very many years.

CWB - Well that's something that we have very possibly got to change then?

MW - Well possibly it is but this is something that we have done all the years that has gone by.

EG - To be fair on that point, normally the nomination for Council to stand, did go out. We only received four. The five that stood today had the opportunity to stand then it would have been sent postal to Azets and then the requirement, therefore, take in your point, if we were to review that, wouldn't necessarily need to be here. But obviously because they are standing from the floor, we need scrutineers.

CWB - Thank you very much.

MW - Just one more thing that Chris would like to say.

CH - I would just like to say that normally we would have two weeks to prepare answers to your questions and with all due respect and because of the situation we have been in, we haven't been able to do that. I would like to say that I did send an email in February, I have the email, asking our management for basic business information for Barclays. I sent a reminder in June; I had various verbal discussions where I was promised that this would be discussed at board meetings, and it was November suddenly that I realised that it had not been done. I was not aware of that until we got to November. Thank you.

MW - Thank you Clare. Is there any other questions?

Hi. Nia Roberts - Heolas. On a positive...

MW - There is not many of them I'm telling you.

NR - I am trying to be positive Martin, I notice from the figures that there is a £15000 with the telephone expenses thereabouts from last year. So, is that because of the mobile phone bills? Can you just clarify please?

MW - No that was to do with BT billed us wrong to be honest with you, that was. The mobile phone bill that was reduced from £400 to £96 is a different thing. What you are talking about is the BT bill that we were billed for incorrectly. And it was written off by BT then. Is there any other questions?

KW - Kerry Wainwright. Would there be a move to using email more than post. Presumably that would be a major cost saving with the increase in postage.

MW - Yes, it would be great but the problem we have got is that the majority of our members are older, and they prefer letters to be honest. But yes, email would be a lot better

KW - Could members not be asked which they prefer?

MW - Yes that would be nice, yes. We can look into that thank you.

Hi Richard Pittman. Excuse my ignorance but has the accounts actually been signed off? Because the copy online, there is no signature on them at all?

EG - It gets signed off by Council.

RP - Normally it asks for a signature every three pages which is blank online.

EG - I think it's best to let the expert explain, there is a reason for it. Callum?

CR - Apologies, they haven't been signed off yet. In order to ensure that you had access to the accounts, ahead of today's AGM. Apologies, there was obviously a delay in that, we wanted to ensure that there was a draft version on the website for everyone to access. The figures are not going to change at this point in time. But due to, there is as part again of the signed accounts, everything is signed off, there is a process around it and unfortunately, we are not just quite there yet. As in terms of in our point of view as auditors, signing our audit opinion, so we recommended that we published draft accounts on to the website just to make sure that you have the access to it. From our point of view, there is not going to be any changes, we are at this point in time expecting a clean audit report as well, with no alteration to our opinion. So, when we do sign everything off, so when the Chair and the board sign off the accounts, then we sign it as the auditors, that will then replace the accounts on the website then to ensure that everyone has access to those signed accounts.

EG - Is there any more questions?

Wyn Jones - Nerwyn Stud. Callum has just answered two of my questions now regarding the accounts being approved by full Council and the fact that their independent Auditors accounts is not within them. Now can I suggest please that once these accounts are completely finished, that that copy is put in and the original is also left in, so that we know from outside that nothing has changed please?

MW - That is not a problem Wyn.

WJ - Now also if I can refer you to page seven of the report, Sharon Charlton is the Vice-Chair, Sharon Charlton hasn't been the Vice-Chair for nearly two years. On page nine, I don't know if this is an omission?

MW – Right.

WJ - There is a paragraph missing halfway down page nine. The old one, last year's says: "The state where the applicable UK accounting standards have been followed subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements". Now has that been take out on purpose?

MW - No, that is on oversight.

WJ - So can that be put back in?

MW - That will be put back in and the two accounts will come out alongside each other.

EG - Yes to marry both accounts.

WJ - And before I finish, I would just like to take exception to Martin's comments that we did not agree last March about saving money. If you look at my finance report last year, I said that Council were looking to review the office costs and the procedures. It was the way you were going about it that we objected to.

MW - That is an opinion, I understand, and I take your opinion on board. But what I say is that it is such a big loss, we needed to take drastic steps, what I see and the same.

WJ - But you needed to take drastic steps within...

[inaudible]

...you can't do that.

MW - And we needed to take drastic steps. Wyn alright, that's fair enough. I'll take it on board, but can you tell me why you were signing a mobile phone off for £400 every month? And I soon as I sat in the chair here, we reduced that to £94. You know we could go for ever by here, it's not about throwing mud, it is about getting this Society on the right foot, to go forward. And that is what I am here to do. I don't want to be tied up in contracts, I don't want to be paying bills that we shouldn't be paying, and I want to get as much back to the members. And I want to promote this Society and that's what we want to do. So, I take on board what you have to say Wyn but we both have a difference of opinion on that.

WJ - Thanks

MW - Thank you.

EG - Any more questions ladies and gents?

This is John Kirk. This is not a question, it's just a bit of positive. I would like to thank Martin for being so honest and open with the membership, laying it out, the way it should be and hopefully from this report, the Society can move forward, we can all move forward with it and get behind it instead of in front of it. Thank you, Martin.

MW - Thank you very John. Thank you.

EG - Anymore for anymore? No?

MW - Thank you very much.

EG - Thank you very much Martin. I am going to now turn to agenda item number seven.

## **7. To appoint Azets as the Society Auditors for 2024.**

EG - I am just handing over to you to appoint the Auditors.

MW - I would like to appoint them for this coming year please. Right, I would like to move to confirm the appointment by Council of Azets, for the Society's audits for 2024. Is everyone ok with that? Have we got a seconder for that?

JF - If we are all being vigilant in saving costs, I am sure they are fantastic but are they the most cost effective? Are they doing the best for the interest of the Society?

MW - Well I will answer that question as I did bring it up yesterday in our meeting and there are a few things that I would like to discuss with Callum, about that. You are right. So, I do take that, but it was brought up yesterday in a Council meeting. No, it's ok, you don't know that do you, but it is a question that we will have to run through with them.

EG - There is some alternatives that we are looking at and some potential tender so. So that leaves it to me. We need a proposer and seconder for the auditors. To propose our auditors for 2024.... Apologies, if you are confused, then so am I... I have some advice coming in and it's what I thought, it has already been proposed by Council that they are going to be our

auditors for 2024 because, when we discussed it in our Council meeting yesterday, it was ratified but we will also consider looking at tender and if not alternative forms of auditing to try and cut cost.

Elizabeth Russell. I would like to propose that you accept from the floor, that they are accepted. The Society needs auditors, and it will take you, certainly several months before you manage to find an alternative, if in fact you decide to do so. So, I am happy to propose from the floor, that they remain our auditors. It might have been done by Council, but it should come from the floor as well.

MW - Thank you very much. There is still a few things to discuss with Callum.

## **8.To receive the Report of The Chair of Council**

EG - I have already covered the late financial report and I think it was quite noble of Martin to take that one on the chin but there was a number of reasons for that and yet again apologies.

Just yesterday out of the blue I received an out of the blue telephone call from a couple from Australia that I visited when I went over to judge in 2015. And they wanted to just touch base with me having just received the Spring newsletter. This is a friendship that I wouldn't else have had, and it was kindled out of our common bond, that is our Welsh Ponies and Cobs. And that is why we are all here today and we must all remember that and keep the Welsh breeds at the forefront of our minds as we progress through the rest of this meeting. There is nothing personally more that I would like to do than be able to stand before you as Chairman and that basically means as spokesman for these people here, for the board of trustees beside me and say that the breed Society is meeting all of its charitable objectives and articles of association, or as a business that is running at an acceptable loss or profit or at the very least breaking even. But unfortunately, I cannot. And with everything going on in the world, and still working through a global financial crisis, it is difficult to find any small business at the moment, that is not struggling. We must not lose sight of that as many businesses have already gone under.

We have definitely reached a crossroads in the Society's life when some extremely important and difficult decisions have to be taken and have been taken. The position in which find our Society in today has not happened overnight but none of us could have foreseen how dramatically the economy and pandemic would affect us in the last couple of years. This may be a saving grace because it has forced the Council to act quickly and positively to counter the effects of a worrying fall in memberships, animal registrations and passport transfer, which is the life blood and income of the Society that allows it to operate and counterbalance the rising costs of rising inflation. In 2014, and I hate statistics but sometimes you need them and as a football man... ten years ago membership was recorded at 5432 in 2007 it was 9000, nearly 10000. Registrations 6222 and transfers at 7867. To date the figures for 2023 and up to the beginning of 2024 show that membership is 3345, registrations at 4352 and transfers at 4746. That is a drop of 50%. The good news is that is can be fixed and we must continue to stick to the job in hand and not be distracted by the sideshows. Before the AGM last year, we had already raised the need to raise the prices at least in parallel with inflation and we still remain competitive with other equine organisations. I imagine that previously the Society and successive Councils worried about the expected backlash that it might get from the membership in the same way that the show affiliation and medal review, that was planned over 10 years ago was parked and not acted upon. The end of year financial reports in 2023 were showing a deficit of £59,902 ex. depreciation as opposed to a reduced deficit of £38,399 ex. depreciation this year as Martin has already alluded to. In some cases, price increases for

services had not been made for a decade or so. This is something that we did not want to do, but like many businesses we were forced to. The members have passed resolutions at recent AGMs to increase memberships and subscriptions in line with inflation and so that remains unchanged. We will endeavour to keep the rises to a minimum and as a last resort. A review of service charges in respect of the staff hours spent dealing with registrations across the board and other issues caused by non-members, is already under way. We cannot keep running events or offering services at a loss. The Journal is a prime example of this. The criticism surrounding the hefty deficit at the 2023 AGM, surprisingly did not come. But the comments that an ex-President made at that AGM last year to cut your cloth accordingly, resonated in my head when I was elected shortly after it. The substantial deficit of around £60,000 to carry out our day-to-day business accounts, not the investments that have been propping us up was highlighted in spends attributable to lower income yields, rising costs and salaries.

We have been propping up our everyday running costs using investments and savings and every time we draw off this, we are losing shared dividend and if we continue to do this over the next few years there will be nothing left. The salaries of two managers was attributable for a large proportion of our staff costs, that contributed to our deficit and yet productivity in the form of registrations, transfer and membership was considerably down. Staff retention... we'd lost two, was troubling and because staff requested review of wage increases, the decision was taken to employ professional services to carry out a business diagnostic of our operations and interactions with the board of trustees, to identify our weaknesses and opportunities for efficiency and improvement. Purposeful budgets for each spend area were put in place and monitored closely with cost cutting exercises introduced where possible. A snapshot of the diagnostic report identified areas that needed improvement in our operation, that was absorbing many resource hours and ultimately cost. The findings highlighted the lack of standard operating procedures and performance targets and performance review. Flat staff structure with imbalance of management to staff ratios. Three slow license inhibiting case management systems. A hard to navigate non-user-friendly website that drove demand to telephoning the office. A poor telephone system, particularly poor and non-friendly judging and showing system with no strategic plan or clear lines of roles, responsibilities. Not only for the Chair but the managers and trustees making poor designation between Council and the operational side. There has been an issue for some time with the roles of Council and office have merged. The Council is a strategic arm and should not be interfering or becoming involved in work and the decisions from the shop floor. That is for our Company Secretary to implement as a result of strategic decisions by the board. There was an agreement by the majority to implement all the diagnostic recommendations but disagreement amongst the board came with difficult decisions to restructure, which would mean the loss of one manager. The Council was split with the majority voting for the reduction to one manager. The minority wanted to keep the structure the same with two managers and seek alternative income streams to support the managers positions and salaries as they stood.

