

**MINUTES OF THE KENNEL CLUB AGILITY LIAISON COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD AT THE KENNEL CLUB ON 13 JULY 2015**

**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 C Huckle	South and South West
Mr M Cavill	Wales

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Miss D Deuchar	Manager, Canine Activities
Miss R Mansfield	Specialist, Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Mitchell	Committee Secretary, Working Dog Activities Team

**IN THE CHAIR:**                    **Mr I Mallabar (Vice Chairman)**

**ITEM 1.        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Mr S Chandler, Mr J Gilbert and Miss L Olden.

**ITEM 2.        APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2015 were signed by the Vice Chairman as an accurate record.

**ITEM 3.        MATTERS ARISING/RESULTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Kennel Club Code of Practice for Owners and Handlers with Dogs Taking Part in Canine Activities

3. The Activities Sub-Committee had noted the Council's views on the document.

Review of hurdle heights

4. The Sub-Committee noted that the Council had accepted the principle of a review of current hurdle heights but had agreed to defer any decision until the current research, which was investigating all hurdle heights, was complete, and the results available. It

was acknowledged that this was an issue of great importance to the agility community.

Regulation H(1)(A)3.b Reduction of the height of the dog walk in special classes

5. The Council noted that the proposed amendment to the above Regulation had been approved by the General Committee at its meeting on 14 April 2015.

Recognition of Agility as a sport

6. The Council considered the issue of applying to the Sports Council for recognition of agility as a sport. It noted that an application form was available from the Sports Council which consisted mainly of a number of tick boxes to be completed by the applicant and submitted with various documents. The office confirmed that it would be possible to complete the form as an initial approach but it was likely that, based on the previous approach, no further progress would be possible until such time as the Kennel Club had addressed the issue of the recognition of handlers rather than dogs.
7. The Council considered the reasons for making the application and whether attaining recognition of Agility as a sport would be helpful in allowing the discipline to progress and develop. It was acknowledged that such recognition would be helpful in supporting applications for grants and funding, including lottery funding, for both clubs and individuals. The Council noted that in the equine community it was possible to obtain grants for improvement of facilities and to fund projects to assist young handlers and disabled handlers and it was hoped that similar funding would become available for agility should it be recognised as a sport.
8. However, a concern was raised regarding the risk that additional controls and regulations may be imposed upon the discipline by the Sports Council as a condition of recognition being granted.
9. There was also a possibility of additional requirements being imposed in respect of health and safety matters, but it was accepted that all such issues should be addressed via the risk assessments carried out by show organisers.
10. There was some concern that recognition as a sport may benefit elite competitors without having a significantly beneficial effect on grass-roots competitors who formed the basis of the discipline. However it was anticipated that should more funding become available to clubs, even those which were run on a commercial basis, there would be benefits for competitors at all levels in the form of improved facilities. It was accepted that more information was necessary as to the potential benefits, other than the possibility of additional funding.
11. It was accepted that recognition of agility as a sport would bring a number of benefits but there were also a number of concerns which should be addressed before any decision was made. The decision was an important one and should be made only after careful consideration. A suggestion was made that a Panel, consisting of some members of the Council, should give further consideration to all aspects of the issue, and would then report back to the Council. The Panel would investigate both the potential benefits and drawbacks of recognition of Agility as a sport. Such information would be invaluable in making the decision as to whether to progress the application.

12. It was agreed that the office would investigate the progress made during the original approach to the Sports Council, and would then make a further exploratory approach to the Sports Council. If this proved to be positive the matter would be referred to the Panel.
13. It was also agreed that advice should be sought from Mr A Allcock who was a breed show Championship judge and also Chief Executive of Bowls England and may therefore have relevant experience which would be helpful.

