

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OBEDIENCE STRATEGY WORKING  
PARTY HELD AT THE KENNEL CLUB AT 10.30 AM ON  
MONDAY 11 APRIL 2016**

**PRESENT:**

Miss F Godfrey  
Mr R Harlow  
Mr P Lubbi  
Mrs L Turner

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Miss D Deuchar	Manager – Canine Activities
Miss S Mamouzi	Specialist – Working Dog Activities Team
Mrs A Mitchell	Committee Secretary – Working Dog Activities Team

**IN THE CHAIR:**

**MR R HARLOW**

**ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence had been received from Mr M McCartney.

**ITEM 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKING PARTY**

2. The Working Party noted the objective which was to discuss ways of attracting more competitors and dogs into competitive obedience and ways of retaining existing competitors.

**ITEM 3. OBEDIENCE LIAISON COUNCIL - FIVE YEAR STRATEGY**

3. There was some concern that the current strategy document was not sufficiently detailed and did not contain specific follow up actions or dates by which actions should be completed. In order for it to be effective it would be necessary for specific individuals to be named against each action point, together with an appropriate deadline.

**Young Kennel Club Obedience**

4. Mr Harlow confirmed that he had been in touch with the YKC office and had proposed that Mrs Turner should liaise further with the YKC in order to discuss issues relating to Obedience and how it could be promoted to YKC members.

**LT**

5. It was noted that it was hoped that in future YKC handlers would be able to claim points from classes other than special YKC classes, which were not scheduled by all show societies. It was agreed that this would be helpful in allowing more handlers to gain qualifying points.

6. It was noted that rules relating to YKC Obedience were in the process of being amended. It was hoped that suitable guidance would be provided to judges undertaking appointments to judge YKC classes.
7. It was agreed that it would be helpful for a member of the Council to attend YKC meetings. Mr Burbidge had agreed to be available to the YKC for consultation purposes but it was unclear as to whether he would be present at meetings. Mr Harlow undertook to check this issue with Mr King, Chairman of the YKC Management Team.

**RH**

Council engagement with grass-roots competitors

8. It was acknowledged that communications had improved with the widespread use of social media. Many representatives had their own presence on social media which provided an easy route for effective communication.
9. A suggestion was made that each Council representative be requested to provide a report stating how many individuals had been in contact with feedback regarding any Obedience issues. It was considered that this would encourage all Council members to be pro-active in seeking the views of competitors, although it was accepted that some areas may receive less feedback than others. It was emphasised that feedback may be sought by any method such as meetings, social media, or email.
10. It was accepted that many competitors were reluctant to attend regional meetings. As an alternative, the presence of a Council representative at a show was generally welcomed and provided competitors with a convenient opportunity to discuss issues and to raise suggestions for future consideration. Council representatives may also visit training clubs to encourage discussions with competitors.
11. The Working Party agreed that an item was to be added to the Council agenda requesting all representatives to provide a short report of activities undertaken in their area to gain feedback from competitors since the previous meeting.

**AM**

Attracting newcomers into Obedience

12. It was noted that there had been some positive developments in respect of breed shows holding Obedience classes at their shows. This was welcomed and it was hoped that more breed shows may be encouraged to do so in order to widen the range of activities offered.
13. The Working Party considered the suggestion that competitive Obedience could be promoted by visits to clubs by Council representatives but it was accepted that this would be problematic due to the input of time and resources required. However it may be possible to undertake some promotional activities at Companion Dog Shows. It was noted that few Companion Shows were scheduling Obedience classes. This was considered to be a key area as it had previously been the case that many

competitors began competing at Companion Shows before progressing to Open Shows.

14. Companion Shows provided a number of benefits for new exhibitors. It was not necessary for dogs to be registered with the Kennel Club, and competitors could turn up on the day without the need to enter in advance. The atmosphere at most Companion Shows was relaxed which was greatly beneficial for new competitors who may find Open Shows more daunting.
15. It was noted that many Companion Shows were run on an annual basis and it was suggested that these could be targeted and encouraged to schedule Obedience classes. It may be possible to issue a Press Release highlighting the number of Companion Shows held each year and encouraging more of them to include Obedience classes.
16. It was agreed that the topic of Companion Shows should be placed on the agenda for the Council's next meeting and that one individual would be encouraged to take on the project of promoting Obedience classes at such shows. **AM**

Crufts – promotion of Obedience to potential newcomers

17. Most of the objectives outlined on the strategy document had been achieved.
18. A suggestion was made that it may be helpful for a demonstration of the Championship round by a 'white dog', with a full commentary, to be carried out prior to the first competitor's round in order to explain to the audience exactly what was happening. A repeat could also take place at lunchtime. It was agreed that this was a good idea and that it should be progressed further. **RH**

