

**MINUTES OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON  
17 JANUARY 2013**

**PRESENT:**

Mrs Y Croxford	Midlands
Mrs J Gardner	Midlands
Miss J Lewis	North East
Mr I Mallabar	North East
Mrs P Baltes	North West
Mr M Hallam	North West
Mr R McAleese	Northern Ireland
Mrs O McShane	Scotland
Mr S Chandler	South East and East Anglia
Mr J Gilbert	South East and East Anglia
Mr C Huckle	South and South West
Miss L Olden	South and South West
Mr M Cavill	Wales

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr D Jolly	Activities Sub-Committee & Judges' Working Party Member (Until Item 7.b only)
Mrs K Symns	Executive – Canine Activities
Miss J Nosalik	WTOA Specialist

**ITEM 1. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL  
(JANUARY 2013 – DECEMBER 2015)**

1. Following a ballot, Miss Olden was elected as Chairman for the new term of the Council. Miss Olden thanked the Council for its support.

**MISS OLDEN IN THE CHAIR**

**ITEM 2. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE TERM OF THE COUNCIL  
(JANUARY 2013 – DECEMBER 2015)**

2. In the absence of any further nominations, Mr Mallabar was elected as Vice Chairman for the term of the Council.

**ITEM 3. TO ELECT A REPRESENTATIVE ONTO THE ACTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE EFFECTIVE FROM JUNE 2013 – MAY 2016**

3. Following a ballot, Mr Gilbert was elected as the Council's representative onto the Activities Sub-Committee for the above period of office.

**ITEM 4. PRESENTATION TO THE COUNCIL ON KENNEL CLUB STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES**

4. The Council noted the presentation which explained Kennel Club and Liaison Council's structure and procedures. New representatives were welcomed to the meeting and the role of Council representatives was clarified.

**ITEM 5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

5. There were no apologies for absence.

**ITEM 6. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

6. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2012 were signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.
7. The Council noted that there had been an error in the H Regulations booklet regarding Regulation H(1)(A).8.e where the possibility to progress on points had not been removed. The correct regulation should read as follows:

Grade 5 (Intermediate)

Open to dogs which have gained a first place in an Agility Class or three first places in Jumping Classes at Grade 4 at Kennel Club licensed Agility Shows and are not eligible for Grade 3, 4, 6 or 7.

8. It was noted that an errata would be included in all printed versions and that the downloadable version from the Kennel Club website had since been rectified.

**ITEM 7. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regulation Changes

9. The Council noted that, at its meeting on 17 July 2012, the General Committee approved the following amendments, which took effect from 1 January 2013:
- i. Amendment to Regulation H18.a. Approval of Judges
  - ii. New Regulation H18.c. Approval of Judges
  - iii. Amendment to Regulation H(1)9.e. Management
  - iv. Amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)7 Progression
  - v. Amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)8 Points Progression
  - vi. Amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)9.f. Standard Classes
  - vii. New Annex H(1)(D) Specific Regulations for Limited Agility Shows

#### Calculating Accurate Course Times

10. Further to its meeting in June 2012, the Council was invited to note a presentation from Mr D Jolly regarding the continued research on the methods of calculating a course time. One method was based upon the dog's anticipated route and the second method was based on the straight line distance between obstacle centres. Mr Jolly reminded the meeting that the course time matrix originated from the 1980's and had never been updated until recently. It was stated that the research undertaken consisted of more than 600 measured courses using the straight line distance between obstacle centres method. Since the last meeting at which the Council had requested research for measuring the dog's anticipated path to be included as well, over 200 courses had been measured and added to the research. The dog's anticipated path method indicated that the measurement taken could differ from one judge to another by over 10 metres over the same course, thus creating inaccurate course times.
11. Having discussed the matter at length at the Annual Accredited Trainers' Seminar in October 2012, the vast majority of agility trainers agreed that the straight line method between obstacle centres would be the fairest and most consistent method of measuring course length to achieve accurate course times. The meeting was reminded that it was the Council who had requested a regulation to stipulate that judges should measure courses, not the Working Party who had concentrated on forming guidance, however, it also agreed it should be regulated. From a practical point of view a concern was raised regarding the cost of the surveyor's type measuring wheel, but it was clarified that the cost was minimal and show societies could provide these for their judges to use at their shows or judges who had regular appointments could share. The point was raised that research would need to be on-going and that the matrix would be subject to amendments should course designs alter in the future. It was also noted that in the event of various unforeseen circumstances or complexity of courses, judges would retain their discretion on course times to ensure all potential factors had been taken into account.
12. It was agreed that there was a need for the Regulations to stipulate the type of method to be used to calculate course times to ensure judges were consistent. Subsequently, the Council supported the principle of the proposal and voted in favour of the straight line method between obstacle centres. The office was requested to amend the regulation accordingly and include this on the agenda for its June meeting. The Chairman thanked Mr Jolly for his presentation and for the research undertaken.