The redundancy decision was aggravated by the fact that, before legal and human resources advice and guidance advice was completed and implemented, there was a leak of this confidential information from the board to the managers and the staff that was highly divisive. It complicated the situation and the stability of the office and caused conflict amongst the board of trustees. It was an extremely torrid and stressful time, that regrettably resulted in the block resignation of six trustees who did not support the collective decision, to restructure in this way and that is their prerogative.

These resignations took the board to below the required number of ten to function correctly and at this end Mrs Tracy Hook Kemysfawr and Mrs Ann Bigley, Llanarth were co-opted onto

Council to serve the remaining terms of the last two resigning trustees that took us under ten. A block resignation of knowledgeable and experience trustees comes as a severe blow to the Society and is regrettable. None of us wanted to lose staff or trustees but difficult decisions have had to be taken in this difficult situation that we find ourselves in and collectively majority believe that the path that we now tread is the right one for the Society.

The remaining ten trustees remaining here have worked well together as a team and have pulled together to support Gemma Bassett-Burr in the position of Company Secretary following the resignation of Meirion Davies. It is fair to say that we have been distracted from pushing on with the gusto that we would have liked. The Society has a reputation for getting bogged down with complaints relating to trustees and Judging and Showing and the last few months have been no exception. Firefighting complaints and dealing with civil litigation cases have kept us pretty busy. The clarity over legal contracts with the Welsh Pony and Cob Sales in conjunction with McCartneys and the annual Journal that we are tied into remain sketchy and are up for renegotiation. The latter at least, makes us on course to make considerable saving next year. However, on a positive note, our deficit has already been reduced by £21,503 but there is still a lot of work to do to bring this down to break-even or even to an acceptable loss, I'm talking about £500 or something around that region. But for some of us, an acceptable loss is not an acceptable loss, it has to be profit. The biggest issue we face which is extremely worrying is the fall in membership. We have discussed plans to tackle this when the new Council is formed by reviewing the reasons behind this and where necessary carrying out polls with existing members and past members. Early indications are that the retained membership are the hard-core nucleus of members focused heavily into showing but that people have not renewed their membership frustrated by the perceptions of corrupt judging, or the Society's failure to adequately address welfare issues, it's organisation, or lack of it, and failure to uphold education and promotional projects.

However, it is imperative that we get our housekeeping right first and the spending under control. Gemma has energetically responded to the challenges of Company Secretary with aplomb during a really difficult and stressful time. In collaboration with professional HR services, we worked to organise and agree slightly adjusted staff structure, a responsibility to improve their development and progression and tackle staff and skill retention. We have also managed to increase the staff salary to meet National Living wage which in some cases had been overlooked for some time, to the embarrassment of this Society. And although the budget has been tight, we have also employed one full time equivalent member of staff who has made a good start with judging and showing responsibilities. Registration policies and standard operating procedures have been re-written, so staff are expected to respond in a standard service across the board. Training for all staff is planned for the long-awaited conversion to the Xero accounting system in May and the migration of systems to cloud from the old server is in place which will increase the speed and effectiveness of registration etc on Grassroots, that will soon be able to launch stallion covering and birth notifications online... we hope then registrations. The old XIS non-supported management system will soon be defunct. The building of the new website will provide the Society with information and Society archive documents as well as show schedule uploads, take payments and basically be all singing and dancing, is currently under review and development. We have been working in collaboration with Cardiff University to design and build a bespoke package to do this for us that will involve the proof and expertise of some of our staff. In addition to this Cardiff Uni have undertaken to explore the facility and program of virtual riding, driving and showing experiences as part of an educational promotion project we are exploring with schools and colleges and the museum of Wales. I was hoping that today that Dr Catherine Teehan would be in the position to provide us with an update on that presentation but sadly she is not available. We have met with Ulrika Smalley as part of a project consultation between Museum Wales at St Fagans and other

hubs, to be able to provide the Welsh Pony and Cob Society Museum hub and promotional features for visitors and schools. We have also been in consultation with the Welsh Black Cattle Society who are interested in pursuing this as a joint venture with The Welsh Pony and Cob Society. Like most things a large-scale publicity, they need support to make a successful bid and subsequent launch. Meetings canvassing support for these museum and education projects together with the promotional of sales of the Welsh breeds abroad has taken place with the First Minister of Wales and the Senedd member Adam Price and most recently Steven Kinnock MP, have all pledged their assistance. We hope that we will be able to build on it to encourage new members and promote the breed.

If one was to look at the Welsh Pony and Cob Society from the outside, one might be forgiven to think that we are a show society. But of course, we are not. The majority of the questions and emphasis in the association meeting this morning and questions tendered later are levelled predominately on shows and winning medals. Judging and showing has become important and integral part of the breed Society to promote the breed but we must broaden our horizons to attract members, particularly youngsters. Social media, my god. Social media is a wonderful tool, but it can be equally destructive and as a member of any one of a number of equine organisations thinking of joining the Welsh Pony and Cob Society, the recent and regular scandals and rumour and misinformation published on Facebook and other social media would almost certainly ensure that "I'll give the Welsh Pony and Cob Society a wide berth." This type of Facebook and social media is killing us. And if there are any of you out there today, where the cap fits, I implore you to stop it. You are scaring people away. If you have got any queries or gripes with the Society, please, please contact, or make a complaint, or do something. Don't be judge and jury out there for all the world to see. I have to mention the medal review. There is a school of thought, and this was well received this morning's associations, that we should tear it all up and start again and go back to select, traditional, geographical placed shows starting at the top at the Royal Welsh and the gold medal and working down, that are allocated with a certain quantity of medals, or even scrap them completely. However, we are where we are. The change to affiliate medal status from numbers entered to numbers forward has so far identified the allocation previously set on the criteria of the numbers entered was false or inaccurate. We have another year to run of the pilot until the end of 2024, and we are seriously considering some kind of refund to the affiliation for bronze or silver, if the numbers are not forward and we will also undertake an urgent review of the Section B and Part-Bred numbers compared with those required, the numbers required that has been set. I told the associations this morning that we are waiting for documentation research back into that very thing, in view of some awaited research that's been request as well as some useful constructive ideas sent to us by a few of our members.

Contrary to popular belief the Welsh Pony and Cob Society is extremely keen to continue with the performance awards that was so successfully run until recently by Jo Filmer and Jane Weller. We have set up a committee that is due to meet next week to discuss how best to run and format the event for ratification with the new Council. We have also had some offers of assistance from members which will be followed up by the committee.

And I would like to finish by saying a few thank you's. The first must go to Skye Whittle, our Young Ambassador and her mentor Roger Davies, for stepping up to provide his knowledge and guidance to Skye. Skye rose above the difficulties, of the constant changes in mentor and the frustration this has brought her, to running some successful fundraising events for her chosen charities and the Young People's fund, she has raised an incredible amount of money and left a lasting legacy for the Society. To Gemma Bassett-Burr and the office staff, who in times of uncertainty and adversity have risen to the challenge of maintaining and delivering standards and service level agreements, during the busiest periods with reduced staffing

levels. To our outgoing President Mr Dewi Evans and incoming President Mrs Jocelyn Price for their patience for their support and advice, and to Mr Dilwyn Roberts, who has stood beside me always offering help, encouragement, and support and even the odd Welsh lesson. And to Mr Roland Mitchell, who I have worked with closely, our honorary vet, for his valuable professional contributions over many years and who never misses a meeting. And then finally to the trustees beside me for their work because they are volunteers, for their enduring help and support and I look forward to working with them and the new members elected today, to positively drive these improvements forward for the benefits of our members, the Welsh Breed and our Society. Diolch yn fawr. So, I am now going to pass you to Angela Kember who is the Chair of Members Services for agenda item number nine.

### **9.To receive the Society's 'Members Services Committee' report.**

Angela Kember - Good afternoon, everyone. I have been asked to present a brief report from the Member's Services Committee because I am now the current Chairman for this committee - I took up this post in November. This group is responsible for the stud book, the yearly Journal, the newsletters alongside with helping the Young Ambassador and the associations etc. I am sure you know all about it. It came to our notice from our new head of finance, who also took up the position in November, when I did, about the losses of the journal over the past few years. Many... I don't know if many of you have received it yet? It was posted out on Thursday, I haven't seen one, well I have seen one handed to me but, it is slightly smaller at 462 pages as opposed to the normal 600 it's been. But we have brought it within budget, I think it's only lost £200 this year rather than £8000. So, I will get a good mark from our... erm... thing. But the staff in the office have been fantastic and helping locate some extra finance coming in from coming in to pushing for some late adverts etc. to come in. The spring newsletter which came out separately this year, yes, I know there has been a few complaints about the postage being different but we had to get the AGM information out and we knew that the journal was going to be a little late this year in coming forward this year. So, it came out separately but as you have been explained to by two people today, the Journal posting is likely to be coming out directly from the printers next year, which will come out separately from the newsletters anyway. But this is something that we are going to be discussing in Council in the coming year. We have a new ambassador coming on board today, we say goodbye as Skye as mentioned by our chairman etc, so I won't reiterate to that. And this committee also sees the... well myself, I have been the international Chairman for a couple of years alongside an association Chairman, so I meet with the international members as well. We have a gathering now at the Royal Welsh Showground, on the Monday, the first day of the show, for any people are invited to come and meet with us. We have our proper international meetings by Zoom, which includes and is able to incorporate, far more people abroad, to attend these meetings and we get through a lot of things in these meetings. If anyone has any questions for me, I am happy to hear them, or if you would rather send them through to me, thank you but I might not be Chairman of Member's Services anymore when we get the new Chairman. I'll leave you there. Thank you very much.

EG - Well thank you Angela. Any questions for Angela? No? So that leaves me to agenda item number ten.

**10. To propose and consider two special resolutions as amendments to the existing Articles of Association as adopted 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Each resolution will be voted on individually by a show of hands and a 75% majority of those present in person or by proxy will be required for each resolution. Those persons carrying proxy votes will be given a card on arrival which will note the number of proxies registered. By showing the card as part of the show of hands those votes will be counted. The wording of these proposed special resolutions was circulated in the 2024 Spring Newsletter.**

EG - So, I am now going to introduce Marie Phillipe from Geldards who will go through the Special resolutions with you.

Marie Phillipe - So the first of the proposed special resolutions is to add a new provision to article 11 that the members agree that if they are subject to any disciplinary sanction by the Society, not limited to their membership, the Society may publish their name, offence and sanction. So, this provision if adopted today will not apply retrospectively, so will only be for future disciplinary sanctions. I understand speaking to Ed that this was something that the members asked for and it would act as a deterrent and other Societies do this, which is why it's been proposed today. The second proposed amendment is to article 14 (iii) it will be to add additional wording to this existing wording, to say that when signing, so this is when... sorry... is when members want to request a general meeting to be called, when they make that request, they have to provide authentication by way of their Society membership number and current postcode. So, this is just to help the staff in the Society to identify members, so it's more of an administrative provision rather than amending your rights as members in any way.