Channels of communication

19. The Council had suggested that more use should be made of all channels of communication in order to maximise opportunities to promote Obedience. For example, it was suggested that all handlers obtaining a Gold Good Citizens award should be targeted to encourage them to take part in competitive Obedience.
20. It was noted that many clubs offering Good Citizen training did not offer any additional Competitive Obedience training. However the Working Party agreed that it would still be desirable for such clubs to receive information regarding Competitive Obedience.
21. However, there were other routes of communication which could be used to promote Obedience.
22. It was highlighted that the Council had agreed that a meeting should be held with the Kennel Club's Good Citizen department in order to discuss the creation of Obedience information packs for clubs and the provision of

information on Competitive Obedience to assessors. However, this meeting had not yet taken place.

RH

23. It was acknowledged that, at present, there was no constructive strategy in place to allow owners to make the transition between Good Citizen training and Competitive Obedience. Some clubs offering Good Citizen training did not teach the skills necessary for Introductory level Obedience.

24. A suggestion was made that the Council be provided with details of those who had been awarded a Gold Good Citizen award, so that contact may be made with the individuals concerned, via their area representative. However it was unclear as to whether names and addresses of owners were recorded. The office agreed to check.

DD

#### Bonus wins

25. The Council had highlighted an issue whereby, due to entries closing well in advance of shows, handlers having qualified out of a class were obliged to continue to compete in that class for some time, and as a result, in some cases, blocked wins by other handlers.

26. A number of suggestions were submitted regarding ways in which this issue may be addressed. These included:

- That a win would not be counted if it was (for example) the dog's third win in that class, or if it had already won out of that class, and if so, the win would pass to the 2<sup>nd</sup> placed dog.
- In the event of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> placed dogs having been awarded an equal score and where a run-off had taken place, the 2<sup>nd</sup> place may be considered to be a win for the purposes of progression.
- That a handler should cease to compete in a class immediately he or she had won out of it. However it was acknowledged that this was not practical.
- Implementation of a system similar to that used in agility, where, in the event of a dog becoming eligible for the next level more than 25 days before a show the dog would be moved into the next level, regardless of the closing date.

It was noted that this system had proved to be effective in Agility. It was suggested that for Obedience shows, if a dog became eligible for the next class more than 25 days prior to a show, and the show secretary was advised at least 14 days before the show, this would allow adequate time to prepare and issue running orders, especially as most running orders were now published online rather than being sent out individually.

- Introduction of a points system whereby a handler may, optionally, progress on the basis of points gained, rather than by wins.

There was some concern as to whether progression on points would

be a positive step but it was agreed that if it was optional rather than compulsory, it may be a helpful way of addressing the issue of bonus wins.

27. It was noted that any changes to the current system would result in a number of knock-on effects, in particular for show organisers who would be required to implement any changes. It would be necessary to ensure that the benefits were clearly highlighted to ensure a positive reception from the Obedience community, and to provide reassurances that there would not be an increased administrative burden.

Agility and Obedience shows being run together

28. The Working Party was requested to discuss the Council's suggestion that Agility shows and Obedience shows could be run together, bearing in mind potential logistical issues such as a lack of space at some venues, and the difficulty of co-ordinating suitable dates in a crowded show calendar.

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

Judges

29. It was suggested that a list of Obedience judges should be made available on the Kennel Club website. Each judge could provide updated information such as details of their own availability and what classes they were willing to judge. It was noted that in order to do so there must be a mechanism allowing them to have access to their own personal record. This would be dependent on IT resources being available.
30. However it was noted that the Kennel Club was reluctant to publish lists of judges other than Championship judges as it would contain details of individuals who had not previously undergone any approval process.

**ITEM 4. ISSUES FROM MEETING WITH OBEDIENCE SECRETARIES**

31. The Working Party noted the minutes of a meeting held on 16 February 2016 and considered a number of suggestions arising from it.
32. Introduction of ABC classes (up to Open C)
- To encourage handlers to continue to compete and to progress
  - Introduction of an ABC option similar to the Lower Height Option offered in Agility
  - Up to Open Class C

Consideration of this item was deferred until the next meeting of the Working Party.

**AM**

33. Introduction of a Novice Obedience Warrant
- To encourage all competitors and to boost entries at shows
  - Points-based system

- Points to be gained from Limited Shows, Breed Club Limited Shows, and Open Shows

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

Wins at Limited Shows to count towards progression at Open Shows

34. • To encourage clubs to schedule more Limited Shows  
• Wins would count towards progression, or towards a Novice Obedience Warrant

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

Progression on points

35. • Similar model to that applying in Agility whereby handlers could progress either on wins or, optionally, on points

This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting (paragraph 26 refers). Further consideration was deferred until the Working Party's next meeting.

