

Meeting Minutes
Cleveland Bay Horse Society
Council Meeting
Wednesday 12th November 2025
1900 GMT

Present: Matthew Stonehouse (MS), Catherine Lea (CL), Claire O'Connell (CO), Reece Wolfenden (RW), Daniel Cracknell (DC), Elaine Keith (EK), Tierney Hill (TH), Jess Odgers (JO), Muick Wood (W), Sarah Kirk (SK), Michelle Snooks (MS2), Tracy Williams (TW), Coleen Benfold (CB), Sarah Ramsden (SR), and Beverley Heffernan (BH).

Absent: N/A

Apologies: N/A

General Business:

MS opened the meeting, confirmed that the meeting was quorate with a full Council in attendance, and advised that the meeting was being recorded. No conflicts of interest were declared.

New Council / Committee Administration

The Chair reminded members to return outstanding conduct forms. Catherine Lea outlined the updated Companies House requirements for trustees, including identity verification via the government portal. Members were advised that those unwilling to complete the process could remain committee volunteers rather than trustees. The procedures required of trustees for completion of the society's confirmation statement were outlined.

Appointment of Show Chair

Council were informed of the resignation of Maggie Brown from Council and from the role of Show Chair by MS; Council noted her service to the society. EK confirmed her willingness to step into the role if supported by Council.

EK was proposed by MS, and seconded by CL as Show Chair and appointed unanimously.

Discussion followed regarding perceived conflicts of interest for show committee members who actively show horses. Council agreed that shared responsibility and transparency mitigated these concerns. EK highlighted potential conflicts of interest; SR agreed to assist in coordinating judges, to prevent any conflicts.

EK confirmed the continuation of the show Gmail account as the central communication point.

Review of AGM:

Council agreed that the AGM had been well attended and positively received, with improved turnout compared to recent years.

Venue

Discussion followed whether to move the AGM to Sheffield. Feedback from members and cost comparisons indicated that the current venue (The Bridge) offered good value, accessibility, catering and support. Quotes from two venues in Sheffield were more expensive on a per head basis – with a minimum meal attendance of 38 to 45 members to meet cost comparability to the current location. Council agreed that attendance had previously been lower when held elsewhere. The Committee agreed that the AGM venue would remain unchanged for 2026.

AGM Administration

Council discussed feedback regarding AGM paperwork and voting procedures. It was agreed that all documentation should be finalised and agreed by Council well in advance, with clearer instructions regarding membership numbers and deadlines. CO will circulate draft AGM paperwork early for Council review.

BH suggested reintroducing Zoom attendance for observation only, with questions submitted in advance, subject to bylaw compliance.

Financial Sustainability and Fee Structure Review

MS presented a financial analysis showing the society losing approximately £5,300 annually and facing reserve depletion within 5-8 years. He outlined recommendations including a 30-50% reduction in HBLB grant applications, and raising membership fees to £60 to address the deficit. CL suggested implementing postage charges for all passport services and transfers rather than the society absorbing these costs. It was noted that the financial situation was exacerbated by the fact that approximately 25% of members are life members who cannot be charged increased memberships fees. The Council agreed to review all fees including passport registrations and transfers to ensure they cover actual costs, plus a reasonable margin. The committee decided to implement fee increases in stages, starting with service fees before addressing membership rates.

Magazine and Communications:

Council discussed feedback on the Society magazine. The Committee agreed that responsibility should not rest solely with the editor and that a clearer strategy was required.

Suggestions included:

- Greater member engagement and encouragement to submit content
- Possible themed issues to stimulate contributions (Bay Window)
- Retaining traditional content valued by members (e.g. registrations)
- Developing the magazine into a more structured publication to attract advertisers

CO and CL noted technical constraints around extracting registration data and CL agreed to explore reporting options from the office system.

Partnerships / Promotions:

Council discussed a proposed affiliate-style arrangement with Horse & Hoof Direct (supplements) as proposed and managed by CB, whereby purchases using a Society code would generate income. It was agreed this was comparable to existing merchandise arrangements. Council all approved proceeding with the arrangement.

Show Stands - Great Yorkshire Show & Royal Windsor:

Council reviewed costs and income from recent stands. Figures showed the Great Yorkshire Show stand had generated the required HBLB contribution through fundraising, while Windsor remained significantly more expensive with no income return. Committee members debated the merits of supporting the stands given the Society's weak financial position.

CB confirmed her willingness to attend and lead fundraising efforts for both shows. Alternative events and collaborations (e.g. RBST) were also discussed. Council unanimously agreed to proceed with both stands for 2026; moving forward the continuation of the stands shall be conditional on fundraising covering the required HBLB contribution. CO will submit the Royal Windsor application, and EK will submit Great Yorkshire Show application.

Welfare - French Cleveland Bay Mares:

TH outlined a proposal to assist with the re-homing of two 19-year-old Cleveland Bay mares currently in France. Council discussed transport, welfare, and legal considerations. It was agreed that Council's role would be facilitative, seeking suitable homes among members without taking ownership or financial liability.

Council agreed to contact members to invite expressions of interest, and to explore welfare contacts (including World Horse Welfare and National Equine Welfare Council) for potential assistance within France if possible.

CBHS Office Administration:

Council noted that Norma had formally stepped down from running the office and thanked her for her service. CL outlined the complexity and workload involved in passport administration and office duties. Council acknowledged that the role constituted significant unpaid work.

Discussion opened on longer-term solutions, including potential remuneration or alternative arrangements, recognising current financial constraints. CL outlined offers from TH and Kate Lines to undertake this role. Council opted to accept TH's offer with CL working with TH on a transition plan; allowing her to observe the work requirements before committing to the role fully.

Any Other Business:

EK reported on the successful camp held in September; the event showed a profit despite three late dropouts and was well supported. EK outlined challenges finding a new venue, as Somerford cannot accommodate the dates needed in 2026.

SR raised the possibility of selling archived Cleveland Bay magazines and stud books that many members have accumulated over the years. CL noted she has substantial collections that could be valuable, particularly early editions that sell for significant amounts. EK confirmed this had been discussed previously but lacked personnel to implement due to limited committee numbers. The committee approved exploring both sale options for historical materials to generate revenue.

BH outlined the National Sporting Library in Virginia lacks Cleveland Bay materials.

Meeting Adjourned: 21:15 PM

Next Meeting Scheduled: 27/01/2026