EG - Thank you Marie. I propose that first resolution to the members here and you will take a vote to whether you agree to that or not. It will be a show of hands and we need to find 75% of the vote. So, can I have a vote on that first resolution if you are in agreement with that?

[Show of hands]

EG - Ok that is unanimous. Ok, thank you, so that resolution will be passed.

EG - And then a proposal to vote on the second resolution the administrative one, for the 5% of members, names and addresses and postcodes for calling a general meeting. Can I have a vote on that please? Those in agreement.

[Show of hands]

EG - Ok so that is passed. So, I'm now going to turn to agenda item number eleven.

**11. The election of trustee. Nominated candidates from the floor will be invited to address the meeting briefly in alphabetical order. A ballot will be held from members present including proxy votes. The successful candidates in the election shall be those who attained respectively the greatest number of votes cast, the next greatest numbers and so on in descending order until the number of vacancies has been filled.**

EG - I invite those that are nominated in item five previously to be given the opportunity to address the meeting for no longer than two minutes please. So, I am first going to call Mrs Ann Bigley.

AB - Good afternoon, sorry I hate doing this. Some years ago, I was on Council and during that time I did Chair it, and I was Chairman of Judging and Showing for a bit and I think as a Council we were in times that were less troubled, and we were quite successful in what we did. Last November I was co-opted on to Council, basically to stop the Society from becoming

defunct because we got below the numbers. So, for the last five months I do hope I have been contributing positively to Council. I have been mainly assisting in finance and the HR in the office. I think, I'm not interested in playground politics I think I need to say that. We really need to be thinking and I think it's been said a lot this morning and this afternoon, that we have got to be thinking about strategic planning because we have got to have a Society for the future. I think that is really important and I think we are in the same boat as other breed societies; I don't think we are on our own with this, but we are all fighting in an economic climate which isn't particularly helpful. We do have, I think, and I'm sure that you will agree, that we have the greatest pony society in the world, but we really have got a duty of care to make sure that it is going to last and that we are going to be there for our future generations. I think it's very important so I would just like to think that I could work for the Society and the membership.

EG - Thank you Ann.

EG – I need to remind you and that's why, in fact I am going to get her to tell you...

Marie Phillipe - The Articles provide that you can vote for any number of candidates. You can cast one vote, or you can cast up to five votes for when you are voting for who you want to elect. And obviously the more votes, the person with the most votes will have the longest terms. So, you can cast up to five votes, you don't have to cast just one vote.

EG - Thank you Marie for clarifying that. I am now going to turn to Mr John Kirk.

JK - Prynawn da ladies and gentlemen. I have decided to stand for Council yet again. I have served on Council with thirty-three members of Council, I have served on Council with fifteen members of Council. What I bring to the table is passion for our breed Society. I am extremely concerned for the future of our Society. I have seen the best times, and these are not the best times, I can assure you. And that's why I come to you, and I am quite happy to put my hat in the ring to stand for another elected term, whatever that time is will be up to you. But I will keep it short and sweet and that's what I am doing here this afternoon. Thank you.

EG - Thank you John. Can I now ask Mr Phillip Lewis to say a few words please?

PL - Prynawn da, good afternoon, everybody. I am Phillip Lewis and I'm from the Rhydyfelin stud. We have been breeding ponies since 1937, and I'm very lucky to be fourth generation of active breeders. Now what I bring is a freshness which I hope the Council will embody. We need new ideas and I think that I have something to offer. I am very lucky that the ponies have given me a wonderful life: a lot of heartache but a lot of friends around the world. So, I would like to ask everyone, please vote for me. Thank you.

EG - Thank you Phillip. Can I now ask Peter Rutherford please to come and say a few words?

PR - Members and Mr Chairman Thank you. I am really glad that I put a tie on today actually as I wasn't quite expecting this, this morning. The Society is very dear to me and my good wife that is not able to be here. I have been involved in showing for over thirty years, we are predominately cob people. Riding, driving, and showing in hand. We take a great interest in all sections when we see them in the ring. The Society is a great umbrella for all of us, it is our family, our horse family and it is something that we always treasure. I am very proud to wear a Welsh Pony and Cob badge or even my simple tie. And it would be a great honour for me to serve the Society as part of this group of wonderful people actually. We are facing difficult times, I have certain expertise in different things, and probably I could bring something very positive to the Society. So, I would be grateful if you did vote. Thank you.

EG - Thank you Peter. Thank you. And last but by no means least, Mr Geraint Thomas please.

GT - Mr President, Mr Chairman, members of Council, ladies and gentlemen. I too like other candidates have served the Society on Council when it was thirty-three. Having joined the Society as a junior member in 1966, I have been here quite a long time having bred all five ponies within the stud book. Judged all over the world, but my main passion is the breed. I think at time we lose focus on the actual breed and concentrate far too much on winning rosettes. Everybody seems to go to the show today, or rather this is the perception that I have, expecting to win firsts and championships. There was a time that we used to go to shows just for the fun of it. And I would like to bring that fun back to our Society. I would be very proud if you supported me today. Thank you.

EG - Thank you Geraint. So, you will now find that there is going to be some ballot papers handed out amongst you all, so if you can complete those please and pencils as well please? Please put a cross against the cross for the individual that you are voting for, and I'll repeat what Marie said, is that you can vote up to five. And if carrying proxy votes, please complete the box on the form, on the ballot form.

[Ballot papers handed out and collected]

GBB - Has anyone still got a form with them, or have they all been collected?

EG - Ladies and gentlemen, I think that all the ballots have been collected, if there are any more still out there can you please put your hand up and we'll come and collect them. They are going to get counted now, so with your permission now I shall continue then to agenda item number twelve.

## **12. To receive recommendations from Council for the Honorary Life Vice-President Award.**

So, it gives me great pleasure to share the nominations for the two individuals who have been awarded honorary Life Vice President's as a gift of Council. So, I would also like to invite President Mr Dewi Evans to present the certificates. So, ladies and gentlemen for the first award it gives me great pleasure to present to the annual general meeting the appointment of Mrs Betty French of the Forlan Stud as an Honorary Life-Vice-President. Mrs Elizabeth French, more affectionately known as Betty joined the Welsh Pony and Cob Society in 1968, when she and her late husband Brian bought the Welsh Mountain pony Fair Waterfall at the Fayre Oaks sale. For the fifty-three years that have followed Betty has tirelessly served our Society demonstrating major commitment to the Welsh breeds, not only as a prolific breeder of Welsh Mountain ponies but as a member, judge and trustee and the first Society President to be elected by the membership in 2015. There are many examples of Betty's contributions over this lengthy period but some highlights specifically evident is this criterion for this nomination, I am going to summarise for you. Betty was extremely active during her Presidency, travelling the length and breadth of the UK and abroad as far away as Australia, where she represented the Society in an ambassadorial role, judging at major shows and giving presentations on the Welsh breeds and the Society. Betty is held in the highest esteem by her peers and members of the Society, fuelled by her enduring energy and commitments and achievements. In 2018 at the age of eighty-one years old she was selected to judge the Welsh Mountain ponies at the Royal Welsh show, a feat and challenge that has tested younger and fitter candidates that have had the honour bestowed upon them. Betty must sit amongst the first few octogenarians, if at all there are any to have judged this prestigious event which is televised all around the world. This appointment filled her with great pride, but she has judged countless shows and attended many association events as guest of honour to give talks on the Forlan Stud, breeding and showing to reinforce breed requirements and the aims

of the Society. In 1998 and 2001, Betty embarked upon a survey to record numbers of mountain ponies living out in herds on the hills of Wales. As a result of this huge task and her findings, the Welsh mountain pony was placed on the at-risk register category three 'vulnerable' with the Rare Breed Survival Trust. This led to additional funding to being allocated to maintain critical numbers within the herds that are within the essence of the foundations of the Welsh breeds and the Society's studbook which has brought about changes and improvements that have undoubtedly helped to preserve and secure important gene pools for the breed and for the Welsh Pony and Cob Society. Betty is renowned for her successes in the showring but more importantly the successes of other people that have bought her stock and gone on to show and breed, that should be noted. Betty has continued to follow the Forlan bloodlines established together with her late husband with success and Forlan ponies have been exported all over the world including USA and Australia but have also been a major factor in establishing Welsh mountain studs and strong links to the breed particularly across Europe and Scandinavia. Betty's foals have often commanded the highest prices and accolades at the Society's sales winning much praise and adoration. Betty has always supported animal welfare and education of Society members to ensure that the breed does not suffer at our hands. She has never forgotten the sacrifices made by our ponies and cobs in two world wars and is a great supporter in the annual remembrance service in London for animals that lost their lives in combat. She is one of only a few Presidents that have openly represented the Society together with other charities and animal welfare organisations to lay remembrance wreaths at the dedicated cenotaph in London in honour of animals that have been post in battle. This has won many hearts and has also enhanced the reputation of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society and recognition amongst international animal welfare organisations. On one occasion, she was able to meet Prince Harry and speak to him about our Welsh Breeds reinforcing his grandmother's affection for our Society as patron. Betty's ambassadorial role has brought distinction for the Welsh Pony and Cob Society setting it above others and thereby encouraging participation from young people and new members. The identity and further recognition of the Welsh Mountain Pony, its importance and place in history and tradition is reinforced further by Betty's evidence to raise its profile. By facilitating the gift of Forlan mountain pony called Trooper Emrys Forlan Jones as a regimental mascot to the First Queen's Dragoon Guards of the Welsh Cavalry, Betty has raised the profile of our Welsh breeds because this pony provides us with a spotlight for observers and commentators when attending ceremonial functions, highlighting the history and versatility of the Welsh breeds. And thereby increasing their popularity. I would respectfully ask you to consider therefore, the members that can boast the achievements of Elizabeth 'Betty' French, who are borne out of an interest and hobby, that so aptly fit the criteria required to be eligible for Honorary Vice President. So, it gives me great pleasure to ask Dewi to present the award.