**AM**

Time frames for winning out/Bonus wins

36. • Any wins gained up to 2-3 weeks prior to a show to be counted for the purposes of class eligibility  
• Any handler achieving a class win within this time frame to advise the show secretary who would move them into the appropriate class  
• No necessity for any amendment to closing dates which could still be 6-8 weeks prior to the show  
• Similar system already operates in Agility  
• Use of 'ghost entries' in order to allow for freshly-qualified dogs to be allocated spaces within running orders

This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting (paragraph 26 refers). It was agreed that the matter should be placed as a discussion item on the agenda for the Council's meeting on 6 July 2016.

**AM**

37. Catalogues

The Working Party agreed that the necessity for the publication of catalogues should be removed, and be replaced with a marked running order to be sent to the Kennel Club, detailing the name of each dog, and its owner/s and handler. The wording for the necessary Regulation was to be as that used in the H Regulations applying to Agility.

38. It was anticipated that the removal of the requirement for catalogues would result in a reduced financial outlay for show organisers.
39. It was agreed that a formal proposal should be placed on the agenda for consideration by the Council at its next meeting.

**AM**

Training rounds

- 40.

- Delays in judging were occurring due to training rounds taking place within the first ten dogs within the running order
  - Judges having to hold classes open during the afternoon awaiting competitors, who then wished to train rather than compete
  - It was suggested that handlers wishing to carry out a training round should be required to do so before noon as this would prevent this occurrence
41. It was not considered practical to suggest that training rounds should be carried out before noon and that it may be preferable for them to take place throughout the day. The Working Party was not of the view that training rounds were unduly problematic, particularly as they often took less time than a worked round. However, it was emphasised that judges should remain in the ring during a training round. It was anticipated that, should amendments to Regulations be agreed which would affect the eligibility of competitors who had already won out of a class, training rounds may become less common.
42. No further action was considered necessary.

#### Running orders

- 43.
- Draws were very time consuming for show secretaries
  - Running orders to be reduced to 5 dogs which would considerably reduce the time involved.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to reduce running orders to 5 dogs as it would reduce the administrative burden on show secretaries, and it was not considered that it would have any adverse effect on delays in judging. A suitable proposal would be made to the Council.

**AM**

#### Draws for Championship classes

- 44.
- On occasion, a handler with more than one dog was drawn with his or her dogs in close succession
  - However, draws must be random in nature and must be seen to be fair. Handlers with more than one dog should not be given any kind of special treatment or advantage
  - No changes to the existing system had been suggested

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

#### Progression into Championship 'C'

- 45.
- Concern that some handlers did not enter Open 'C' classes due to a perception that the class would be won by a dominant handler
  - Suggested that the old system be reverted to, whereby qualification into Championship 'C' was achieved by completion of Open 'C' tests with a loss of 10 points or less on three occasions
  - OR that a dog having won an Obedience Certificate would no longer be eligible to compete in Open 'C'. However there was some concern that

this would result in reduced entries into Open 'C' classes

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

#### Tests

46. • There was a great deal of variation in the length and difficulty of tests set by judges  
• This was an issue which would be best addressed by judges training.

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

#### Judges Training

47. • Some concern that in some training clubs, there was a negative attitude towards competition obedience at some clubs  
• Judges and stewards officiating in the early classes were crucial  
• Judges training should address this and promote a positive attitude towards new handlers

48. There was a concern that at present prospective judges received a limited amount of active training. It was acknowledged that it would be desirable for existing seminars to contain more active teaching and an increased element of progress checking and assessment. However, it was not clear exactly how this could be achieved. Mr Harlow would raise the issue with the Activities Judges Working Party.

**RH**

49. It was agreed that a positive attitude towards new competitors from judges was vital to ensure their retention within the discipline.

#### Breed Shows

50. • Open and Championship breed shows should be encouraged to host obedience shows

This issue had been discussed earlier in the meeting (paragraph 12 refers).

#### Companion Shows

51. • Should be encouraged to attract newcomers into the discipline

This issue had been discussed earlier in the meeting (paragraphs 13-16 refer).

#### Administration issues

##### Training for show organisers

52. • Some seminars were available to help show organisers.  
• A Manual for Registered Societies was available for breed show secretaries and it was hoped that a similar document would be introduced for other disciplines.

Consideration of this item was deferred until a later meeting.

53. Fees

- It had been agreed by the Kennel Club that fees for Listed Status clubs would be reduced to £15 enrolment fee and £15 annual renewal fee, if they were already listed for another activity or for the Good Citizen Dog Scheme.