Proposed Amendment of Regulation H 28.a.(9) (Disqualification and Forfeit of Awards)

14. The Council noted that, at its meeting on 19 March 2015, the Activities Sub-Committee had considered the Council's recommendation for an amendment to the above Regulation which would allow a judge to judge dogs handled by his or her spouse, immediate family or resident at the same address as the scheduled judge, other than in Championship Classes and Kennel Club sponsored events. The Sub-Committee had accepted that agility had special challenges in view of the high number of judges required but had expressed a concern that the proposed amendment would result in different criteria being applied to agility to those in other disciplines, and that it would also imply that more trust was placed in judges at Open shows than those at Championship shows. In the interests of consistency, it had not recommended the amendment for approval.
15. The Council wished to record its deep disappointment with the Sub-Committee's decision not to recommend the proposed amendment for approval, noting that the agility community had been strongly in support of the proposed amendment, which had been made in the interests of ensuring that there was an adequate supply of judges available.
16. The office confirmed that other Activities disciplines such as Obedience, Working Trials, Heelwork to Music and Rally were subject to Regulations which allowed for a dog to be disqualified if handled by the judge's spouse. In breed showing, a dog may be disqualified if it had been handled at a Show, boarded or prepared for exhibition within the previous twelve months by the scheduled Judge. In the case of Field Trials, a dog may be disqualified if it had been handled at a trial, boarded or prepared for competition by one of the scheduled Judges within the previous twelve months prior to the Trial.
17. The Council noted that there was no Regulation which would specifically prevent a dog being judged by a judge's spouse at a Field Trial or breed show and the Council's view was that therefore the Sub-Committee's point regarding consistency across all disciplines did not apply. However it was clarified that these disciplines did not fall within the remit of the Activities Sub-Committee but were under the jurisdiction of the Field Trials Sub-Committee and the Show Executive Sub-Committee.
18. The Council wished to highlight its view that agility judging was not subjective in its nature and that an agility judge was not required to express his or her opinion on the performance of the dog. He or she therefore had very little influence over the results of a competition. It was considered that this was not the case in other disciplines

where judges were required to make subjective decisions regarding the characteristics or performance of a dog.

19. The Council requested the support of the Activities Sub-Committee on this matter, and wished to request that the matter be reconsidered in view of the strength of feeling within the agility community, and the issue of consistency.
20. It was also suggested that in the interests of consistency, the Show Executive Sub-Committee and the Field Trials Sub-Committee be requested to review the relevant 'F' and 'J' Regulations respectively with a view to including provision to be made regarding the handling of dogs at Shows and Trials by the spouse of a scheduled judge.

#### **ITEM 4. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE**

21. The Council was requested to note that the General Committee, at its meeting on 14 April 2015, approved the following proposals for a trial period covering the next term of office of the Agility Liaison Council.
  - That a number of subject specific panels be formed, on a similar basis to the recently formed Equipment Panel. Each panel would be encouraged to regularly liaise with a nominated Agility member of the Activities Sub-Committee and apprise them of progress of matters under discussion. It was anticipated that, as a result, matters being referred to the Sub-Committee from the Council would be better understood and supported from the outset. All Panel discussions would take place externally to the Kennel Club.
  - That from January 2016, an embargo should be placed on any Regulation changes within a three-year period, with the exception of any urgent matters, those currently under discussion prior to this date, or any matter relating to health and welfare of the dog or handler. Frequent changes to Regulations made it quite difficult for competitors and judges to keep up to date, and the imposition of a three-year embargo would also allow for the impact of previous amendments to be assessed before the introduction of further amendments.
22. The Sub-Committee had been of the view that the establishment of subject specific Panels would be of great assistance in allowing the Council to make definitive progress at its meetings.
23. It also considered that it was not desirable for frequent amendments to be made to Regulations and that the three year embargo would allow those changes already made to take effect, and for their impact to be assessed. It was anticipated that without the necessity to consider a number of proposed amendments to Regulations at its meetings, the Council would be able to make better use of its time to consider issues of overall strategy for the progression of the discipline.
24. The Council, whilst accepting the need to consider issues of strategy, expressed a concern at the suggestion of a three-year embargo, noting that this period would not enable it to bring to fruition any proposals made as a result of its consideration of

strategy issues, within a single term of office. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee should be requested to reconsider the length of the embargo to two and a half years, which would enable the Council to make recommendations for amendments to Regulations, based on the findings of work it had carried out during its term of office.

25. It was confirmed that the Council would continue to meet twice a year.
26. The Council noted that other Kennel Club Liaison Councils were not subject to the same changes in format at present as the Sub-Committee wished to assess the effect on the Agility Liaison Council before suggesting that the revised format be introduced for other Liaison Councils.