EF - This is very emotional. When I received this thin letter envelope and it was left on my desk, I left it here for the day and this was about a fortnight ago and in the evening, I opened it up and it said that I was going to be offered honorary life membership and there was a bit of a tear and there is a bit of a tear now. I never expected it, but I love having it. I never said a word to my family, to my friends or anything for a week while I processed it because it needed processing. And during that week it took me through the journey of where it started. And we didn't like cows on our farm, Brian and I, we didn't have sheep at the time, but we had hundreds of chickens and turkeys. We did first of all think that our children would be interested in riding and they were taught to ride, but they had no interest and nor do my grandchildren. So, we suddenly thought, first of all we went to Bengad and bought two colt foals and they ended up as lead rein ponies, my daughter rode one which is called Bengad Cloudberry. Then I went to Fayre Oaks and when my husband got the sale programme, I thought where is this going? We bought Fayre Waterfall for £78. Her line is still at home all of those years and we only

bought foals for the first three years. In 1969 we bought Bowdler Belladonna and her line is still there, there will be three left of the old girls of the Honey line, and the Bowdler Bella line, the B line. It is a journey but what a wonderful journey because I feel that I have been a member of a family. I love showing but I can remember that we used to go to show, I would do the showing and Brian would set up a gazebo and put a large urn on. We would have twenty cups, and everybody would come back to us after the show and we would all chat about what we had done, what we had enjoyed and would sit and have a cup of tea. And that is what we are missing now, all the Association shows but I think that, what you think about through this process, Northleach was possibly the first show that I have shown at. I was out fourth, this was my first pony. And they said gosh, you were fourth and in good company. I said, am I? They said Yes, well there is Bengad Welsh Poppy in first place, there is a Gredington pony second, and Lady Rosamund Greeves is third, and you are fourth. So, I thought that I must be doing the right thing! So, along that journey and Northleach does come to me as being important, that one pony that I have sold when he was nine years old was Supreme Champion at Northleach. He was Champion A; he was seventh in the driving marathon round the hills of Northleach and he was third in the open ridden. That is what part of it is and actually this may be a little bit weird, but he was cremated. The person that had owned him for thirty-two years, we went to her funeral, he was in her coffin. I think the most important is that I wanted to breed ponies that had the temperament for children to ride. When I went to Northleach in 2022, which I didn't realise that it would be the last one, but I hope it will be able to start again. There was a little pony there called Forlan Honey Capalano and two little children, one takes it into the lead rein, one show it in hand. You could hear them chatting, I have got this rosette got this cup, this is lovely. And then they went into the competition for the one that the judge would most like to take home and he won. But just watching these children, every interaction, this is what we want. They had a Welsh pony and I hope that as they grow up that they become members and that they follow the pleasure that I have had with the Welsh breeds and thank you.

EG - Thank you Betty Elizabeth French. So, for the second award, it gives me equally the amount of pleasure to present to the annual general meeting, the appointment of Mrs Pat Lewis of the Penyffynnon Stud as Honorary Life Member. So can I ask Tracy Hook please to come up and address the meeting. Thank you.

TH - What can I say, Pat? Pat the bank, Pat Glanusk and Pat the hat. I am sure there is more, but I haven't heard the others, Pat! Pat Lewis has been a member of The Welsh Pony and Cob Society since 1974 breeding Welsh Part-Breds along with other ponies under the prefix Penyffynnon, which have been successful both home and abroad and at major championships. She has been instrumental in running Glanusk show was forty years and when she retired in 2022, I believe she was only the second ever secretary of that show which started in 1958. So, I think that was quite a long time that they glued her to the seat. In 2007 she was awarded an honorary life membership from the Welsh Pony and Cob Society for her services to Glanusk, and I'm sure that she is honoured today to be receiving honorary life member. Well done Pat, I would like to call you down.

Pat Lewis - I haven't prepared anything as I hadn't realised that I ought to say a few words, but I am so honoured to be here today. I am still a little bit... all this talk about Glanusk but I'm still a little bit weepy. It did take a lot of years of my life; I must say they were good years. I have probably fallen out with a few of you over the years by late entries or trying to put another pony in but deep down I enjoyed every minute of it. Considering I was approached by the late Mr Gwyn Price would I help out for Glanusk from the Chair as the secretary was thinking of packing up and would I help out, but only for a short while. I didn't think that forty years would be a short while. I am standing here today and from the bottom of my heart, I am so highly

honoured to achieve this award and I would like to thank everybody concerned. I would just like to say one thing. I hope my successor and wish her the very, very best. She has worked with me, she has passed my test, so I feel quite certain that she will be, but I will always be there for her. Thank you all very, very much indeed.

EG - So that brings me on to agenda item number thirteen.

### **13. The Awarding of the Brodrick Memorial Trophy.**

EG - The Miss Brodrick Trophy, the highest honour the Society can bestow, is awarded by Council to an individual or animal in recognition for distinguished service to the Society or breed. This year there were many deserving nominations both human and equine, However, one emphatic nomination stood out to receive it this time. The Brodrick award this year is awarded to a stallion of the highest calibre. It is all too easy to praise a pony or cob based on its show record however glowing, but very rarely do they go on to produce generations of ponies, each with such a strong record, not only in the show ring but as performance animals and successful sires or dams.

Purchased as a yearling colt by Mr and Mrs Watkins of the Radmont stud, who soon entrusted him into the capable hands of Colin Tibbey, where he remained resident for the rest of his life being gifted to Colin as a commemoration of thanks for his exemplary service provided. He won the Royal Welsh as a yearling, a two-year-old and a three-year-old, was champion at two International Welsh shows and reserve at the centenary show. Qualified for HOYS in hand twice among many, many more accolades. In line with the purpose of the award recognising outstanding contribution to the breed, this stallion has also indelibly left his mark on the Section A breed winning the Welsh Pony and Cob Society on numerous occasions. The Royal Highland Show sire ratings award three times and sired a HOYS in hand two-time qualifier and Hoys overall pony champion in Pinewell Bucks Fizz. Has won the HOYS Section A performance sire ratings award for the last nine years including in 2023, eight years after his death, showing how influential he has been as a sire of performance animals. He also has progeny across the world including Australia, America and across Europe. His progeny have shown time and time again how versatile they are from showring to performance and how equally important, proving to capable children's ponies. Therefore, a worthy winner for his outstanding contribution to the breed but besides that also Colin Tibbey was also the recipient of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society Lifetime achievement award for 2023 that was awarded at the recent Society's events evening. The award for 2023 went to Colin who has dedicated their life to not only exhibiting Welsh ponies but breeding and judging Welsh ponies. Colin's involvement with the Welsh Breeds spans some six decades and if that does not define lifetime, then I don't know what does. So, the award is to be given to Blackhill Picalo. So, I would ask his daughter to come down, Jess to collect the award as Colin is not here... he is in Australia, and to say a few words.

Jess Salt - Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, I will keep this short as I am losing my voice. Unfortunately, Colin and my mum cannot be here today as they are away judging in Belgium, but I feel completely honoured to be collecting this award on their behalf. I know Colin especially is unbelievably proud and absolutely over the moon that Picalo has won this award and to think that all these years on after his death that he is still an absolute superstar. Thank you very much.

#### **14. Presentation from Dr Catherine Teehan – Cardiff University.**

EG - So, agenda item number fourteen. as I said earlier, I was hoping to present Dr Catherine Teehan from Cardiff University. We hoped she would be here to give some of the details on the projects we are looking at but that will have to remain to be put out to the membership in some sort of form of update as to where we are with that. So that will take me on to agenda item number fifteen.

#### **15. A vote of thanks to the retiring President: Mr Dewi Evans.**

EG - And we turn now to Dewi Evans for his time as President and thanks also to Eirian for her continued support throughout Dewi's term as Presidency and to Meriel for all her assistance for the arrangement with the President's dinner. So, I would just like to say before I hand over to Dilwyn to do his part, I would just like to say that it has been a pleasure working with Mr Dewi Evans. I actually dropped Dewi in it at his President's awards night, because unknown to me, Dewi has almost sort of converted me into some sort of drug dealer around the Council meeting table because as you can see from our hard boiled sweets there, every time I open one I get this from Dewi and then the other Council members have started doing it the same, so I am like a dealer really going round the table. I said this at Dewi's President's do, and I found out later that he got a severe rollicking because he is a diabetic. So, I apologise for feeding him and addicting him. But it has been a pleasure working with him, he has always been there for support, he has his quiet word with me, he has his quiet word in the meetings also. I know he has been to most meetings, he has been around on association talks, he run a very, very successful stud visit. Been to Australia just recently and it's been a pleasure working with him, I know he is a man of few words, and he probably hates me standing here now, so I am going to have to hand over to Dilwyn, to say a few words. Thank you.

Dilwyn Roberts - Right well, it gives me pleasure of course to say a few words of thanks to Dewi here today, there we are. Especially as I had the privilege of nominating him for being the President of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society. Dewi was, most of you will probably know him as Dewi Hilin. His proper name is Dewi Lloyd Evans if you didn't know, but I will always know him as Dewi Cwrt. That is what he is known as locally, affectionately as well. My first recollections of Dewi are as a young lad, watching Dewi Cwrt competing in races as we had then. Llanerfel was a big one, there were others around too. Dewi was a well-known jockey in the area at the time. The only thing I can say about him, and you can work out what you like from this, he didn't seem to like losing. He was quite determined. And I think that was one reason that they chose Section B's at the Hilin. He thought that of the four sections, they were the quickest. But there we are Dewi as a youngster was made a member, a life member I'm sure by his father at the age of sixteen. They had a couple of Section B's at Cwrt Y Llyn, his father John Evans and Mrs Evans, they were very well known in the area. But his dad didn't register, didn't pay to register then but Dewi decided to do that, and he was made a life member. So, in the initial years it was him that built the Hilin Stud. Then he was very, very lucky in my opinion to marry Eirian who is also from the well-known Betws Yn Rhos family, who were very keen on horses. I remember Trefor and Mrs Williams Gwyndechau, they were also part of these gymkhana's and what we had in the area at the time and together Dewi and Eirian and their four children eventually, it's been very much a family affair at Cwrt Y Llyn. They have had a very, very successful career breeding Section B's. And for those of you that were at the Hilin Stud for the open day, it was a privilege to be there. And the one thing that really struck me was the consistency of breeding there. The consistency of all the ponies that we saw there. There is a very, very good word in Welsh which describes Dewi, and his family and that is angerdd, mae nhw'n angerddol, that word means passion. But I think it sounds

good in Welsh as well, the angerdd bit. They have certainly put their passion into the Welsh Pony and Cob in particular in breeding Section Bs, although there have been other sections be known to land in Cwrt Y Llyn at the time. One of them happened to be a Trofarth one! But there we are, so in the last period, what I have definitely seen as expected from Dewi as President was always his emphasis on breeding. And breeding the correct type and looking after the breeders. He has made that pretty clear throughout his time as President. Dewi mae rhaid i mi ddiolch o galon i ti fel Llywydd am y gwaith wyt ti di neud. Ti di bod yn arbennig ag diolch i Eirian hefyd am y croeso 'da ni di gael a'r plant yn Cwrt Y Llyn dros y flwyddyn diwethaf. I was just thanking Dewi now, and Eirian now, and his family for the very warm welcome that they have given us at Cwrt Y Llyn. He has certainly in my opinion shown what a President, in my opinion, should look like. He has been a credit to himself, his family and the Hilin Stud. So, in that case, can I ask you all to join with me, and give Dewi, Eirian and the family a very warm round of applause as appreciation. Diolch yn fawr Dewi.

Edwin Prosser - Ladies and gentlemen, I have been given the honour of seconding the vote of thanks proposed by Dilwyn for our outgoing President Mr Dewi Evans of the Hilin Stud. I go back with Dewi quite a long time. The first time I ever met him in the show ring was in the United Counties in Carmarthen. I was showing two Section B colts at the time one three-year-old and one two-year-old, two different classes. We had a monsoon of weather like we have got at the moment. I was running in my wellies, and I tried to pull a fast one on him and he made me run again. And when I run again, I pulled my hamstring! My association with Dewi and his family over the years, he is a gentleman, and I would just like to thank him from the bottom of my heart.

