

Meeting Minutes
Cleveland Bay Horse Society
Council Meeting
Tuesday 20th March 2026
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), Coleen Benfold (CB), Sarah Ramsden (SR), and Beverley Heffernan (BH).

Absent: Sarah Kirk (SK), Michelle Snooks (MS2), and Tracy Williams (TW)

Apologies: N/A

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made in relation to agenda items.

General Business:

MS opened the meeting, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved without amendment.

Office Administration and Mailing Arrangements

Council held an extended discussion regarding the Society’s office arrangements, postal handling, and associated administrative burden.

CL reported that the Sage accounting package had been changed – resulting in an approximate £300 annual saving.

CL outlined the current costs associated with the Society PO Box and Royal Mail redirection arrangements. It was noted that the combined annual cost was excessive, prompting discussion as to whether the arrangement remained financially justifiable.

Council considered alternative approaches, including:

- use of a residential correspondence address

- continuation of redirection services only

Discussion acknowledged the practical difficulties associated with passport applications, recorded delivery requirements, and maintaining continuity for members submitting official documentation.

EK highlighted that a significant proportion of office administration, post handling, DEFRA compliance work and member correspondence currently fell to CL. Concern was expressed that this workload was becoming disproportionate and potentially unsustainable without additional support.

The possibility of seeking professional or accounting advice regarding administrative handling and governance implications was briefly discussed.

Various committee members discussed whether increased digitisation of records and communications could reduce postal dependency over time, whilst recognising that some DEFRA-related documentation still required physical handling.

MS proposed that the PO Box would be reviewed further, and a decision made and communicated to the membership before renewal.

Breed Committee:

DC reported on the progress of the Breed Committee with a focus on the SPARKS interactive meeting held the previous week.

DC had conducted a survey with 21 participants, of whom 18 actively engaged. The survey was intended to generate discussion and gather feedback on breeding priorities and programme development.

Results showed that 13 respondents ranked programme priorities as follows:

1. Sparks and Pedigree Viewing
2. Stallion availability
3. Mare fertility
4. Stallion accessibility
5. AI availability

Discussion noted surprise that mare fertility ranked above stallion accessibility. Members also indicated strong support for retaining HBLB funding.

Concerns were raised regarding negative social media behaviour within society-related groups, with members acknowledging the damaging impact this could have on the breed's reputation and horse sales.

Grassroots Platform

Andy and Libby Henson from Grassroots attended the interactive meeting and gained insight into how the Society uses the platform.

A key issue identified was that member contact details were not appearing publicly because individuals were required to manually enable data sharing within their own profile settings. Members noted that this had not previously been communicated by Grassroots.

A further issue was identified with the inactive “for sale, hire or loan” section, which Grassroots confirmed had not been enabled for the Society. Arrangements were made for this to be corrected.

Zoom Meetings

Discussion took place regarding the correct management of Zoom meetings.

DC and EK noted there was support for holding more regular Zoom sessions on a variety of topics, although concerns were noted regarding varying levels of member IT confidence.

SPARKS Mentors Proposal

A proposal from Andy Dell at the SPARKS meeting was discussed; suggested appointing two or three dedicated SPARKS mentors to support members experiencing difficulties with the platform.

It was agreed that this could help reduce the administrative burden currently falling primarily on Catherine. Broader discussions also considered establishing small volunteer groups to support different operational areas and avoid over-reliance on individual members.

Publicity and Promotions:

Member Engagement and Fundraising

Council discussed ongoing concerns regarding the fact that fundraising, sponsorship, prize donations and volunteering continued to fall upon the same small group of members, while wider member engagement remained limited.

CB expressed concern that without broader participation the Society risked becoming focused primarily on breeding activity rather than operating as a wider breed society.

It was noted that several individual fundraising initiatives had been undertaken by members, including a JustGiving page organised by Mel Ellis.

Council acknowledged that the Society’s required £6,000 contribution towards HBLB funding was unlikely to be achieved through current fundraising activities. Discussion included the possibility of communicating more clearly to members that failure to meet the contribution requirement could result in the Society ceasing future HBLB applications or at least scaling back applications. CL reminded Council that the Society’s headline bank balance did not represent unrestricted reserves, as a substantial proportion of funds related to HBLB allocations and restricted activities. It was agreed that this distinction was important when communicating the Society’s financial position externally.

Matching contribution models were also discussed, whereby members benefitting from grant-funded activities could be encouraged to contribute proportionally.