#### **ITEM 5. REPORT FROM THE EQUIPMENT PANEL**

27. The Council received a written report from the Equipment Panel regarding issues which had been referred to it.

##### Collapsible Tunnel

28. The Panel had been requested to consider the Collapsible Tunnel to ascertain if there was a safety issue, and whether shortening the length of the cloth would have a positive effect on safety. Members of the Panel had observed a number of dogs using the Collapsible Tunnel at a recent show and had not observed any issues with it where there was a straight entrance and exit to the tunnel, or where there was a slight turn at the exit.
29. However, from previous experience of watching the Collapsible Tunnel being completed at other shows, the Panel reported that if the Tunnel was positioned with a hard turn at the exit, or if the handler had to cross behind the Tunnel, this could result in a dog exiting from the Tunnel on its side.
30. The Panel concluded that any issues with the Collapsible Tunnel were as a result not of the equipment itself but of its placement, and that it was best set with a straight approach and exit, with the handler remaining on the same side as when the dog entered the Tunnel. It also considered that the Tunnel must be staked down correctly and that show organisers should liaise with manufacturers in regard to the correct way of doing this.
31. The Panel was unable to comment as to whether shortening the length of the Tunnel would be beneficial as this would require thorough testing with a prototype Tunnel, and the Panel did not have a budget to commission a suitable prototype.
32. However, the research conducted by the Panel appeared to indicate that there was not a major issue relating to the use of the Collapsible Tunnel which would warrant further detailed research. The office also confirmed that it had not received reports of major issues relating to use of the Collapsible Tunnel.

### Setting up of equipment

33. It was suggested that equipment manufacturers be requested to provide written guidance on how to set up equipment correctly so as to maximise safety. This could be in the form of an information sheet. It was agreed that this would be helpful and the office agreed to progress this further. Such guidance could be added to the Judges Guide to Agility Equipment.

### Incident Forms

34. At the Council's previous meeting It had been noted that all judges at the International Agility Festival had been provided with an incident form on which any injuries occurring in their ring were to be reported, and it had been agreed that this form should be provided for judges at all shows. The form was available for societies to download from the Kennel Club website. The Council was keen to encourage all judges to submit completed forms, together with photographs if possible, so that any issues with equipment could be investigated by the Equipment Panel.

### Use of a green Tyre

35. A query had previously been raised regarding the visibility of a green Tyre and whether dogs could see this clearly. Dogs competing in a combined grade 3-5 course were observed by members of the Panel, and it did not appear that dogs were experiencing any major problems with this obstacle. Research had been conducted with the aid of a mobile phone app which allowed members of the Panel to view colours as a dog would see them. It was noted that results obtained from using the app indicated that there was no difficulty in distinguishing the green Tyre even against a background of green grass. It also suggested that it was difficult for dogs to distinguish yellow and red, whereas purple and blue were easier for them to distinguish.
36. It was accepted that colour contrasts were very important for a dog, and that it was difficult for the Equipment Panel to make further comment without professional opinion being available. It was noted that it was the intention of the Activities Health & Welfare Sub-Group to undertake further research into this issue when resources allowed.

### Other issues

37. A number of concerns were raised by members of the Council about the safety of the following items of equipment:
- Jump wings: it was important to ensure that these were sufficiently high so as not to present any hazard to dogs or handlers.
  - A frames: an A frame had been observed with a metal strip which was becoming loose on one side.
  - Dog walk: protrusions had been observed on the underside of a dog walk.
  - Pipe Tunnel: a metal hook had been observed protruding into a tunnel.
38. It was agreed that the above matters were to be referred to the Equipment Panel for further investigation and appropriate action.

39. Should there be any concern about the safety of an item of equipment at a show, a note should be made in the show's Incident Book. The Council wished to highlight that competitors wishing to note any such concerns would not be required to lodge an objection fee.

#### **ITEM 6. ACTIVITIES HEALTH AND WELFARE SUB-GROUP**

40. The Council noted a report from Mr S Croxford on the progress of the Activities Health and Welfare Sub-Group following a meeting on 30 March 2015.