Dewi Evans - I have got a pretty big head now you know after all that! It's kind of you, it's tremendous. I am standing here as President, I am better at it this year than I was last year. Slightly, slightly, not much. As I have said thank you very much for those kind words. It has been a busy year, and I would like to thank everyone, apart from this lot you know, for the support they have given me. The open day and the dinner, they made over £4000 for the charities, my charities, this is quite hard as it's very emotional really. Hang on I'm getting these mixed up! It has been a pleasure meeting a lot of people going around this year, I have met a lot of people and made a lot more good friends. Skye over here has been working really hard and I would like to congratulate you on what you did, and I wish you all the best for the future. Before I get rid of this, somebody asked me - Eirian must have been polishing that this morning, and I said no I haven't had it out of the box much! But it has been a privilege to wear it today and it's been a privilege to have it but before I give it to Jocelyn here, I am sure we would all like to wish Dennis Price last year's President well, as he is not very well and I'm sure we could all send him our best wishes and hope for a quick recovery. So now I would like to call Jocelyn forward.

EG - So on behalf of Council, agenda item sixteen.

## **16. To appoint on the recommendation of Council Mrs Jocelyn Price as WPCS President for 2024/2025.**

DE - Here we go. I wish you the very best with it ok.

Jocelyn Price - Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you Dewi. The Society has been a major part of my life, and it is such an honour to be President and I am so looking forward to meeting as many people as I can over the next twelve months. I would like to say, and we must not forget that this Society is a breed Society first. Our showing is dare I say it, an expensive hobby. But to be able to show the world what our wonderful equines can do so well

in all spheres. The 2025 AGM will be held at the Holiday Inn in Newport just off the M4 Junction 24. It will be on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April, followed by, in the evening the President's dinner ball. Full details will be following. I will next week, hope to go and see Dennis and I am sure that I will send him all your love and I know that he is still interested. Wishing you all a happy, healthy, successful, and peaceful year ahead. Thank you. I am now going to present Dewi with his past President's badge. He deserves it.

EG - Moving on to agenda item number seventeen.

### **17. To thank the outgoing WPCS young Ambassador and award the Derwen harp to welcome the Young Ambassador for 2024-2025.**

EG - We would like to thank Skye Whittle the Young Ambassador for the last year. I mentioned already in my speech and her mentor is Mr Roger Davies from the Hywi Stud. Skye has been an asset to the Society through what has been difficult circumstances with changes in Council, leading to various different mentors. Skye has encouraged and developed the junior members interested in the breed and also in the young handler classes, through her support and also class sponsorships. One of the moments that cemented this was at the recent awards evening, where Ella Edwards a young WPCS member, wanted to make sure that she had a photograph with Skye and the award that she had won and thanked Skye for supporting her throughout the year. And I think about says it all. Skye has also developed a newsletter promoting all the good work of the young members which has been a great addition. Towards the end of this year was the development of the Unsung Hero award which she devised which I am pleased to confirm that following a request from Skye, that this will be carried on for years to come. So, she leaves her Young Ambassador legacy. Skye has raised a phenomenal, a fantastic amount of money for her chosen charity MacMillan and also the Young People's fund. But I will let Skye tell you more about this. So, Skye a heartfelt thanks from me and the Council and from everyone here and from all our young members. I would like to ask you to come up and say a few words. Thank you.

Skye Whittle - Good afternoon, I hope you can all hear me. I would like to thank by thanking you the members for your support throughout my year as young ambassador. Any of you have come forward with kind donations and support towards my many initiatives throughout the year and without you my fundraising wouldn't have been possible. I am now going to give you a quick breakdown of the fundraising I have completed this year, As many of you will know my chosen charity of the year was MacMillan cancer support, a charity very close to my heart and which I chose in honour of my nan Diane Merrick of the Brynithon stud, who died of cancer many years ago and is huge part of the reason why I am where I am today. During the official Welsh Pony and Cob Society sales during October 2023 I ran my initiative of the 5% club, to raise money for my chosen charity of the year and the Welsh Pony and Cob Society Young People's fund. The initiative saw vendors put forward their animals for 5% of their sale price to be donated to my charities. The total money donated through this was £733 which is to be split between the two causes. Over Christmas, I also raised money for my charity of the year. This fundraising initiative raised £288. On February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, I hosted my charity ball, that I have organised throughout my year as Young Ambassador through the Gwent Area association. The ball was to raise money to be split between MacMillan, Ty Hafan Children's Hospice and The Welsh Pony and Cob Society's Young People's fund. The dinner consisted of a dinner, ball and raffle which alongside the tickets sold, contributed to the total amount raised. The ball raised a total of £2607 after expenses were deducted and this resulted in £869 for each of the three causes. During my year I also held raffles at a couple of shows including the Gwent Area Association summer show and The Welsh Pony and Cob Society

Performance show and raised a total of £265 to be split between MacMillan and the Young People's fund. Towards the year I have also received some kind donations from members towards my charity with a total of £473 being donated all together. There was also a Just Giving page set up for MacMillan which raised a total of £125. Whilst fundraising has been a key point throughout my year, I have also done so much more. I have released several newsletters highlighting all the achievement of all the Young People that I have been fortunate to meet and get to know. As a way of showing that the successes of our Young Members are recognised and commended.

I have represented the Welsh Pony and Cob Society at many key events such as the international meeting at the Royal Welsh showground, the Young Judges Competition, The Welsh Pony and Cob Society Performance show where I was involved in offering the opportunity for young members to come forward and gain experience in various aspects of the show. I put a small team together who attended the show and stewarding in the dressage ring before helping the helping the course builder set up for the next day. I also stewarded the ridden ring myself on both days and presented awards.

I have given talks at associations regarding my year and my experience as Young Ambassador, spending time at Brecon and Borders Association and Gwent, where I gave a talk on my background and year as Young Ambassador. I also have a couple more talks lined up for the coming months at associations.

I recently attended the Welsh Pony and Cob Society's Awards evening where I presented an award that I had organised throughout my year, the recognition award, to a young member of a Welsh Pony and Cob Society association to commend them on their efforts for their association throughout the year. This year saw a few associations nominate their young unsung heroes for this award and the award is something that will carry on in my name. Hopefully the awards will continue with great success and nominations will increase as the years go on.

I have also shown my support to events such as the President's open day at Hilin Stud and the President's dinner. I must say that it has been a great pleasure working alongside Dewi as the President this year and thank him for his support. During my year I have also been fortunate enough to begin a journey and gain some experience in judging. As a regular competitor in the showring myself, it has been a great opportunity for me to experience the judging side of shows as well, something that I am hoping to continue to gain experience in. It has also been a pleasure to be invited into the ring at many shows to present our young competitors with their awards and to present various section championships.

It is lovely to see the impact that I have had on some of our young members, and it has been a pleasure to be involved with them. An example of this would be at the awards evening when handler and rider of the year Ella Edwards, asked me for a photograph with her as a thank you for all the help and support I have provided her over the course of the year. And I can honestly say that it has been a pleasure to watch many these young people compete so enthusiastically through this year and I always look forward to seeing and hearing the success of the young people, as we the young people are of course the future of this Society.

I am also a keen member of both of my local associations, Gwent and Brecon and Borders, where, as I have previously stated, I have given talks and supported with things. I am heavily involved with the promotion and the involvement of the young members of Gwent Association, taking over with the social media aspects of the Association and I am currently putting together a team for the Young Judges competition this year. I have also been involved with the success of my own brother this year, who with my support went on to win the young handler's

championship at the National Show, as well as all the time and effort that I continually put in leading to my own success in the showing this year.

Before handing over to Charlotte, I would like to end on a positive note by sharing with you all that I have raised a total of £3622 to be split between Macmillan and The Welsh Pony and Cob Society Young People's Fund. This results in £1812 for each charity. The money raised for MacMillan will be donated straight to the charity and part of the money raised for the young people will be donated to the Welsh Pony and Cob Society Performance show, to sponsor a young achiever of the show across all disciplines, over the course of the weekend with the rest being donated into the Young People's account.

None of this would have been possible without the support of members and most importantly the support of my family. Especially my mother who has been the best support to me throughout the year and with who I definitely could not have done this without. I would also like to thank Roger for his help and support and for finishing my year with me as my mentor and giving me a more positive experience to end my year with. And Tanya for being my mentor for a short period of time and her continued support throughout the year. After being the young achiever for the Welsh Pony and Cob Society for 2022/23 and the Young Ambassador for the Society for 2023/24, I am extremely grateful for all of the recognition and praise I have received and the opportunities that I have been presented with.

I am sure the 2024 show season will be full of new opportunities for myself, and I would like to wish Charlotte all the best with her role for this year. Before finishing, and unfortunately, I don't think that Roger is present today, however I have got a little something for both Roger and Tanya to show my gratitude. So, I would still like to ask Tanya to see if she could come forward to receive something. Thank you.

[Skye Whittle presents thank you gift to Tanya Baldwin]

EG - Thank you Skye, well done and thank you to Roger and Tanya. Dewi has a little gift, a traditional gift and memento for your role, to take from him if you would like to step up. So, I now have the great pleasure in introducing Charlotte Harris, who will take up the office of Young Ambassador for 2024/25. Unfortunately, Charlotte had a prior commitment before accepting the position of Young Ambassador with the Society so isn't able to be with us today. So, I am going to ask Charlotte's mentor Janice Parry to collect the Young Ambassador harp on her behalf, which is kindly donated by Mr and Mrs Lloyd of the Derwen Stud. So, Janice thank you.

Janice Parry - Charlotte your new Young Ambassador for 2024 has sent us a video which we will now play, and we hope that you will have the opportunity sometime to meet her.

Charlotte Harris (video) - Hi, my name is Charlotte Harris and I have been elected as the Welsh Pony and Cob Society's Young Ambassador for the 2024/2025 session. I am thrilled and excited for this opportunity. I can only pass on my apologies for not being able to be here tonight. I hope you can all understand that we are foaling and unfortunately with being so far away it is a bit impossible for me to get down at the moment. I wish everybody a safe and happy and promising foaling and wish you all the best for your young spring stock. A bit about myself, I am twenty-one years old, and I live in a farmhouse in Strathaven in Scotland. As you can probably hear from the rain off the roof, it is not a typical sunny Scotland day, it is very, very rainy and is very miserable just now. So please everybody keep safe and remember to keep chatting to each other because we are all experiencing the same horrible weather, so we are here for each other and just keep chatting. So, I am twenty-one and I live in sunny Scotland, I work as a small animal nurse, and I play rugby in my spare time for my local rugby football club as scrum half. I run our stud with my dad and my grandfather breeding A's, C's

and D's. I will go just now but thank you all for your messages of support and I cannot wait to meet you all. So goodbye now from me and Nap.

EG - Jocelyn has asked me to carry on with this, so we are going to carry on with agenda item number eighteen.