#### International Agility Teams

13. The Council noted the reports on Team GB's attendance at the 2012 European Open and World Championship competitions. The Council congratulated the team's successes and thanked Mr Partridge and Mr Jolly, the outgoing World Agility Championships team manager and coach respectively, for all their hard work over the past few years. The Chairman also thanked the office, Team Vet and Chiropractor for their support.

#### Agility Listed Status

14. The Council noted a verbal report on the progress of Agility Listed Status since its official launch in October 2012. It was noted that 10 Listed Status Clubs had been approved so far with a couple of licences already issued for Limited shows in March 2013 and some Open shows from early summer. It was clarified that for Limited schedules, the word "Standard" must be included in the class titles for those which allowed for progression, of which there can only be a maximum of three scheduled. The word "Special" must be included at the front of all other class titles. It was reiterated that the minimum capping number for a class at an Open or Limited show was 250 dogs; however show organisers could state a higher number, but nothing lower than 250 dogs. It was queried what the incentive was to remain a fully registered club. It was explained that fully registered clubs had the option to hold more prestigious shows; Championship and Premier shows which scheduled Kennel Club qualifiers and that licence fees were lower than those for Listed Status clubs. It was also noted that for registered clubs, members had an element of control over the management of the club, its funds and its shows. It was highlighted that the reason for having the two types of club recognition was to provide a choice for agility clubs and the Kennel Club to provide an inclusive service for all agility competitors.

#### Dog Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group

15. The Council noted a report on the progress of the Dog Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group. It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 4 February 2013 and that there would be a discussion on the physical impact of hurdle heights on dogs. It was noted that two members of the Fourth Height Supporters Group had been invited to attend the meeting to represent its views. It was confirmed that the Council would be kept up to date on the Sub-Group's ongoing progress in agility related matters.

### **ITEM 8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ACTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE**

#### Preventing Conflicts in Agility

16. The Council was requested to discuss the matter of course design with the objective of preventing potential conflicts between dogs at shows. It was noted that a number of incidents in and around the ringside had given the Sub-Committee reason to suggest that some solutions should be introduced to prevent conflict. The Council was reminded that the Activities Sub-Committee dealt with breaches of regulations whilst the Disciplinary Sub-Committee considered more complex and wide ranging complaints. For its information the Council requested a report be provided for its next meeting outlining the number and type of incidents that had taken place at agility shows.
17. The Council was of the view that judges should not be required to oversee the immediate vicinity of the ring. It was considered this was the show management's responsibility. It was agreed that this matter had been discussed several times in the past without much progress and better guidance was required. In particular, it was suggested that officers at an agility show should ideally have experience of shows, that gangways should be stipulated for indoor and outdoor shows, and better queue management was required. The meeting was reminded that the Code of Conduct and the Guide to Agility Judges and Stewards was available to download from the Kennel Club website which highlighted responsibilities and advice for competitors and for

those officiating at a show. The office was requested to draft agility show management guidance for publication in the Kennel Club Manual for Registered Societies.

#### Design Changes to Agility Equipment

18. The Council was requested to consider the possibility of introducing a regulation to ensure equipment suppliers consulted the Kennel Club over any fundamental design changes to agility equipment. The Council was in favour of this principle to safeguard dogs' welfare, but stipulated that it was the responsibility of the show societies to ensure their show equipment was of the correct specification. The office was requested to draft an appropriate regulation for consideration at its June meeting.

### **ITEM 9. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY**

19. The Council noted that all of the items were either in review or resolved, but representatives were invited to propose further items to the Council's five year strategic plan. The following points would be added to the five year strategy in addition to those already on the agenda:

- To recognise agility as an official sport.
- To establish the possibility of creating a results database.
- Judges' Mentoring Programme for all judges.
- To suggest recording a dog for actual height measurement rather than, as at present, placing a dog into its relevant height category.

