



**MINUTES OF THE OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JULY 2019 AT 10.30AM IN THE
BOARDROOM, THE KENNEL CLUB, CLARGES STREET**

PRESENT

Mrs K Allen	South West
Mrs A Benoist	North East
Mr J Farr	Wales
Miss F Godfrey	South East/East Anglia
Mr R Harlow	South East/East Anglia
Mrs J Jessop	Wales
Mrs D Lavender	North East
Mrs J Le Fevre	South East & East Anglia
Mr M McCartney	Northern Ireland
Mrs C Patrick	Scotland
Mrs B Smith	Midlands

GUEST

Dr J Boyd	(Item 6 only)
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IN ATTENDANCE

Miss D Deuchar	Senior Manager - Governance & Education
Mrs A Mitchell	Senior Committee Secretary - Working Dog Activities Team
Miss H Lawrence	Education Manager (Item 10 only)

IN THE CHAIR

MR R HARLOW

ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies were received from Mr J McIntosh, Mr D Moxon, Mrs K Russell, Mr B Luckock, Mr N Slater, and Mr R Wakelin.
2. The Council noted that Mr Burbidge-Grant had resigned from the Council. The appointment of Mr B Luckock to replace Mr Burbidge-Grant had been approved by the Board.
3. Mr McCartney had submitted his resignation as Vice-Chairman with immediate effect, although he would retain his role as a member of the Council. A replacement Vice-Chairman would be elected at the Council's next meeting.



ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 were approved as being an accurate record.

ITEM 3. MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Council noted that the Board, at its meeting on 9 April 2019, approved the following amendments to G Regulations:

Regulation G30.h.

TO:

Judges should whenever possible, provide their own Caller Stewards, but the Show Management shall provide any Caller Stewards if necessary. Caller and Scribe Stewards used by judges at the show must not work a dog on the same day, **with the exception that at a show with 6 scheduled classes or less, caller and scribe stewards may compete in one class, other than the class in which they are officiating, provided that the class has 20 entries or less. Caller and scribe stewards taking up this option will be exempt from any running order and may compete at a convenient time agreed by the judges concerned.**

(Deletion struck through. Insertion in bold).

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Regulation G32.e.

TO:

A Judge's first three appointments for shows must be restricted to Novice.

The next three appointments must be up to and including Class A. Before accepting an Open Class C appointment, a Judge must have completed at least a further nine appointments. These must include a minimum of three Class A and three Class B appointments. It is the individual's responsibility to retain proof of their judging appointments.

(Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Regulation G(A)6.a.

TO:

a. To compete in Pre-Beginners a handler or dog must not have won **two a** First places in either Pre-Beginners or Beginners nor gained a third place or above in any other Obedience class (Introductory Class excepted).

(Insertions in bold. Deletions struck through.)

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Regulation G30.g.

TO:

Where timed stays will take place it must be announced in the schedule that they take priority over other tests. The times of such tests to be published at the show and in the catalogue, **if available, and may also be published with running orders. Published stay times must not be changed, except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the show management.** In the case of Championship Class C stays must not be judged before 12 noon. In all other cases, timed stays must not commence before one hour after the published time for the commencement of judging.

(Insertions in bold)

(Effective 1 January 2020)

Training for commentators

6. At its previous meeting, the Council reiterated its view that the provision of a training course for commentators at major events would be very useful and should be progressed.



7. The Council was advised that subsequent to its request, the Board had approved the principle of practical training for commentators but with the stipulation that such training should be available company-wide, as appropriate. The office would prepare a business case which would be submitted to the Finance Committee. An update would be provided in due course.