#### **ITEM 7. PROPOSALS FROM SOCIETIES/PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS**

##### Number of entries in a Championship Class

41. At its last meeting, the Council agreed the principle that should the number of entries for a Championship class exceed a set figure, show organisers may appoint a separate judge for the jumping round. A formal proposal had been prepared by the office.
42. It was noted that a judge appointed to judge a Jumping round was not considered to be awarding an Agility Certificate and that the appointment did not constitute a conflict with any Championship judging appointments for that judge.
43. It was also highlighted that a Reserve judge may enter the show but may not compete if called upon to judge at that show.
44. Mr Mallabar proposed the following amendment to Regulation H(1)9.e. Mr Hallam seconded the proposal. A vote took place and the Council voted to **recommend** the amendment for approval:

Regulation H(1)9.e

##### **TO:**

The maximum number of individual runs a person shall judge on one day is 450, excluding unforeseen eventualities such as re-runs. **Where Championship Class entries exceed 200 an additional previously approved Championship Judge must be appointed for the Jumping round.** Reserve judges may enter dogs...  
(Insertion in bold)

##### Grade Changes

45. The Council noted that Mrs Croxford and Mr Chandler had prepared a number of proposals relating to grade changes. The objective of the proposals was to address the issue of dogs moving up the grades too quickly and progressing into Grade 6 or Grade 7 without being fully prepared.
46. However, Mrs Croxford wished to propose that consideration of the individual proposals be deferred, pending a review of the grading structure as a whole. Mr Hallam seconded Mrs Croxford's proposal for deferral, which was accepted by the

Council. It agreed the views expressed at regional meetings regarding the proposed amendments, which were as follows, should be noted and collated by Mrs Croxford.

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)8.

47. The proposed amendment suggested that the first win at a show should count towards progression and that no further wins would count towards progression for a further five days. All wins would be counted towards Points Progression. The objective was to lengthen the progression timetable so that dogs had the opportunity to gain more experience before moving up a grade.
48. Feedback from regional meetings did not indicate strong support for the proposal. It was unclear as to which win at a show would count as being the first one, and there was also a concern that a win on the first day of a show held over several days would result in no further wins at that show counting towards progression. This was not considered to be desirable. It was acknowledged that the existing Regulations allowed for a handler to gain enough wins during the course of a single show for progression but this was not considered to be a major issue.

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)2.

49. This proposal was intended to address the issue of very small classes and suggested that in classes with less than 20 entries, a win would only count as a half win towards progression.
50. It was considered that the concept would be too complex in practice and that it would be impossible to monitor it. Competitors would wish to be aware beforehand whether their wins would count as 'whole' or 'half' wins. Feedback indicated that it would be seen as unfair to penalise competitors for a lack of entries in a class, which was outside their own control, and that a small number of dogs entered, or competing, did not indicate a lack of quality. A dog winning a small class could be of an equal standard to a dog winning a large class and both wins should be counted in the same way.

Proposed amendment to Regulation H(1)(A)8.g.

51. The proposal suggested that Grade 7 classes should become open to those who had gained a minimum of four first places at Grade 6 at Kennel Club Licensed Agility Shows, two of which must be gained in Agility (not Jumping) classes and one of which must be a combined class including Grades 6 and 7.
52. Feedback expressed during regional meetings had been mixed, with concerns expressed that the proposed amendment would benefit only those handlers perceived as 'elite'. It was also considered that it would become very difficult for handlers, especially those in Small and Medium classes, to progress into Grade 7 as to do so they would have to achieve wins against top-level handlers, and that this may encourage people to attend those shows attracting lower entries in order to gain an 'easier' win in order to progress.
53. It was noted that that there had been some support for the proposal but this had mainly been from those currently competing in Grade 7.

54. The Council noted the feedback, and expressed a view that when considering any suggestions for the development of the discipline it was important to take into account the views of handlers at all levels. In some cases it may be necessary for decisions to be taken which would have a beneficial effect on some handlers and an adverse effect on others, for the benefit of the discipline as a whole.

Proposed amendment to H(1)(A)5.

55. The proposal suggested that combined classes should remain permissible for any number of grades, but would become compulsory when there were more than three grades in the class. Judges could then set the appropriate course challenges and course times for the respective grades.

56. The Council noted that there had been a high level of support for this proposal at area meetings and that many handlers enjoyed Grade 1-7 Combined Classes as courses were often fast and flowing.

Overall comments

57. The Council accepted that the issue of the grading structure was an important one, and that the review should be carried out with care as it would form the basis for the ongoing development of the discipline. The review should be based on statistical evidence as well as on the views expressed by the agility community.

58. A suggestion was made that a Grading Panel formed of a sub-group of Council members should be appointed to carry out the review.