### **ITEM 10. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

#### Proposed Amendment of Regulation H(1)(B)3.n. (See-Saw)

20. Mrs Croxford proposed an amendment to the above regulation. Mrs Gardner seconded the proposal. Mrs Croxford stated that the regulation had since been amended slightly because the proposal was based on the FCI see-saw regulation which had also recently been amended. The Council supported the amendment since it would help standardise the obstacle, but it was suggested that dimensions for all the contact equipment should be standardised in order to be consistent. Although it was agreed that further research was required, it was stressed that an amendment to the see-saw was needed as soon as possible, rather than having to wait for the outcome of research. The Council requested that an amendment to the proposal, to state standardised dimensions for each obstacle, to be proposed at its next meeting. Mrs Croxford and Mr Gilbert agreed to liaise.

#### Proposed Amendment of Regulation H(1)(B)3.a. (Hurdle)

21. Mrs Croxford proposed an amendment to the above regulation. Mr Cavill seconded the proposal. Mrs Croxford explained that to ensure consistency because if judges did not make allowances for different pole lengths in their course design, it may have the unintentional effect of altering the flow and dynamics of the course from that originally intended. It was argued that this could be injurious for larger dogs attempting to negotiate difficult sequences. The majority of the Council was not in support of the amendment and that course design was considered to be a matter for judges' education. As a result, no further action was taken.

Proposed Amendment of Regulation H(1)4.b. (Marked Running Orders Championship Class)

22. Mr Mallabar proposed an amendment to the above regulation to remove competitors' addresses from Championship Show catalogues. Mr Chandler seconded the proposal. The Council unanimously supported the amendment since the Kennel Club and Championship show societies would have recorded information. The Council therefore agreed to **recommend** the following amendment to Regulation H(1)4.b. as follows:

**FROM**

Marked Running Order Championship Class – The Show Society must publish a marked running order containing the following.

- b. Championship Agility Class – An alphabetical index containing the names and addresses of competitors (unless withheld by competitors), the number and name of each exhibit and the number of the Championship Agility Class in which it is entered, giving a separate line to the name of each competitor, and the full particulars of the exhibit as given on the entry form completed by the competitor.

**TO**

Marked Running Order Championship Class – The Show Society must publish a marked running order containing the following.

- b. Championship Agility Class – An alphabetical index containing the names and addresses of competitors (unless withheld by competitors), the number and name of each exhibit and the number of the Championship Agility Class in which it is entered, giving a separate line to the name of each competitor, and the full particulars of the exhibit as given on the entry form completed by the competitor.

(Deletions underlined)

Proposed Amendment of Regulation H18.a. (Approval of Judges)

23. Mr Cavill, on behalf of Mr Dicker, a private individual, proposed an amendment to the above regulation. The Council considered that the proposal did not reflect the intentions specified in the background information supplied. The meeting was reminded that the reason for the extended submission deadline for first time Championship judges was to enable the office to organise a second assessment in the event of the first being unsuccessful. However, the Council was in favour of the principle that individuals should be able to apply for approval to award Championship Certificates. It was agreed to **refer** the matter to the Sub-Committee for its views on the matter and a report would be provided for the Council's June meeting.

**ITEM 11. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Course Design – Positioning of Collapsible Tunnel

24. Ms Weaver requested the Council discuss the importance of correct positioning on the course of the collapsible tunnel. The Council sympathised with this concern since some representations had witnessed poor positioning of the tunnel in the past,

however, the feedback from regional meetings was that this was a matter for judges' education. It was stated that concerns regarding the positioning of the collapsible tunnel were already addressed in the judges' training programme, but it was acknowledged that many existing judges would not have attended these seminars. A suggestion was made to introduce a form of "Continued Professional Development" for existing judges. However, it was considered that this was unnecessarily restrictive as to judge was voluntary. Additionally, it was stated that although it would be useful for judges to have experience of handling dogs at each height at which they judged, it was felt this would make it more difficult for show societies to find enough judges. The Council urged judges to consider and understand the dogs' path when designing a course to ensure the positioning of all obstacles was safe. Therefore, no further action was taken.