Allocation of Championship show dates

8. At its January meeting, the Council discussed issues relating to the allocation of Championship show dates and how these may be addressed via the use of week numbers
9. It noted that due to issues with some championship show societies which needed to keep the same date each year, it had not been possible to formulate a suitable proposal, using week numbers, which would effectively address the matter.
10. The Council accepted that some societies held obedience shows in conjunction with other disciplines such as agility or breed showing, or on bank holiday weekends, as a result of which the allocation of a system using week numbers would be problematic for those societies.
11. However it went on to consider whether a way could be found to address the issue of clashing dates, particularly in view of a reduction in the number of competitors which made it particularly necessary to avoid clashes which would have a detrimental effect on societies.
12. It was highlighted that championship shows would take priority over open shows, but that clashes of open show dates could often be prevented by means of good communication between show organisers. The office would try to assist shows wishing to retain their traditional dates, but this was not always possible.
13. The Council noted that the existing database did not provide for automatic recognition of clashes between two shows in the same area, and the office did not have sufficient resources to highlight such clashes manually. It was unlikely that the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system would provide such a facility.
14. The Council concluded that it was not possible to avoid all clashes, but that the Kennel Club's 'Find a Show' facility could be used by show societies to help them in planning their show dates.
15. Where two show societies were not able to reach an amicable agreement regarding dates, and where an objection had previously been lodged, the matter would be referred to the Activities Committee for a decision.

Pedigree information for dogs registered on the Activity Register

16. At the Council's previous meeting the Council had expressed its view that it would be helpful to have public access to information regarding dogs on the Activity Register, particularly health testing information and pedigree details. Mrs Garner had undertaken to pursue the matter on behalf of the Council.
17. In response to a request, it was noted that no update was available. The office agreed to investigate what progress had been made. **[Afternote:** it was confirmed that the facility would not be available via the new CRM system, but may be included in Phase 2 development of the system.]



ITEM 4. FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

18. All Council representatives provided reports regarding activities undertaken in their area to gain feedback from competitors since the previous meeting.
19. Feedback had been obtained via informal conversations at shows, meetings at shows, evening meetings, and online via social media.
20. Several representatives reported a lack of enthusiasm for any changes within the discipline, whilst some competitors had highlighted the availability of a wide range of other activities such as rally, agility, and tracking, which were seen as more relaxed than obedience, as a reason for the reducing number of entries.
21. The Council agreed that in view of the feedback it was necessary to find ways to encourage both new and existing competitors to participate.

ITEM 5. ACTIVITIES JUDGES SUB-GROUP

22. The Council noted a written report from Mr Rutter on the work of the Activities Judges Sub-Group following its meeting on 11 April 2019. The following issues were highlighted:

Education Day

23. The Council was advised that the suggestion of an Education Day for activities judges was currently under consideration by the Training Board.

Regulations and Judging Procedure examination

24. The Council noted that the Regulations and Judging Procedure film was now available online via the Kennel Club Academy. It went on to discuss the suggestion that the Regulations and Judging Procedure examination should also be made available online via the Academy which would enable candidates to take the examination at home without the necessity for them to attend a classroom-based seminar.
25. A range of views was expressed. Some Council members were in support of the suggestion, but others expressed a concern that candidates taking the examination online would have the opportunity to refer to the G Regulations, but it was acknowledged that by doing so the candidate would be gaining useful awareness of the Regulations and of where to find relevant information.
26. It was highlighted that the online examination worked well in agility where aspiring judges were required to pass an online examination before attending a 2-day practical seminar on a pass/fail basis. Those candidates who did not demonstrate a good understanding of the Regulations relating to agility may be easily identified at that stage and would not be awarded a pass.
27. The Council acknowledged that a similar process, which could include a revised and extended version of the existing Obedience Test Design and the Practice of Judging Seminar, may work well in obedience.
28. Its views would be referred back to the Sub-Group.

ITEM 6. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP

29. The Council was pleased to welcome Dr Jacqueline Boyd, Chair of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group to the meeting.
 30. Dr Boyd provided an excellent presentation which summarised the work of the Sub-Group. **(Attached as Annex A to the Minutes).**
- ##### Membership of the Sub-Group
31. In response to a query, Dr Boyd advised the Council that in due course a behaviour specialist may be invited to become a member of the SubGroup, to reflect an increasing



focus within the dog-owning community on the mental and emotional wellness of dogs, in addition to their physical health.