59. The Council agreed that the first priority would be to decide on objectives for the discipline and what it wished to achieve. It was keen to ensure that Agility was an inclusive discipline which could be enjoyed by competitors at all levels, and that in particular handlers at lower levels should be provided with clear goals for them to aim at, in the form of progression and awards. It was noted that Agility had a large base of 'pet owners' who enjoyed competing and that such handlers formed the basis of the hobby and should be encouraged as much as possible. Equally, the interests of those competing in higher grades should also be taken into consideration.

60. The following suggestions were noted for future consideration as part of the review:

- The introduction of a two-tier system whereby wins at shows held by Registered clubs would count towards progression, but that wins at shows held by Listed Status clubs would only count under certain circumstances.
- A 'mock' Championship class where handlers not yet qualified to enter Championship classes would have the opportunity to experience a Championship course.
- To make more use of the Agility Warrant scheme, such as by the introduction of competitions for winners of Bronze, Silver and Gold Agility Warrants. These could be area competitions leading to a final at each level.

61. It was agreed that the agility community should be encouraged to submit further suggestions relating to the issue of grade changes. Suggestions should be submitted in the first instance to Council representatives.

Proposed amendment to Regulation K3.c. Agility Warrants

62. Mrs McShane wished to propose the introduction of a Platinum Warrant in addition to the existing Bronze, Silver and Gold Warrants, with the objective of encouraging participation in the sport and to provide competitors with additional goals, such as to seek to improve the ability of their dog and build on the team work between the dog and handler. The proposal was seconded by Mrs Croxford.
63. The Council noted that there was a lot of support for the proposal which was viewed as a positive step. However, it considered that it would be desirable to add an additional level beyond Platinum so that there were ongoing achievements for handlers at all levels to aim for, and it was proposed by Mr Huckle that Regulation K3.c. be amended to also include provision for a Diamond Warrant to be awarded to those gaining 1600 points, a minimum of 400 of which to be from agility. The revised proposal was seconded by Mr Hallam.
64. It was confirmed that it would be acceptable for handlers to claim points already won prior to the introduction of Platinum and Diamond Warrants, if approved. It was noted that a clear round with no time faults was required in order to claim points.
65. It was noted that since the introduction of the Bronze, Silver and Gold Agility Warrants in 2006, the following numbers had been claimed:

Bronze 3021	(344 claimed in 2014)
Silver 1700	(234 claimed in 2014)
Gold 766	(99 claimed in 2014)

66. A vote took place and the following amendment to Regulation K3.c. was **recommended** for approval:

Regulation K3.c. Agility Warrants

**TO:**

Bronze 200 points (minimum of 50 points in agility)

Silver 400 points (minimum of 100 points in agility)

Gold 800 points (minimum of 200 points in agility)

**Platinum 1200 points (minimum 300 points in agility)**

**Diamond 1600 points (minimum 400 points in agility)**

The following titles may be used after the name of the dog on Show entries and in catalogues.

Bronze AW(B)

Silver AW(S)

Gold AW(G)

**Platinum AW(P)**

**Diamond AW(D)**

(Insertions in bold)

Proposal to amend Regulation H(1)(B)1.a(4) Standard Class Course Time

67. Mrs Croxford, on behalf of Ms Harding, introduced a proposal to amend the above Regulation. The intention of the proposal was to remove the pressure of a measured course time from beginner dogs and beginner handlers, whilst achieving consistency with course times as dogs progressed through the grades. However, there was no seconder for the proposal and no further discussion took place.

**ITEM 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Defibrillators at shows/Provision and maintenance of an Automated External Defibrillator