#### **18. To receive a report on the President Elect for 2024-2025.**

EG - You will have noticed in the spring newsletter that there was sadly another election nomination form, there hasn't been an appointment of a President-elect because there were no nominations. So, you will notice in the Spring newsletter that was a new election nomination form. This is also available on the downloads page on the Society website. The Society was particularly saddened not to receive any nominations for President Elect for 2024/2025 and we have therefore included a nomination form again in the newsletter as our Articles do not allow us nominate off the floor the same way as we do with trustees. I would ask you all to consider any worthy individuals, the nomination must be submitted to the office by 12 noon on the May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. A voting paper will then be available in the autumn newsletter for all members to cast their vote. We look forward to announcing the President elect for 2024/25 later this year. Thank you.

So that now brings me on to the report of the election of trustees.

#### **19. To announce the result of the election from the floor of one candidate to serve as a trustee for the period 2024-2027, one candidate to serve as a trustee for the period 2024-2026 and three candidates to serve as trustees for the period 2024-2025.**

EG - So, I will invite Callum Ryan from Azets, our scrutineers to announce the results of the election from the floor of one candidate to serve for the period 2024-2027, one candidate to serve as a trustee for the period 2024-2026 and three candidates to serve as trustees for the period 2024-2025. Callum

Callum Ryan - Thank you very much. The candidate elected to serve as trustee for the period 2024-2027 is Mrs Ann Bigley. The candidate to serve as trustee for the period 2024-2026 is Mr John Kirk. And the trustees to serve for the period 2024-2025 is Mr Phillip Lewis, Mr Peter Rutherford and Mr G. Thomas.

EG - Thank you Callum, please may I ask all the new trustees and all the serving trustees to gather in the normal fashion for a brief meeting following the AGM, to collect relevant paperwork etc I will now follow on to Agenda item number twenty.

#### **20. Any other business.**

EG - Items for any other business were requested to be sent to the Welsh Pony and Cob Society office at Bronaeron by the 29<sup>th</sup> of March. The following questions were received by the deadline. The first one comes from Mr Nigel Burton. And the question reads.

*"When I was the Vice Chair of Council in 2012, the following policy was approved and implemented.*

*1. A summary of Council discussions to be posted on the Society website the morning after the Council meeting and*

2. The Council minutes to include a record of how individual Council members voted in accordance with Charity commission guidelines and 3. Council minutes to be posted on the Society website the morning after they were ratified by Council. I know that on the Society's website the most recent Council meeting minutes are dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018 and the most recent summary is dated 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. There is no record of how Council members voted. When did Council change the approved policy and why, why are there no recent reports or Council meeting minutes?"

We thank Nigel for the question. I believe this has been resolved in that at the moment, there are Council minutes and summaries, on the website, they were recently put up in the last week. They have fallen behind and the reason why a number of things changed because of the data protection act of 2018 and the general data protection regulation, GDPR as it is commonly known, which prevented us from straight away sending those details out because of an individual's personal data. And there has been a number of policies and decisions taken by previous Council's and ourselves that in relation to minutes. We understand that it is a very important area and often an area from criticism from the membership. What was decided is and any previous Council's is that a summary would go on there and we have actually recently just improved that by saying that if there is a vote on, included in the summary, the summary will include those that voted against and those that voted abstained. And naming those people that voted. Of course, it takes some time for the minutes to come for ratification and to be read before Council, particularly in the last few months. And any of those can be applied for by contacting the office. Confidential minutes is obviously something completely different and that is the way that recommendations and guidelines has come from Charities commission and previous secretaries. And so that is how Council proceeds at the moment so just to clarify that, after a meeting, as soon as after a meeting, you will have a summary of the events of the meeting. Any votes that were taken obviously unanimous is recorded as unanimous, but the proposers and seconders will be named, or initialled and the abstentions and votes will be recorded. And then after that as soon as the Council minutes come back at the next meeting, will be ratified and available for you to apply for.

EG - The next question comes from Mr Richard Miller. In fact, we have a series from Mr Richard Miller. So, the first.

*"Dear Sirs, I write regarding four topics for any other business at the 2024 AGM that I and I believe the membership, will at large appreciate some clarity on.*

*Number one. Judging and Showing handbook 2024 rule 4.5a. I see that this has been changed from must not be banged level should, this is in relation to banged tails, should not be banged level. Could Council please share their insight in the changing of this term that could now be perceived as a recommendation rather than a rule., leaving the exhibitors with an element of suggestion. Following on in the same rule in 4.5(or shaved, leaving an element of suggestion when, particularly with Part-Breds, it is now almost commonplace to see tails either side of the dock, rather than pulled or plaited. Is this practice acceptable when judging or be outlawed. Please provide clear and unchallengeable definitions as to avoid uncertainty for both judge and exhibitor."*

Ann Bigley - There have been quite a lot of observations about this and actually some observations by exhibitors and that is why it was changed from the compulsory element back to a 'should', what it had been until it was changed. I think the point that we discussed was and indeed points being made to us, is that that of course, the Welsh breeds are very adaptable, and they perform across a lot of disciplines. And of course, the rules vary incredibly across the disciplines depending on where you are actually performing. And if we changed it to a 'must', we actually inhibited the progress of our Welsh Breeds in those different

disciplines. The obvious example is the plaited hunter ponies. There are a lot of B's, C's and cobs and A's who will actually plait up and go into hunter classes, and of course their rules are very different to ours. And if we started saying, this is what the general consensus was, if we actually made it a compulsory issue about not being banged, it was a problem for them, where there was an expectation that they might be. What we suggested and that's why we took it back to a 'should' because it really actually depends on where they are performing. I can only speak for myself now and I speak as an individual and not from Council that I have judged a lot of RI classes, where Welsh breeds are actually in a mixed breed class, going for an RI, a lot of them aren't members, they actually don't know rules and I think we actually have to guide them and say, look if you are going to do a class like this. Otherwise, what we will be finding ourselves doing, in some of these classes where 80% of our Welsh breeds will be dumped either out of the ring or told to go to bottom, just because there is a 'must' not a 'should'. So, I think we perhaps looked upon it as perhaps we could be a bit of an education to them. That was our opinion.

EG - Thank you Ann. Question two was:

*"Judging and Showing handbook rule 4.7 is it now acceptable to body clip part bred youngstock shown in hand? Please provide clear, unchallengeable definitions as to avoid uncertainty for both judge and exhibitor."*

EG - I will have a go at this one. Well, we have done it and it has been done as mainly a request from Part-Bred exhibitors. And it involves a similar sort of thing, so whereby Part-Breds are competing in multi-discipline events and classification is run by other societies, they have to comply with their rules. So, you know, coloureds or sports horse or Part-Bred Arabs and under their rules so no other Society has a clipping rule so that is why it was changed. Have I answered that, ok?

*"The third is Judging and Showing handbook 2024 rule number 5.24, Could Council explain their thinking in returning to a predetermined list of shows eligible to win sire ratings points, at rather than any other affiliated medal show, as was the case for the 2023 season. I personally feel this is a retrograde step, not reflecting on a full geographical footprint, of what stock is winning around the country, furthermore, removing another incentive to support an affiliated show, where a medal might not even be attainable, yet could reflect the sire's ability. I understand that the collating of points from such results within the current database is in fact easier report, rather than to create a selected shows report, as are the gelding and veteran year end awards. Along with all the other affiliated show classes that have already been added to the system before the end of the year. Why make a limited list of shows and what is the criteria for selecting those shows?"*

EG - So, I am going to hand to the Chair of Judging and Showing to answer this one.

Mervyn Davies - Good afternoon. The reason being behind us going back to selective shows, that we felt as a group, that it wasn't really a true reflection on a sire, because at the end of the day, any show could be affiliated, and it is going back to this thing about the medals again, and the value and the value of the shows. The points scheme, the points for the sire ratings doesn't work out in a true reflection because they should be in shows that are for want of a better word, 'prestige' shows, like they were years ago. I know we are harping back to the old days but when you have got a show in the middle of nowhere, I am not being thing to that show, and there is only four people that have turned up, I cannot see that, or we can't see that, I shouldn't say. We can't see that as a true reflection of that sire. Whereas if he accumulates his points at picked shows which, are you know silver medal show, gold medal shows, and bronze medal, we are counting affiliated association shows in this as well. That

was the thinking behind it, and we had a big discussion on collating the points, with Gemma in the office and it came that you could just press a button and all the results would come out. But what we were saying was, there was nothing wrong with pressing the button with the number of those shows, for them to come out. That was the thinking behind it, but we are trying to bring the prestige back to the sire ratings as well as we are trying to bring the prestige back to the medals. And that is the answer.

EG - And so we do also determine geographically because in the stud book it, sorry, in the handbook it shows the different geographical areas of the UK where the sire ratings come from, the shows. So, question number four:

*“Spring newsletter 2024 page 31. I note that the triple crown is to be removed after one season of being offered and being enthusiastically received at the awards evening. Can I ask Council for their thinking behind this? Personally, I believe it represents a huge achievement for both breeder and exhibitor alike. A real feather in the cap moment for all concerned and another highflying accolade for breed to be able to publicise. With a finite number of animals ever winning a gold medal to add to a bronze and silver, I would have hoped that if ever Council deemed this a cost cutting exercise, it might have been more encouraging for the membership to seek an outside sponsor rather than axe the initiative.”*

EG - Very few animals achieved this in 2023 making it extra special. And of course, it was a great achievement because of course Heniarth did achieve it.

*{\*N.B. - only 3 animals won the triple Crown Award in 2023 and these were Trindod Celtic-Lord, Llanwarne Miss Candy and Donys Dick Turpin}*

EG - The reason why we removed the Triple Crown was as I say it was part of a pilot, the pilot ends in 2024. The reason why we took it out was we felt, or Council felt, that it was like the elite medals, the word elite could cause an element of elitism and we were going to push the association medal, which we have done and was mentioned quite highly and at length in the associations meeting. It is not necessarily out or in at the moment, we also just wanted to clean up the handbook and reduce the amount that was in it and the number of awards and medals going out for the time being while we continue with the project and experiment. There is nothing to say that in the future it won't, you know at the end of the project, we might decide that it comes back it, especially as some of the feedback from the membership has been positive towards it.

Elizabeth Hampson - So as one of those people that actually was fortunate to receive that award, I do think that it is a crying shame that you have looked to take this this award and, I will treasure that award. The main reason being that this is the only year that you would have awarded it and I would really urge the Council to rethink it. It is an achievement, to bronze, silver and gold medal and I think you know that there are people in the past that have not received the award because it wasn't available. But going forward I think, you know, you do need to reconsider that because it is a tremendous award to win.

EG - Ok thanks for this. I did notice and somebody pointed it out to us at the last meeting, there have been quite a lot of feedback from that social media and the office about that being removed, so again it will be something that we look at, and if, you know looking at it positively. We don't want to ruin it for you, we are just trying to move things and if it means coming back it will.

Clare Willis Burton - Just to clarify Ed with regards to this award, this elite award, does that mean that when you say thank you are going to look into it, are you stopping it for this year and then maybe?

EG - Yes

CWB - Well that seems unfair on anyone that is going to win it for this year.

EG - Right

CWB - You know I don't think that you can do that, I don't think that is fair and I think that that is something that you should put to the membership. So, if you are going to go out go out and you are going to win the Royal Welsh this year, you are going to win a silver maybe at Lampeter and you have bronze medal, how are you going to feel if you have missed out? It is not fair, is it?