Colour recognition in dogs

32. The issue of colour recognition in dogs was raised. The Sub-Group had noted external research which had been carried out, but as yet this had not had any impact on obedience, for example in terms of the colours used for retrieve articles or sendaway markers. The Council agreed that it would be helpful to be aware of scientific information which may be used as evidence to support appropriate changes to G Regulations.
33. Noting that a similar issue had been raised by the Agility Liaison Council at its meeting the previous week, it was agreed that the matter of colour recognition by dogs should be referred to the Sub-Group for further investigation and research, and that the results would be shared with both Councils in due course.

Body carriage in heelwork

34. It was highlighted that the Sub-Group had noted research relating to heelwork. The research had been used to produce guidance for obedience judges, but it was unclear as to whether the two research papers had been disseminated. [Afternote: the two papers may be accessed via the following links:]
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/314268466_An_examination_of_neck_angle_in_obedience_dogs_whilest_completing_competition_heel_work

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327475513_Human_preferences_for_heelwork_positions_during_UK_competitive_obedience

35. A query was raised as to whether any research had been carried out relating specifically to dogs working with their head around the handler's leg. It was confirmed that the Sub-Group had not been requested to undertake such research.
36. The Council was of the view that any scientific evidence regarding the dog's body position during heelwork would be of value in assisting judges and would help to promote practices which were not detrimental to the dog's welfare.

Accredited Trainers Annual Seminar

37. Noting the value of the Sub-Group's work, and the need to publicise it more widely, a suggestion was made that Dr Boyd be invited to make a presentation to the Accredited Trainers at their annual seminar due to be held in October 2019. It was agreed that this would be a positive step, and the office agreed to raise the matter with the chairman of the Activities Judges Sub-Group.

Next meeting

38. The Council noted that the Sub-Group's meeting due to be held on 14 January 2019 had been cancelled due to lack of business but any urgent matters were being addressed via email. The Sub-Group's next meeting would be on 19 September 2019.
39. Dr Boyd was thanked for attending the meeting, and for her highly informative and interesting presentation.

ITEM 7. YOUNG KENNEL CLUB

40. At its January meeting, the Council had agreed that a monthly teleconference call would take place between the YKC office and Mr Burbidge-Grant, to provide updates on developments and activities relating to the YKC. However, this had not taken place.
41. Noting Mr Burbidge-Grant's resignation from the Council, Mrs Lavender was appointed to take over the role of liaison with the YKC office. A report would be provided to the Council at each of its meetings.



ITEM 8. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Proposed amendment to Regulations G(C)4.e.(3) and G(C)4.e.(4)(i)

42. The proposal was presented by Miss Godfrey on behalf of Ms K Woodgreaves, an individual, who wished the Council to consider a proposed amendment to G Regulations which would allow for the use of diagonal turns in Class B and Class C. It was seconded by Mrs Le Fevre.
43. Ms Woodgreaves was of the view that the inclusion of diagonal turns would not be detrimental to the dogs or handlers and would add further scope for judges when setting rounds. The angle of the turn would be approximately 135 degrees.
44. The Council was in agreement with Miss Woodgreaves' view, and, by a majority, the following amendments were **recommended** for approval:

Regulation G(C)4.e.(3)

TO:

Class B. In this class at normal and slow pace the only permissible turns are turns of 90° to the left or right, 180° about turns to the right or the left and diagonal turns to the right and left. Medium or large circles and arcs can be included. At fast-pace the only permissible turns are turns of 90° to the left or right, **diagonal turns to the right** and 180° about turns to the right. Medium or large circles and arcs can be included. (Insertion in bold)

Regulation G(C)4.e.(4)(i)

TO:

Class C (i) Permitted turns

At normal and slow pace the permissible turns are 90° to the left or right, 180° about turns to the left or right, diagonal turns to the left or right, and circles or arcs. At fast pace, the only permissible turns are 90° to the left or right, **diagonal turns to the right** and 180° about turns to the right, and circles or arcs.
(Insertion in bold)

ITEM 9. OBEDIENCE STRATEGY WORKING PARTY

Qualification to compete at Crufts

45. The discussion item was presented by Mrs D Lavender, who wished the Council to consider a suggestion that, where the winner of an Obedience Certificate was a Champion and had already qualified to compete at Crufts the following year, the winner of the Reserve Obedience Certificate should qualify.

There were mixed views on the matter. Whilst the objective of allowing as many dogs as possible to compete at Crufts was welcomed, there was a view that the Championship was the highest level of competition and that only those dogs which had gained a top award, i.e. an Obedience Certificate, in the preceding year should qualify.

46. On balance, the Council concluded that it would not be productive to change the criteria for Crufts, however it would welcome any suggestions for improving the process by which dogs progressed through the classes so that, in due course, more would be in a position to qualify to compete at Crufts.
47. This led to a brief discussion regarding the Championship itself, and the necessity to make it attractive to spectators. The Council was of the view that long heelwork rounds were only of interest to those who already had a keen interest in the discipline, and did not attract those with less enthusiasm. It was hoped that ways could be found which would stimulate interest amongst spectators to encourage them to participate in the discipline themselves.



Distance between dogs during stays

48. Mrs Le Fevre presented the item on behalf of Ms C Eley, an individual, who requested that the Council discuss suggested amendments to the G Regulations, which would stipulate that a minimum distance of 1.5 metres should be left between dogs in the stay ring, with a recommended gap of 2 metres where possible.
49. Ms Eley had submitted the item on the basis of welfare and safety, in that stay exercises would be safer and less stressful for dogs if a minimum gap was left between them.
50. Concerns were raised that such a requirement may cause severe logistical problems for show organisers both in terms of providing the amount of space required, and in respect of the practical implications of ensuring that gaps were of the specified distance. Further, the imposition of a specified gap may cause issues for competitors with more than one dog participating in a stay exercise.
51. The Council acknowledged that show organisers would do their best to provide stay rings which gave adequate space for competitors, but it did not consider that it would be helpful to be prescriptive on the issue.
52. It also noted that there was no evidence to suggest that there was a significant issue with stays which would warrant an amendment to G Regulations.
53. For these reasons it did not support the discussion item.
54. However, it was noted that Regulation G(C)4(h) stated that stays in all classes were group tests and all dogs must compete together, but 'where this is impracticable at an indoor show, the class may be equally divided but the judging for the groups must be consecutive.'
55. It was suggested that it would be helpful for this Regulation to be amended to provide for stays to be split at outdoor shows as well as indoor ones, as this would provide all show organisers with the opportunity to ensure that competitors had adequate space in the stay ring. Any potential timing issues could be avoided by careful planning beforehand, based on the number of entries for each class, or part. The Council was of the view that this suggestion had merit, and it was agreed that Mrs Le Fevre would provide a formal proposal for consideration at its next meeting.

Introduction of Distant Control into Class B

56. Miss Godfrey requested that the Council discuss a number of suggested amendments to G Regulations which would introduce the Distant Control exercise into Class B.
57. The suggested amendments were based on responses to a questionnaire published by the Kennel Club in 2018 in respect of ways to improve progression of some exercises. Miss Godfrey was of the view that introducing a Distant Control exercise into Class B would help to prepare competitors and dogs for the more advanced Distant Control exercise in Class C, allowing them to become familiar with the exercise in the ring at a more comfortable level.
58. The Council was sympathetic to the objective of the suggestion which was to assist handlers with the transition from Class B to Class C. However, some representatives were of the view that introducing the Distant Control exercise into Class B would make the transition from Class A more difficult, and may prove discouraging to some competitors. It was also considered that the Sendaway exercise was often more challenging for competitors moving into Class B than Distant Control was for those competitors moving into Class C.