68. The above two items were considered together as they related to the same issue. Ms K Maynard wished the Council to discuss a suggestion that it should be compulsory for a defibrillator to be present and accessible at a show at all times. The location of the defibrillator should be communicated to the competitors. Mr I Mcghee, wished to suggest that clubs agree to funding for an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) which could be taken from show to show. Mr Mcghee's view was that an AED should be available at every Kennel Club licenced agility show.
69. The Council noted that a number of clubs already provided access to a defibrillator at shows, either hired or shared between several clubs. A concern was raised regarding possible consequences if the equipment was incorrectly used but the Council was reassured that the equipment contained sensors and would not work if a heartbeat was detected.
70. The Council agreed that shows should be encouraged to provide a defibrillator but it was not considered that this should be mandatory.
71. Ms Maynard also requested that the Council discuss the requirement for a first aider to be present at shows. The Council wished to remind all show organisers that they must ensure that adequate first aid provision was considered as part of their risk assessment.
72. It was noted that Mr Chandler could supply details of a service whereby a paramedic and a first aid team could be present at any show within the UK, at an estimated cost of 30p per competitor, although it was accepted that this could vary depending on the numbers present. It was agreed that the attention of show organisers may be drawn to available facilities but that it was up to clubs to make such arrangements as considered appropriate for the individual event.
73. It was acknowledged that although there may often be health professionals present at shows in a private capacity, they may be reluctant to assist in the event of an emergency due to issues with professional liability and insurance.

Dogs with infectious diseases

74. The discussion item was presented by Mrs McShane on behalf of Ms K Whillans, who requested that the Council discuss a suggestion whereby anyone whose dog was certified by a veterinary surgeon as showing signs of a contagious canine disease,

would be refunded their entry and camping fees for all dogs entered for that handler/owner.

75. The Council did not consider that the suggestion was a viable one and was of the view that it would cause logistical difficulties for show secretaries. It noted that in some cases the cost of obtaining a certificate from a veterinary surgeon would be higher than the value of a refund so would be of little benefit to the owner. It was also concerned that the suggestion would lead to refunds being requested for a wide variety of reasons.
76. It was noted that any handler could approach a club to request a refund for any reason, and that it was the decision of the club concerned as to whether it agreed to the request.
77. The Council did not support the suggestion.

Input from members of Listed Status and Registered clubs

78. Mrs Gardner presented the item on behalf of Golden Valley Dog Training Club which wished to suggest that a structure be created for feedback from Listed and Registered clubs to enable them to have more input into Liaison Council meetings and influence decision making. It was suggested that club representatives would collect views from their membership which would be forwarded to their Council representative either via attendance at regional meetings or by other means. By doing so, all competitors would be encouraged to join a local Kennel Club Registered or Listed Status Club in order for them to have a say in how their sport was shaped in the future, although it would not be practical to compel people to join a club. Golden Valley Dog Training Club was of the view that such a measure would support Kennel Club Registered and Listed Clubs and provide a better structure for providing feedback to grass-roots competitors.
79. It was noted that this would allow for proposals to be submitted to the Council only via Registered or Listed Status clubs, which, it was anticipated, would help to ensure that only suitable proposals were placed on the agenda. However, it was accepted that at present, Council representatives were able to check proposals before they were submitted to the Council for consideration.
80. There was little support for the suggestion. A similar scheme had been attempted in the past in one of the regions but had not proved to be effective, and had resulted in a very low attendance at regional meetings. There was also some concern that such a measure would be perceived as elitist and would exclude those competitors who did not wish to join clubs. The Council agreed that healthy debate at regional meetings was desirable and that hearing a range of views was a helpful part of the decision making progress. Its view was that regional meetings should continue to be open to all who wished to attend them.
81. Accordingly, it did not support the suggestion.

### Training in the ring at shows

82. Mrs Gardner requested that the Council discuss the issue of whether trainers should be permitted to hold training sessions in competition rings before, during or after a show.
83. It was accepted that some shows provided practice rings specifically for the purpose of training which was quite acceptable. However, it was suggested that, ideally, food should not be used even in a practice ring, as the same ring may be in subsequent use for competition purposes and dropped food would be a serious distraction for competing dogs.
84. Some judges, after setting up their course, would request that a test run be carried out in order to check the course. However, it was not acceptable for organised training sessions to be held in a ring which had been set up for competition. Show managers should not allow this to take place.
85. The Council expressed a concern regarding handlers who did not attempt the course as set by the judge but who ran their own course for the purposes of training. It was accepted that it was difficult to define exactly what constituted training, however the Council reiterated its view stated at its meeting in July 2014 that training in the ring demonstrated a lack of respect for judges and the other competitors, and that all competitors were expected to attempt the course.
86. The Council wished to remind show organisers and competitors of the provisions of Regulation H(1)(B)1.c. which stated that 'no practice is allowed on the course save that competitors will be allowed to walk the course set at the height the dog is to negotiate without their dog (s) before the class begins.' It confirmed that, once a course was set up, no practicing was permissible, other than the judge's course testing. A notice to this effect was to be placed in The Scribe.