EG - No, personally I would be gutted about it but, so as I say the first, the first judging and showing, we talked about at length yesterday, it has gone back on the judging and showing committee for the first meeting, and I am not saying that it is not coming back, I can't say any more than that.

Jo Filmer - Could you not offer somebody to sponsor it?

EG - Yes, we could do, to be fair it was, it wasn't a financial issue that we removed it, it was again, we have a broad spectrum across the membership some will like it, some won't. Some had talked about the elitism side of it and we thought that while we are looking at it, the numbers and the medals, we will take it out, as the elite medal has gone as well. But we will look at it. Sponsorship is a good idea, but it wasn't necessarily the only criteria, for the financial. John Kirk?

John Kirk - I think there is a defined difference here, we are talking about the triple crown which is an achievement. Elite is a different thing. Elite awards you are pulling people apart, making them elitist. An achievement is a different thing completely. So, I don't think you should cloud the water with saying about elite things and an achievement is a completely different thing.

EG - So there you go you have got a champion, you have got a champion coming back on Council for that, for bringing that back, and looking at that so in John's hands, so it will come before committee again. The final any other business points were submitted by Liz Hampson. So, there were three areas covered.

*"Service price increases, Part-Bred exclusion and medal allocation."*

EG - I know you covered a lot of those this morning in the associations meeting, but I am going to ask you, to invite you, to expand of those points please.

Elizabeth Hampson - Thank you so which one would you like me to start with?

EG - Start with number one, service price increases.

EH - Yes, so this is aimed at the Chair of HR and finance. Martin, we have spoken earlier about this, so you know what is coming. I think everyone in the room understands that things have gone up and we understand that price increases have to come. But some of your price increases just beggar belief. So, the one I am going to concentrate on is the change of ownership. For me the change of ownership is a way of encouraging people to get involved with The Welsh pony and Cob Society and it is also a legal requirement. That has gone up

from £15 to £24 if you are a member and £36 for a non-member. Now I am not good at maths, maths is definitely not my strong subject but that is a 60% increase. So that is the first one, do you want to reply to that so....

MW - Can I answer that on first? We have spoke earlier on, but we will speak so that everyone else knows. I totally agree with you with what you say by there to be honest but when it was put up on Council, I didn't agree with the big hikes, because we hiked quite a few things up in one go. I wasn't in agreement with that, I thought they should go up slowly. We do need the money; I think they should have gone up slowly. The problem is that for years things have not gone up, we haven't tied them with inflation, like I spoke earlier on. From now on, our prices will be tied with inflation, well I hope they will be: we will wait until the next meeting but I can teel you, I was not in agreement with the big hikes in the beginning but they have got to be realigned because of past, haven't been tied with inflation. So, I am sorry you feel that way, I know how you feel because I was more or less on your side by there, but we will see as far as I am concerned, we should see, our costs being tied with inflation, going forward.

EH - Ok I hope from that the increases in prices on that one will stay as they are and we won't see any more.

MW - Yes and I do think that it is ridiculous that it jumps so much. Thank you.

EG - So then your second one is Part-Bred exclusion.

EH - Yes and this is for the Chair of judging and showing. I would like to understand why you have decided to exclude Part-Breds as part of the medal qualifications and that shows now don't have to offer Part-Bred classes. You know at the end of the day; we are a Society of five sections and not four. And if you are going to tell me it's because of the numbers forward, then I am afraid that you are going to go the same way with the Section Bs, probably to Section C's and at some shows the Section D's.

MD - First of all I would like to say that it wasn't I, it was we. That is my first opening one to that. WE never excluded the Part-Breds as such, at all, they... I am all for all sections, you know if it was up to me, it would be a different story. But it was a collective decision amongst Council to do what we done with the medals. You know it is not one person's decision, it is a collective decision. We have never excluded anybody; I don't really know where that is coming from. The bottom line is you know we have had this talk; we went through this all this morning about the medals and back to what everyone is saying, we are a breed Society, we are not a show Society but also, we have got to offer as much a humanly possible for the members. If the members want to be showing, we should be supporting them. So, I don't know where you are coming from Liz?

EH - I am specifically talking about the Part-Breds.

MD - Yes but...

EH - You have now told shows that they don't have to hold Part-Bred classes.

MD - They don't have to hold any classes, but we have never told any shows that they don't have to hold classes.

EH - It specifically says that they don't have to include Part-Bred classes.

MD - No, Liz, I am sorry, I have got to contradict you there. We have never ever said that they don't have to hold Part-Bred classes.

EH - I think you will find that you have.

MD - Sorry?

EH - I think you will find that you have. Read the wording of the information that you have given out and it specifically talks about Part-Breds in there. And going on the figures here, and I am looking at what you have got. Last year on the number of ponies registered, you have got more Part-Breds registered, quite considerably to the B's. They are the fastest growing section.

MD - So, we are agreeing with you. We have looked at the figures and at the end of the day, why aren't they in the shows then?

EH - Are you saying that you have made the decision based on the numbers forward in the shows?

MD - No. No, we haven't.

EG - We haven't made any exclusions in the Part-Breds at all.

MD - We have never excluded Part-Breds at all.

EH - The Part-Breds now... shows do not have to offer Part-Bred classes.

MD - No, what we said is they can offer medals, for as many sections as they want in that show whether they want to offer an A and a B, an A and a C, a C, D and a Part-Bred. It is entirely up to the show. We have never excluded any show from having a medal.

EH - So with the Part-Breds, and I know that Di Nicholson has formally put something in...

MD - Yes, that is right. We are looking into that now yes.

EH - ...and you provided Di with the medals, the number of entries at the medal shows and clearly, clearly on that you have excluded the Part-Breds because not one Part-Bred would have received a Part-Bred last year, at any show, other than the Royal Welsh, who funnily enough do not have to have a criteria to get a gold medal.

EG - So you... but what you are saying is we have actually excluded by it by reason of putting the numbers forward at fourteen.

EH - Correct.

EG - Right ok. We haven't per say excluded Part-Breds from the affiliation. We haven't done that but what we have done is we have allowed shows on the basis that we didn't form... agree a geographical average as we discussed this morning in area association because Council set a fourteen on it, you are saying that that has been excluded because...

EH - Not achievable, you have set targets that are not achievable, and it is not just for the Part-Breds. It is for the B's as well.

EG - It is not a case of excluding it, we did not want to exclude but it is down to numbers forward isn't it and that is an area that we need to look at and as a result I will need to say to the members here, some of the stuff that was raised this morning in association was that the numbers at fourteen was not attainable in the B's and in the Part-Breds. And we have acknowledged that, and we have got paper, we have got research being done at the moment. Especially in relation to the B and it is likely that that will change.

EH - And I will sit here next year, and I will question you how many Part-Breds achieved any medals this year.

EG - That's fine.

EH - I will ask that question and how many shows are offering Part-Bred classes.

MD - But that is up to the show you know, like I have said, we have never excluded any section. At the end of the day, we want as many shows to have medals, we are not stopping. But we spoke about this all morning about the medals didn't we, the bottom line is, we have got to look at the Bs especially and the Part-Breds. And that is the first thing that will come now. You know there has been a couple of shows now in the last couple of weeks. That haven't achieved medals in any of the sections. Because of the fourteen rule.

EH - Yes, I agree.

MD - And 20 odd whatever.

EH - There are three Section A's that have received medals so far with the shows.

MD - Yes. We can't...we are not trying to exclude anybody at all from this. Not at all.

EG - The only thing we did with Part-Breds, that changed that had an effect was with Lampeter and Glanusk. We thought that with historic, prestigious shows like that, that are stallion shows...

MD - Those were the only two.

EG - They have got their historic, articles as well, we didn't want them out in the cold, and they have got the option to come back and affiliate if they want or not. And so, we thought that was wrong and we changed that.

EH - And I think with all due respect, a lot of these people wasn't in the room this morning, so they, and I'm sure there will be questions around the medal situation, so I think it would be really good if someone could just give an overview of what discussed in the association meeting this morning regarding the medal situation.

EG - I mean with the association, ladies and gentlemen, the meeting this morning, it was two hours long. And it was predominately backwards and forwards about medal refunds.... a variety of things. The only thing I can do is give you a potted summary of it. So, the general feeling was that it was unfair for the Welsh Pony and Cob Society not to give refunds to the associations and shows that didn't make the required criteria forward. We have said that that is already urgently being looked at and there is liable to be a refund, whatever that is, what percentage that is I don't know. So that is already on the cards.

The other thing is, we discussed many, many, many ways, we tried the numbers, the entries forward, sorry... just on entries for affiliation, which were clearly from the shows that have gone on this year, those entries that were there last year were... the numbers forward were just not there. So, what we are saying is it has to be on the criteria of numbers forward and it is already proving that last year it was on entries and that difference, that big difference in numbers and what was actually forward, is shown by actually putting our numbers forward criteria now. So, what we said in relation to, there had to be a starting point, I don't think we established this morning was where the starting point had come from and that is what you are questioning about the paperwork that Di Nicholson had requested on a freedom of information act, yes? I will be honest and say we discussed it a length and there was some suggestion this morning that for example I wanted as percentage, an average geographically around the country. It might be that North Western would have four Bs and South Eastern would have two, I don't know so somewhere along that average, we would put the number at that, that gives them a fighting chance geographically to meet those numbers.

Council have decided that they wanted to put a level going forwards across the board to see where we stood. And it obviously been done by the looks of it to the detriment to some of the sections and we are reviewing that. And that is basically a potted history about what happened this morning. There was a lot of questions about it, the association medal as well. There were some very, very good suggestions put forward by Holly Roberts and some of the ladies from Clwyd, North Western and yourself so we are going to look at those. We have got them written down, I have got them personally, and we are going to look at those and see where we go with them.

Graham Roberts - I just think that everybody has got hooked up on winning medals. I think that people just need to get back out to shows, have a bit of fun, support the breed and make it great again because it is just going down the pan, the way it is at the moment.

EG - Yes

GR - And maybe Council should have gone much, much further with this, do you know by what they are doing at the moment shows are a little bit in limbo, they don't know whether they are coming or going, and you really should have got rid of them and started again. And this is someone that goes to more shows than any of you. And it is a mess at the moment, and you are going to have to draw a proper line in the sand somewhere.

EG - That is a very good analogy because we had discussed to rip it all up. And start again.

GR - Get rid of the judge's panel while you are there as well. And the rule book.

EG - Well with the medals comes the rule book and they live together, don't they? And so, what we have tried to do with the handbook this year is to try to condense it down, try to take some of the stuff that you would only read if you were spending twenty minutes upstairs in a certain part of the house. And tried to take some of that stuff out and condense it down, make it a little more fluid and a little more direction for judges as well following issues at the Winer Fair. And yes, it is a problem all the time as I explained earlier, we spend all out time dealing with judging and showing issues. All the time.

GR - This is down to your rule book though, isn't it?

EG - Well it's down to a number of things Graham. It's down to a number of different Councils over the years adding a bit here, adding a bit there. I think that's why I say that there is a school of thought that says rip it all up and start again. I think it was a song, wasn't it? Start with the gold medal at our showcase at the Royal Welsh and work down, or as not, as some have said none at all. So, it is something that we really need to look at. We committed to a pilot that the Judging and Showing committee.

GR - Pilot is not going to work.