59. After consideration the Council concluded that rather than make any changes in isolation, it would be preferable to consider class progression as a whole. Accordingly, although it accepted that the suggestion did have some support, it agreed that it would not be progressed at the current time but may be reconsidered at a later date as part of an overall review.

ITEM 10. FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

Good Citizen Dog Scheme

60. At the Council's January meeting it was suggested that it may be a positive step to open a channel of communication with the Kennel Club's Good Citizen Dog Scheme (GCDS) department.
61. It was pleased to welcome Miss H Lawrence, Kennel Club Education Manager, representing the Good Citizen Dog Scheme (GCDS) department, who had joined the meeting in order to discuss ways in which Obedience may be promoted.
62. The Council noted a presentation which provided an overview of the Scheme. **(Annex B to the minutes refers.)**
63. One aspect which was highlighted was the importance of the role of training clubs, which had a significant influence over the choice of activity chosen by its members. It was hoped that clubs would continue to play a vital role in encouraging new handlers into competitive obedience.
64. The attention of the Council was also drawn to the popularity of the KCGCDS Special Pre-Beginner Obedience Stakes, which had been introduced in order to encourage GCDS participants to take part in competitive obedience.
65. Noting this, the Council went on to discuss ways in which obedience may be promoted, in conjunction with the GCDS. It was agreed that a small Working Party (membership to be agreed) would be appointed to explore a range of options as to how this may be achieved, in conjunction with Miss Lawrence. The Working Party would report back to the Council at its next meeting. [Afternote: it was confirmed that the Working Party would consist of Mrs Allen, Miss Godfrey, Mr Harlow, Mrs Lavender, Mrs Le Fevre and Mrs Patrick.]

Five Year Strategic Plan

66. It was agreed that promotion of obedience via the above route would be added to the Council's Five Year Strategic Plan.

ITEM 11. OBEDIENCE INFORMATION STAND

67. The Council noted that Mrs Benoist and Mrs Lavender would once again run the Obedience Information Stand at Crufts.

ITEM 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed amendment to Regulation G 32.d(1)

68. In response to a query, it was confirmed that a proposal submitted by Miss A Cornish regarding Regulation G 32.d(1) which had not been seconded at the Council's meeting on 10 January 2019, could not be discussed again until a two year period had elapsed.

Marking of the scent exercise

69. A query was raised in regard to a Regulation which was believed to have been in place some years ago and which specified that a handler who spoke to his or her dog whilst it was in the scent area would automatically lose 45-50 marks.



70. The Council noted that should there be a wish to reinstate the Regulation, it would be necessary for a suitable proposal to be submitted.

Judges' names on schedules

71. The Council's attention was drawn to a notice which had been issued on the Kennel Club's Facebook page to remind societies that the names of judges should be included on schedules.
72. It was highlighted that any changes to judges for Championship Class C must be notified immediately to the Kennel Club. In the case of judges for other classes, societies were not obliged to notify the Kennel Club in advance, but should do so as soon as possible. In all cases, societies should make every effort to advise competitors of a change of judge.
73. The Council noted that a list of championship judges, regularly updated by Mr Keble, was available on the Obedience UK website.

Field Officers

74. The Council noted that the role of the Field Officer was to ensure that shows were run in accordance with Kennel Club Regulations, and to highlight any concerns or issues which would be discussed with the show management.

ITEM 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

75. The next meeting of the Council would be held in February 2020 at a date to be agreed.
76. A request was made that the July meeting be held a week later than in 2019.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm

MR R HARLOW
Chairman

THE KENNEL CLUB'S MISSION STATEMENT

'The Kennel Club is the national body which exists to promote the general improvement, health and well-being of all dogs through responsible breeding and ownership'.