Survey

54. • It was suggested that the Kennel Club's Marketing Department issue a questionnaire via Survey Monkey in order to gather data from existing clubs such as what training they offered, classes, shows, breeds, numbers etc.
- The Working Party was requested to suggest details of the specific information which should be requested from clubs.

55. It was agreed that a survey should be carried out and that it should be targeted at all Registered and Listed Status clubs.

56. It was accepted that the survey should be short in nature and should only consist of a few questions. It was suggested that the questions should include the following:

- Do you do competitive Obedience training?
- If not, would you consider it?
- Do you currently hold an Obedience Show?
- If so, was your last show Championship, Limited or Open?
- How many entries were there?
- If there was an opportunity for you to hold a show with a restricted entry (capped classes) would you wish to do so?

Capped Classes

57. It was noted that in Agility there were four levels of show: Limited, Open, Premier and Championship. Some show societies had wished to run Open Shows but were unable to do so due to a lack of space within their venue, as a result of which capped classes had been introduced which allowed organisers of Open Agility shows and Limited Agility shows to set a capping level on the entries to be accepted in any standard or special class, and to decline entries received after the capping level had been reached.

58. The Working Party was of the view that provision for capped classes would be highly effective in Obedience and would allow societies to run small Open Shows at their usual training venue, and on their usual training night, if they wished. Such shows would also be highly attractive to competitors as the results would count towards progression and would therefore be meaningful.

59. Show societies would find shows with capped classes easier to plan as they would be aware beforehand of how many rings would be necessary. Other logistical arrangements could also be made well in advance of the

show as the maximum number of competitors would be known.

60. New competitors were often unwilling to travel long distances in order to compete at shows and it was anticipated that if they were able to enter shows within their local area, they may subsequently become interested in competing and may be prepared to travel further afield in future.
61. It was acknowledged that it would be necessary for the minimum level for the cap to be given careful consideration, but it was noted that it was essential to attain the minimum standard for a class. It was agreed that a suitable minimum cap level would be 35.
62. It was agreed that relevant Regulations could be drafted on the basis of the existing H Regulation applying in agility, which read as follows:

Regulation H(1)(A)11. Capped Classes.

- a. Organisers of Open Agility shows and Limited Agility shows may set a capping level on the entries to be accepted in any standard or special class, and may decline entries received after the capping level has been reached.
- b. Wins and places in standard classes capped in accordance with this regulation will count towards progression, points progression and agility warrant points.
- c. The capping level must be set at a minimum of 250 entries received. There is no maximum level at which a cap may be set. Capped classes may be split into two or more parts in accordance with Regulation H(1)9.f.
- d. The capping level for each capped class must be clearly specified in the show schedule.
- e. The capping level applied may be adjusted upwards by a maximum of 10% after the closing date of a show at the discretion of the show organisers. Capping levels may not be adjusted downwards after publication of the schedule except with the prior permission of the General Committee of the Kennel Club.
- f. Where total entries received exceed a capping level, entries must be processed in the order received. Processing of entry forms, and of online entries where applicable, must be managed so that the date of receipt of H(1)(A) 21 each entry is recorded. (It is permissible to set different opening and closing dates for online entries from those applying to postal entries.)
- g. Entry fees for entries which are received after the capping level has been exceeded must be refunded in full.
- h. Entry forms must allow competitors to specify, if their entry for any capped class is declined because the capping level has been reached:-
  - (i) that they wish the dog to remain entered in all other classes, or
  - (ii) that they wish their entire entry for the dog in question to be cancelled, or
  - (iii) that they wish their entire entry for all dogs they have entered at the show to be cancelled.

In such cases the relevant entry fees must be refunded in full.

- i. Notifications under Regulation H11.g. (dogs which have progressed to the next grade) must be processed in order of the date of receipt of the notification.

63. The office agreed to prepare a proposal for submission to the Council at its meeting in July 2016.

**DD**

#### **ITEM 5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

64. An issue was raised in respect of clashing shows, but it was accepted that in some circumstances it was inevitable that clashes would occur.
65. It was hoped that in due course a list of dates would be available on the Kennel Club website but this was dependent on IT resources being available.

#### **ITEM 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

66. It was noted that the next meeting of the Working Party would take place on 21 July 2016, subject to availability of a meeting room.
67. The meeting closed at 15:30 pm.

**DD**

**R HARLOW**  
Chairman

#### **Note: List of issues deferred for consideration at future meetings**

- Agility and Obedience shows being run together
- Introduction of ABC classes (up to Open C)
- Introduction of a Novice Obedience Warrant
- Wins at Limited Shows to count towards progression at Open Shows
- Progression on points
- Draws for Championship classes
- Progression into Championship 'C'
- Tests
- Administration issues