It was suggested by MW that the President's magazine message would provide an opportunity to communicate the Society's financial position and fundraising needs to members in a balanced and constructive manner.

Fundraising Initiatives and Auctions

A range of fundraising ideas were discussed, including an "auction of promises" model based on experiences and activities rather than physical goods.

Council also discussed silent auctions at major shows, particularly the Great Yorkshire Show, with bids collected throughout the day. Windsor was noted as having stricter regulations limiting certain fundraising activities.

Online auction platforms were considered as a way of extending fundraising reach nationally and internationally, potentially through a hybrid model combining show-based and online auctions.

Social fundraising formats, including Farmhouse-style tea events at agricultural shows, were also suggested.

Social Engagement and Member Events

Council discussed the decline in in-person social events and the impact this may be having on member engagement and community spirit. Historical gatherings such as the Yorkshire Puddings events were recalled positively.

The Great Yorkshire Show stand was highlighted as an important opportunity for member interaction, recruitment and public promotion of the breed. Members expressed concern that loss of major show stands could negatively affect future membership and visibility.

Zoom meetings on a range of topics were proposed as a way of maintaining more regular engagement alongside physical events.

Merchandise and Stock

Council reviewed the current merchandise situation and noted that significant quantities of stock had remained in storage for several years with limited sales.

The JS Team print-on-demand model was viewed positively as it removed the need for advance stock purchasing and fulfilment management.

Discussion also covered surplus stock items, particularly less popular sizes, and possible ways of repurposing unsold merchandise. International shipping costs for overseas members were identified as a concern.

Performance and Points Scheme

CB and EK discussed the possibility of reintroducing a performance-based points scheme covering a wider range of disciplines beyond showing.

The proposed structure would allocate points according to the level and type of competition entered. CO noted that previous performance schemes and challenge initiatives had experienced low participation and, in some cases, generated insufficient income to cover rosette and administration costs.

Reference was made to ring-fenced funds donated by Sue Bulmer, which may still be available to support such initiatives.

Council agreed that a revised performance scheme could help broaden the Society's appeal and engage members competing in disciplines outside the traditional showing sphere.

Show Committee:

Doncaster Training Day / Camp Replacement

Council reviewed progress regarding the proposed camp format and the limited uptake received to date. EK advised that despite efforts by CB and RW to encourage attendance, only two deposits had been received and no wider expressions of interest had materialised.

Given that instructors had already been provisionally booked, discussion turned to replacing the multi-day camp with a one-day clinic format at Doncaster Racing School, reflecting a successful event previously run.

CB and RW had recently visited the venue and reported positively on the facilities available. Council agreed that a shorter, more socially focused event might prove more accessible and attractive to participants.

Any Other Business:

Fees Review

MS reopened discussion on the proposed fee structure following previous circulation and committee comments.

Overstamping Fees

Council confirmed agreement on a standard overstamping fee of £35, which members considered to represent a balanced and proportionate approach. Discussion acknowledged the increasing administrative burden associated with passport compliance, postage, and processing.

Part-Bred Registrations and Late Fees

Extensive discussion took place regarding proposed late registration fees for part-bred horses and the practical implications of DEFRA passport requirements. Discussion also covered differences

between UK and overseas registrations, particularly in relation to American horses and differing documentation systems.

CO questioned whether overseas horses necessarily required full passport production where local registration systems already existed. CL advised that DEFRA and Grassroots systems currently treated registrations and passports as effectively inseparable within the UK framework, making alternative documentation difficult to implement. MS confirmed that previous enquiries with DEFRA had indicated that the Society's registration and passport processes were viewed as a single unit for compliance purposes.

After further discussion, Council agreed that a simplified fee structure would be more practical and realistic. It was emphasized that Overseas free registrations remain subject to the same (six months of age) registration requirement as UK members to qualify for the discount.

The revised fee structure was formally proposed by MS and seconded by DC. It was approved by Council.

Discussion followed regarding implementation timing. Council agreed that implementation timing would be finalised administratively.

The Chair further noted that membership fees would require a separate review before the following financial year.

Memberships and Prefix Applications

Council reviewed new membership and prefix applications.

The following membership applications were approved:

- Samantha Keefe
- Jacqueline Broadhead
- Jennie Clegg
- Kimberley Pennie

A central prefix request for PIPPAS was also approved.

Membership Removal

MS raised the issue of a USA-based life member, from whom no communication had been received despite repeated attempts by email and letter since the previous year. A motion to remove from the membership list was approved.

Meeting Adjourned: 21:20 PM

Next Meeting Scheduled: 26/05/2026