EG - OK. Time will tell, we haven't got long to run on it. The areas that you have challenged today, we will take it away and look at it. And again, it affects, some of here are on committees, associations, we also show so it affects us as well.

GR - Do you think that most association shows can afford to give you, I don't know, £240 a show and not award a medal?

EG - No, and I run an Association and I run on sponsors. So no, we are looking at that.

GR - Your sponsors will walk away enmasse won't they?

EG - Well that is something that might happen, yes,

GR - So there is no future in this one is there because if you are going to do it this year and repeat £240 or £250 or whatever it is, nobody is going to affiliate next year and that has got to be bad for the Society hasn't it?

EG - It is, it is bad both sides, but you have also got to try to consider that we have spent a long time today, talking to you about finances ok. It is not the be all and end all. We have to protect them and that is our job here to try to protect your finances ok.

GR - I think finances aside, it's nothing about finances, it is about the breed isn't it. As long as there is enough money to keep the breed going, that is the main thing, isn't it?

EG - I am just going to say this Graham, our staff actually use their time to do the affiliation, so it is costing us money, so we need to look at that but I have said that we will we will go back and look at potential refunds for those that don't make the numbers and I can't say any more than that because it has only just come in.

CWB - Yes, I have just got two issues and the first issue that I have is that we have got two million pound in the bank invested. That is surely for the good of the Society and the good of the membership going forward. It is no good being and I know you are saying that you want to protect our finances, what happens then as a Charity, do we not have to spend some of that money on membership services and medals would be one of the membership services? And secondly an elephant in the room with the Part-Breds at shows is that a lot of your pure-bred judges in championships, will not look at a Part-Bred. And a lot of people breeding Part-Breds here will say that. They say we don't know anything about Part-Breds, the Part-Bred is a horse at the end of the day, you have got a different type of Part-Bred, but you are breeding a horse you are not judging to breed standards, like we are with and A, B, C and D. You are judging a horse. And it's about time, as a Society that we kicked our judges up the backside for this because I have been in supremes where I have had some beautiful, beautiful Part-Breds and judges will not look at them. So, something about that has got to be done.

MD - Can I answer you on that Clare?

CWB - Yes.

MD - We have actually looked into because there has been a number of requests, to have an actual Part-Bred panel for only Part-Bred people. Well not only Part-Bred people, for anybody that want to go on it or like people who want to go... who keep Part-Breds can't get on the other panels because they have been keeping the Part-Breds.

CWB - But that is still not helping them in a supreme championship is it when all the section judges all gang up together and will not entertain even looking at the Part-Bred? All they are interested in is their breed and we get that right across the board when a judge will only look at an A. If your A is not good enough and you are an A judge, discount it: go for something else for the good of the breed, and I think as a judge it frustrates me terribly. And you have got to do something about it.

MD - It actually frustrates me as well. Because I like all sections right. It doesn't matter to me what they are. Whether it is ridden, drive, A's, B's, C's, D's, Part-Breds. I even considered covering thirty cob mares with a coloured horse two years ago. So, you don't have to bang on to me about Part-Breds. My wife is over by there, she judges, and I have seen her put Part-Breds up as champion, right. So it's down the bottom line is, we have got to start educating the judges better. That is what we have got to start doing. Educating the judges.

EG - Can I just say, you said about the investment, I need to just pick you up on that one. We have got a broad spectrum of membership here, it's not all just about showing, so your idea

of paying that... you are not just talking about medals here and also as I explained earlier, at the moment the investments are propping us up. And if we keep pulling stuff out of that, then we are going to lose dividends. But that is another issue. Down the line though Clare, we have got this. We have got a pavilion that is leaking, haemorrhaging funds at the moment, we need to put that right... or not. It might be a decision for the membership whether they want to go there or not because we have got a lot of money to pay. The building at Bronaeron has got some massive stuff that needs doing to it. And a lot of that money was bequeathed to us for education and welfare, and we don't do anything with that. We have just talked about virtual reality and stuff like bringing kids in and stuff like that. So that money is sitting in a pot there at the moment to be used for the membership. If you read my newsletter, I said I think it's unfair robbing Peter to pay Paul. That is your money in there. Why should we be wasting that by not getting our administration and systems and operations right. And so that has to sit there for the time being otherwise it will be flitted away.

CWB - But you have got to show that you are doing something for the membership and for their membership fees.

EG - Yes and I take that as well.

CWB - As a Joe Bloggs, what does anybody, if you are not a breeder... what do you actually get for your membership?

EG - We have said that we are looking at that.

CWB - Thank you very much.

EG - We are looking at membership and everything.

CWB - I appreciate that.

EG - We have got a lot of work on

MW - I have got to come in. This Society is a breed Society, right, not a show Society, it is a breed Society. That is who we should....

CWB ... [inaudible on tape]

MW - Clare, Clare, We should be looking after at the breeders of the A's, B's C's, D's and Part-Breds. But it is a breed Society. Let's leave it there now Ed or we will end up quarrelling.

CWB - It is a breed Society so why do we look at the Royal Welsh as the god of all shows.

MW - Let's leave it there now it is a breed Society, and we are not pumping lots of money into shows.

EG - Right sorry, Sharon.

Sharon Charlton - Can I respectfully make a request of Judging and Showing. We are backtracking a little bit, I know but earlier they said they were going to look at the numbers of Sections B's and Welsh Part-Breds, regarding medal etc. But can I request that we actually look at the numbers of Section C's as well. Because there were only twenty more Section C's registered than there were Part-Breds and I think that all those sections of those stud books are in problems. If I can just request that they look at it?

EG - Yes, it is across the board Sharon.

MD - You are right, we need to look at. We used that figure as a starting figure, but we need to look at all five sections because you might find that some shows in two or three weeks' time won't make the A's or won't make the C's or the D's.

SC - I was just going off the numbers registered, and those are the three smallest sections.

MD - Yes, yes.

EG - Right I am just moving on. So, does that answer your medal application you got us there?

EH - I think we did the medals to death this morning,.,.

EG - We did didn't we.

EH - And to be fair the associations spoke up really, really well for everybody.

EG - Yes fine.

EH - I just did think it would be good to let some of the people in the room know what you have agreed to take back.

EG - Yes thank you. Emma Edwards?

Hi. Emma Edwards. Interesting discussion and thank ever so much you for being so open with us today, the Council. I really appreciate that, I think one thing is very clear, is that we would like to be involved more. You are talking about what we can do for membership, or what we can do to help the breed and the performance, for the shows and everything. Can I suggest as an idea, that we put a meeting together in somewhere like this where it doesn't cost an awful lot of money, I am not talking about Builth Wells now, but we put a meeting together for members to come along, so we can have a bit of an exploration day of how we can help you and put all of our ideas on the tables, so that we can explore those.

EG - That is a very good idea. Just for the membership here the association meeting this morning was very, very positive. There were a lot of negatives and criticism but right, right and one of the areas is communication. And one of things I keep telling Council is that we have got to stop crashing into it, we have got to look ahead so yes, that is a really good suggestion. John? Did you want to speak? John Kirk.

JK - All I want to say is we are going round and round in circles, but we still keep coming back to this thing medal. The medal is causing more problems for the Society than I don't know what. I think it's time for it to stop, honestly, I do.

EG - You are now going to have a chance, John. Any more questions?

Yvonne Small - Sorry I'll be very quick.

EG - No, no that's good...

YS - ...It's labelled medal...

EG - And then I will close it.

YS - ...Should you decide to do away with medals which I think is a good idea, I think it has got to be all or nothing, other than the Royal Welsh. All or nothing, it is no good having a few dotted here and there, because that doesn't help us as an association. It has got to be a level playing field. That is my opinion.

EG - We have in the diagnostic recommendations... there was looking at survey and poll from ex-members, people that have left and why they have gone and why they are coming back. In

this year we are planning to do that. Also with existing members, yes and no and some of those things. It might go to that so there is a lot of work to do this year. A lot, so thank you. Any more questions? Tanya.

Tanya Baldwin - Thank you. I have two questions for any other business. You haven't got them. One is, can the Council confirm that all the measures in regards to any conflicts of interest, contained in the Society's codes of practice, articles of association, and invitation to quote, were fully observed and the Society's Financial Procedures were fully adhered to in the procurement of the Business Diagnostic Report?

EG - Well...

[Audible yes from main table (female voice)]

MW - Yes.

EG - I say yes... but obviously you have got a complaint about me for that, that I don't want to talk about here. And I shouldn't talk about that.

MW - Excuse me, can I come in there please?

TB - That's fine we have had your answer as yes, for everybody to hear.

MW - Can I come in there. There is an ongoing... there is an ongoing complaint and investigation in line with the Society's procedures and I can't comment much more than that, so we will have to leave that there, right Tanya if you don't mind?

TB - That is fine...

MW - Thank you, thank you...

TB - I am quite happy. Mr Gummery has answered yes that it was done correctly.

MW - Thank you very much.

TB - Thank you. The second question is could you explain why you wish the word Society to be removed from the Performance Event's title?

EG - Is that at me? At me?

TB - At the whole of Council presumably. Presumably it was a joint decision.

MW - Yes.

EG - I think someone else can answer that. Rather than that because, we had to put this on social media recently, the reason being is, the Society, The Welsh Pony and Cob Society is a name, a brand of its own. To use its name, to promote a show that we have nothing to do with, Council felt it was wrong to do that. And where we have liability and a number of other issues regarding the use of the Society name, the Council felt it was inappropriate to use it.

TB - Ok at the time when you told me this Performance Event was nothing to do with the Society, I did tell you that I had proof, and you can have these forward at Council. They are the letters from the original Council, Welsh Pony and Cob Society letters, stating that we are running it on behalf of the Society. They included the Society's name on it and as far as I was concerned with it, when I took it on twenty years ago, I was a volunteer running it on behalf of the Society. And if you read page two of this year's financial report, you will see it under public benefits applicable to the Charities applicable to include the advancement of amateur sport through the establishment of medal and rosette schemes, the sport of young handler

competitions, staging of performance shows and awards. And also, the provision of judges panels and young judge's competitions. This has been in our documents for many years, and as far as my committee is concerned, they have been doing this all this hard work on behalf of the Society. The Society has sent those boards every year, the President has come and presented the awards, every year. The lorry has been there. It has been run as a Society event and you are the first Council to ever support and turn against it... to not support and turn against it. And we did, in your reply to the... my Facebook statement, we did used to be insured, on the Society as a Society event until they changed insurers. Thank you.

EG - Ok thank you.

MW - Thank you very much.

EG - Well we... if you hand those documents to Gemma, we will look at that whole decision and view that with the latest when we, with the decision about using the word Society.

MW - Ok thank you.

EG - Thank you.

TB - If you look back yourself to 1993, providing the records are still there, you will find that it was started by Council with a committee to run it on their behalf.

EG - Ok thank you. Any more questions from anybody before I close the meeting? Any? Speak now or forever hold your peace. Any other? No?

[No further questions heard]

EG – Right, so we are at quarter past four and I'll thank you all for attending. Have a safe journey back and thank you for your contributions. Those that say that they were going to write in, and do certain things, please do so, and have some tea and refreshments and see you again. Thank you very much. Bye.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 4.15pm.

**ENDS**