25. On a separate point, the Council reiterated that there was advice available for judges, for all areas of judging, which could be downloaded from the Kennel Club website on the following link:

<http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/item/605>

Introduction of a Fourth Hurdle Height – Standard

26. Mrs Doble requested the Council discuss the possibility of integrating a fourth hurdle height in agility on behalf of Ms Doble. It was suggested that a "Standard" height hurdle should be introduced at 550mm (21.65ins) which was exactly half way between the current Medium and Large heights. A lengthy discussion ensued with each representative giving a full account of the views expressed at their area meetings.
27. Whilst it appeared that there was majority support for the concept of introducing a fourth hurdle height, the Council recognised that there were a great many issues which would need to be addressed before any firm proposal could be discussed. During the Council's discussion the following key points were made:
- a. To support the suggestion of a fourth height, more research was required to support the premise this would be beneficial to the welfare of agility dogs. Nevertheless it was recognised that it was for individual owners to ensure their dogs were fit enough to compete.
  - b. Background to current hurdle height. The current hurdle height was lowered from 726mm (30ins) to be in line with FCI Regulations; the large height category was between 550mm-650mm until three years ago when the Council supported a fixed hurdle height and the large category was altered to 650mm.
  - c. That agility shows should be inclusive and provide opportunities for all dogs to compete.
  - d. To introduce a fourth height category could lead to the request for other height categories.
  - e. That each dog's height measurement would have to be precisely recorded.
  - f. If a fourth category was introduced each dog would be fixed into one of the four categories. The swapping between heights for those dogs on the boundaries between different heights would not be allowed.

- g. To introduce a fourth hurdle height would require a substantial review of all Agility Regulations including re-evaluating the current categories of competition at Prestige Finals.
- h. It was likely that agility shows would have to accommodate increased time for additional course walking with the need to provide more prizes and likely increases in other costs.

28. Due to the complexity of this item and the logistics of implementing such a large change to the agility discipline, the Council supported the need for extensive research for all hurdle heights. Therefore, it was agreed to **refer** the matter to the Dog Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group to continue with its objectives. It was envisaged that the findings from this research would disclose evidence and establish which hurdle height would be most suitable for different heights of dogs, which may amend the current hurdle heights in the regulations and introduce new hurdle heights. This would finally resolve the ongoing debate for which hurdle heights would be most suitable and ensure that the welfare of agility dogs' was at the forefront of any discussion.

#### Course Design – Distances Between Obstacles – Option 1

29. Mrs Croxford requested the Council discuss the possibility of stipulating an increase in the current distance between all obstacles, not just hurdles as was currently regulated. It was clarified that minimum distances would be in line with FCI rules and could influence more European style courses. However, it was noted that only a small number of dogs competed overseas. Feedback from the regional meetings indicated there was no support for this item. It was also highlighted that differing minimum distances for each height category would make it difficult for judges to plan their courses. Furthermore, it was stressed that it would make course design difficult for indoor shows which lacked the space. As a result, it was agreed not to take the matter further.

#### Course Design – Distances Between Obstacles – Option 2

30. Mrs Croxford requested the Council discuss the possibility of stipulating an increase in the current distance between obstacles. This second suggestion specified the maximum distance of seven metres between obstacles' centres at all times. For the same reasons as in option 1 above, the Council agreed that no further action was required.

#### Cancelled Show Refunds

31. Ms James requested the Council discuss the possibility of stipulating the approximate percentage of refund that would be made available to competitors in the event of a show cancellation due to unforeseen circumstances. The Council sympathised with these competitors who incurred losses due to show cancellations. However, it was of the view that the suggestion was not viable since shows' financial arrangements were too varied. The meeting noted details of the Activities Sub-Committee's cancellation policy. It was stressed that the policy was in place to safeguard competitors and it expected clubs to be as fair as was possible to competitors. The office agreed to investigate the cost of a central cancellation insurance policy to cover all shows. However, the Council noted that this was likely to be cost prohibitive.

32. On a separate point, the Council discussed whether there should be a maximum distance for a change of venue after which refunds should be issued to those who were unable to attend. After a brief discussion it was concluded that this suggestion would be too difficult to manage since it would never suit all competitors and it would be difficult to issue refunds when the show society had made every effort to continue with its show when the original venue was no longer available.

“Anysize” Classes

33. The Council discussed Ms Swann’s suggestion about the hurdle heights in “Anysize” classes. The matter lacked support, stating that these types of classes often already permitted handlers to alter the height originally entered on the day of the show. The Council unanimously agreed that “Anysize” classes were special classes, with specific class definitions and scheduled at the discretion of the show society. There was no support for this item and, therefore, it did not require further action.

Start/Finish – Positioning of Electronic Timing Gates

34. Ms Ullsten requested the Council to clarify the definition of the start and finish of an agility course in relation to the positioning of electronic timing gates. It was acknowledged that some judges had in the past placed electronic timing gates a distance before the first obstacle, for example a metre ahead of the weaves, thereby making them an obstacle in themselves. It was agreed that electronic timing gates should not be used in a way which would make them appear as part of the course. However, it was suggested that the timing devices could be placed on certain obstacles. Consequently, Mr Gilbert agreed to liaise with Mr Mallabar to prepare a proposal for consideration at the Council’s June meeting.