### Qualification for Championship

87. Mrs Croxford, on behalf of Ms C Harding, suggested that in order to qualify for Championship classes, a dog must achieve three top three places in classes which included grade 7 (e.g. 6-7 agility), at least two of which must be agility, at Premier or Championship Shows. The suggestion was designed to ensure that dogs must prove they could beat other grade 7 dogs at that level before they could enter Championship classes. Ms Harding's view was that the Premier/Championship rule was necessary as it was currently too easy for handlers to get wins if they targeted small shows.
88. Feedback from regional meetings had indicated a lack of support for the suggestion on the grounds that it was unfair as some handlers could not attend a number of shows for financial or geographical reasons. The suggestion was also perceived as being of benefit to elite handlers whilst penalising others.
89. The Council noted the suggestion which would be taken into consideration as part of the review of the overall grading structure.

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

90. The Council noted the items on the Council's five year strategic plan.
91. It was concerned that there appeared to have been little progress achieved. Specific topics discussed were as follows:
- That Kennel Club agility be at the forefront of agility in the world
92. This objective was considered to be rather poorly defined. There was also a concern that some overseas competitors considered UK courses to be unsafe. An example was given of a recent visit to the UK by two world-class handlers from overseas who had refused to participate at Kennel Club shows during their visit due to concerns that courses were too tight and the distances between obstacles too small.
- To develop Kennel Club agility as a more attractive product to newcomers, increase numbers in the sport, as well as looking after its customer base; consideration of a results database, more recognition of its competitors and more achievements rewarded.
93. The Council agreed that it would be helpful if future meetings were able to focus on strategy issues.
94. A suggestion was made that the Council should have its own presence on social media sites. It was noted that some regions already had this facility but even those with a number of members tended to receive minimal responses to Council agendas and minutes published on their sites.
95. It was suggested that rather than this being an indication of apathy on the part of competitors, it may indicate that the majority of those participating in Agility were happy with the status quo and did not see a necessity for major change. Research undertaken as part of a student dissertation had suggested that there were approximately 10,000 households taking part in Agility, and the Council was of the view that a great many of these were competitors who simply wished to attend shows and enjoy the activity with their dogs. However it was acknowledged that the costs of attending shows were increasing, which may be discouraging to new competitors. It was unclear how many new competitors were entering the discipline at Grades 1 & 2, although many experienced handlers were participating at Grade 3 level with 'new' dogs.

## **ITEM 10. JUDGES WORKING PARTY (ACTIVITIES)**

96. The Council noted a written report on the progress of the Judges Working Party following its meeting on 28 April 2015.
- Course times
97. A query was raised regarding the use of the Kennel Club's matrix for calculating course times. There was some concern that the course times used in the matrix were overly generous. It was noted that use of the matrix was not mandatory.

98. It was acknowledged that judges were particularly keen to set course times for Grade 1 & 2 handlers which would allow them the opportunity to achieve clear rounds without time faults as this was greatly encouraging for newer handlers. It was considered that the times shown in the matrix did allow for this.

Continuing Professional Development of Existing Judges

99. The Council noted that two assessments of judges had so far taken place, and that progress was ongoing. It was noted that at present assessments could only be carried out by Kennel Club Accredited Trainers.
100. It noted that the majority of complaints received from competitors related to incorrect or incompetent judging and it was hoped that the Continuing Professional Development process would help to address this issue. All Agility judges should be both sufficiently fit to undertake the role, which involved considerable physical activity, and competent to do so. Show organisers had a responsibility to appoint judges who were capable of fulfilling an appointment to a satisfactory standard.

**ITEM 11. INTERNATIONAL AGILITY FESTIVAL**

101. A written report on the arrangements for the Kennel Club International Agility Festival, due to be held on 13-16 August 2015, was noted.

**ITEM 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

102. No matters were raised under Any Other Business.

**ITEM 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

103. The Council noted that the next meeting would be in January 2016. The date would be confirmed in September 2015.
104. Those present were thanked for their valuable contribution to the work of the Council during its current term of office.
105. There being no further matters to discuss the meeting closed at 14.35 pm.

**MR I MALLABAR**  
**Vice 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.

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