**ITEM 12. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL**

35. The Council noted that due to ongoing matters for the Festival’s show in 2013 which had not yet been resolved, an annex was not available. The Council noted a verbal report on the arrangements for this year’s Festival to be held at Rockingham Castle, on 9-11 August 2013. It was noted that all plans were progressing well and that a site visit had been arranged for February to decide the layout; it was envisaged that it would be similar to the layout used in 2012. The equipment supplier had not yet been established; it was confirmed that an Event Medical Team including a paramedic would again be in attendance. It was noted that the next meeting of the International Agility Festival Working Party would be held in mid-February where most of the arrangements would be finalised. The schedule would be available at Crufts.

**ITEM 13. JUDGES’ WORKING PARTY (WTOA)**

36. The report on the progress of the Judges’ Working Party was noted.

Observation of Agility Judges

37. The Council discussed the proposal from the Working Party regarding the observation of new and existing agility judges in order to retain high standards in judging. A discussion ensued with a general consensus that it was believed that the

agility community would welcome a form of observation for all judges. However, it was keen to stress that it should not be in the form of an assessment. It was agreed that the "Observer" should announce their presence upon arrival at a show and it was stated that they should be prepared to give constructive advice to judges after their classes had finished. It was noted that education and support for the observers would be required to ensure appropriate and sensitive delivery of verbal feedback. The point was made that those observing judges should be able to compete on the same day, but should not observe any judges under which they had entered.

38. The Council also welcomed the mentoring system for new judges and expressed a need for such a system to be made available to all judges, either on the day of the appointment or before the date of the show. However, it was acknowledged that mentors could potentially be inundated with requests and, therefore, any decisions should take into account that these people were volunteers. The Council emphasised that since Accredited Trainers already had many obligations, that approved Championship show judges should also be considered as observers and mentors. Overall, the Council supported the initiatives and **referred** the above points to the Working Party for further consideration. It would welcome results of its discussions in due course.

Jumping Practical Seminar – Jumping Appointments Only

39. The Council was requested to discuss its thoughts on the possibility of creating a separate practical jumping assessment to enable competitors, who were keen to judge, but wished to restrict their judging appointments to Jumping classes only. The Council supported this suggestion. It was felt that many people would like to judge, but would not for a variety of reasons wish to fulfil agility appointments. Some concerns were raised that it would become more difficult for show societies to organise judges and others felt there would be a lack of available agility judges in the future depending on the popularity of the seminar. However, overall the Council was of the view that as far as possible, the prospect of becoming a judge should be open to all. Therefore, the Council **referred** the matter to the Working Party for further consideration and welcomed its proposals in due course.

**ITEM 14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Measuring Queries

40. Following a request to increase the number of available measurers in the Worcestershire/Gloucestershire area, the Council requested the matter be **referred** to the Activities Sub-Committee to consider a complete review of the number of measurers for each area of the UK. The Council also requested the existing measurers be written to and asked whether they were still actively holding measuring sessions.

Agility Liaison Council – South East & East Anglia Region

41. Mr Chandler requested the Council discuss the possibility of having an additional representative for the above area since the north part of the region was difficult to represent due to the location of the current two representatives. It was also a numerically larger region compared to some other areas. The Council requested the matter be **referred** to the Sub-Committee for further consideration.

## **ITEM 15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

42. It was noted that the date of the next meeting will be Thursday 6 June 2013. Items for the agenda should reach the office by Friday 8 March 2013.

**MISS L OLDEN**  
**Chairman**

### **THE KENNEL CLUB'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

**“To raise the relevance of the Kennel Club in the eyes of the public at large, dog owners and those who take part in canine events, so as to be better able ‘to promote in every way the general improvement of dogs.’ This objective to be achieved through:-**

- Ensuring that the Kennel Club is the first port of call on all canine matters.
- Improving canine health and welfare.
- Popularising canine events focusing on the retention of existing participants and the attracting of new.
- Achieving a widening of the Kennel Club membership base.
- Encouraging the development of all those concerned with dogs through education and training.
- Encouraging more people to provide input in the Kennel Club's decision making process.”

**Agility Liaison Council Representatives**  
**1 January 2013 – 31 December 2015**

Listed below are the Area Liaison Council Representatives that can be contacted should further information be required on any of the items included on the minutes.

**SCOTLAND**

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**WALES**

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