

Meeting Minutes
Cleveland Bay Horse Society
Council Meeting
Tuesday 26th May 2026
1900 BST

Present: Matthew Stonehouse (MS), Catherine Lea (CL), Claire O'Connell (CO), Muick Wood (MW), Daniel Cracknell (DC), Elaine Keith (EK), Jess Odgers (JO), Coleen Benfold (CB), Reece Wolfenden (RW), Sarah Ramsden (SR), and Beverley Heffernan (BH).

Absent: Sarah Kirk (SK), Michelle Snooks (MS2), Tierney Hill (TH), 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 had been circulated in advance. MS proposed acceptance, BH seconded, and the minutes were approved without amendment. BH asked whether minutes might in future be approved by email, noting the authority now provided under the revised Articles. MS advised that email circulation had previously produced very few responses and that approval in meeting remained the more reliable course.

Treasurer's Report

CL reported balances of approximately £2,091 in the current account, £91,750 in the investment account, and £842.62 in the PayPal account. Principal payments in the period were £424.80 in respect of printing, £445.20 for photography, £305.20 in postage, and £345.92 of expenses relating to Royal Windsor.

CL explained that the photographic quotation of £7 per image had been exclusive of VAT and that the invoice had been rendered at £7 plus VAT, accounting for the higher than anticipated figure. CO noted that the arrangement remained more economical than the Society paying for images to be printed, and that some income would be recovered against it.

CL reported a donation of £1,000 received through TH's employer, which Council gratefully acknowledged.

CL confirmed that she intended to complete the accounts during June so that they could be passed to the accountant in good time for the AGM, allowing members a full opportunity to examine them before circulation.

Breed Committee:

DC reported to Council, advising that a written report had not been circulated in advance on this occasion.

Grading Up Application

DC reported an application for a part-bred mare to be graded up. He is to liaise with the applicant and arrange veterinary attendance and assessor inspection, ideally on the same occasion, and confirmed that the inspection fee remains payable under the current grading process. SR indicated that she was able to undertake the inspection, provisionally on the Friday preceding the Three Counties Show, and confirmed that she photographs and records inspections as a matter of routine. Council noted that a second assessor is preferable although not essential where a grading is uncontentious, and that the inspection serves to confirm identity and breed type against the passport rather than to assess quality.

Stallion Licensing

DC reported an enquiry from a United States based owner asking whether a stallion might be put forward for licensing. No objection was raised, and DC is to obtain photographs and the supporting documentation required.

Overseas Breeders' Grant

Council considered the continuation of the £100 grant payable to overseas breeders in respect of each registration. CL clarified that the grant is not met from HBLB underspend, and that the Queen's Fund, which supports the Society's contribution towards HBLB funding, retains only a nominal balance. Take-up remains low, at three or four overseas registrations in a typical year, with a number of eligible breeders appearing unaware of the grant. Council agreed that it represented an important signal that overseas breeders are regarded as part of the Society. Continuation at £100 was proposed by DC, seconded by MS, and approved. It was reiterated that the discount remains subject to registration before six months of age.

Registrations and DNA Testing

CL reported outstanding registrations relating to a single breeder, comprising foals from 2025 together with older animals, for which parentage has not been reliably recorded; the breeder proposes to submit them on the basis of the dam and sire he believes to be correct. Council noted that DNA testing would be required at the owner's expense, that the fees applicable are those published and effective from 1st May, and that the sample must be drawn by a veterinary surgeon. DC raised the Society's position in registering animals beyond the six month statutory requirement; it was confirmed that these would be issued with appropriate passports.

Chestnut Colouring

CL raised a concern regarding the incidence of chestnut foals, which do not conform to the breed standard and which she believed could be traced principally to one mare. Council recognised that in a population of this size the unwitting spread of the gene through carriers presents a genuine risk, particularly where fillies are retained for breeding.

JO suggested that the production of more than one or two chestnut foals might trigger a testing requirement before further registrations were accepted. SR questioned whether grant support should be offered where a mating is known to be likely to produce stock outside the breed standard. CO cautioned against placing obstacles in the way of breeding given the low numbers involved, noting that colour genetics are predictable and that a mare known to carry the gene can be bred accordingly. CL cautioned that any testing requirement must apply to all breeding stock rather than to stallions alone, so that the problem rather than an individual owner is addressed. MS advised Council that a stallion within his own family's ownership had carried the gene historically and that it had been bred out through selection. DC suggested that public explanation of the breed standard would assist in making non-conforming stock less desirable.

Council agreed that the Breed Committee would consider the options available, including testing and the recording of carriers, and report back to Council.

Publicity and Promotions:

CO presented the Publicity and Promotions report, which had been circulated in advance. CO congratulated Mel Ellis, whose sponsored walk had raised in the region of £600 in addition to the sponsorship she had secured for Royal Windsor and continues to pursue for the Great Yorkshire Show.

Royal Windsor – Volunteers and Accreditation

CO reported that the Society holds a limited allocation of accreditation passes and car parking permits, that additional passes had been secured only with difficulty, and that not all of those obtained had been used, or used across the full period available. Council agreed that accreditation must in future be allocated to volunteers able to commit for the full three or four days, only Thursday and Friday passes being otherwise available and no weekend passes issued.

Accommodation was identified as the principal practical obstacle. Shared accommodation taken jointly had proved substantially cheaper than hotel rooms, and SR offered details of accommodation within ten minutes' walk of the showground, which would remove the need for a parking permit. Council agreed that arrangements must be settled early, that a note of tried and tested options would assist volunteers, and that volunteers should pay the Society in advance of accreditation being submitted.

Annual General Meeting

Council confirmed that the AGM would be held on 17th October, at the same venue and time as the previous year. CO advised that member packs would need to be issued with motions and voting questions required in advance for inclusion. The provision of a view-only Zoom link was considered. Council recalled that online attendance had historically drawn members away from attending in person, making it more difficult to conduct business in the room, and agreed that online attendance would not be offered. A recording or video made available in the members' area of the website would be explored instead.

Membership and Application Forms

Council agreed that the membership and application forms required updating. CO proposed a field recording the applicant's Facebook name, a number of applicants having been difficult to identify when seeking access to the members' page. MW proposed a question inviting applicants to describe how they had heard of the Society and the nature of their interest in the breed, so that the membership might be better understood and targeted. Council agreed that the forms, including the online versions, would be updated accordingly.

Correspondence Address

Further to the review of the Society's PO Box and redirection arrangements, CL confirmed that she was content for her farm address to be used as the Society's correspondence address, representing a saving in the region of £300 to £400 each year. The proposal was made by MS, seconded by BH, and approved.

Website and Advertising

CO confirmed that she was able to add, amend and remove material on the website as required, and noted that no horses were currently advertised for sale. The possibility of reducing or removing the fee

for sale advertisements was raised. It was noted that the fee applies only to non-members, members being entitled to advertise without charge, and Council agreed that the present arrangement should stand.

2027 Calendar

CO reported on the proposed 2027 calendar and the number to be printed. Council discussed seeking a sponsor to meet the cost of production. CO agreed to produce the calendar, to seek sponsorship, and to open electronic pre-orders, including for overseas members, in advance of the Great Yorkshire Show. Council noted that the calendar is intended as a fundraiser and that the Society's required contribution towards HBLB funding remains outstanding.

Show Committee:

Royal Windsor Show Stand

Council received a report on the Society's stand at Royal Windsor. Some 127 visitors were recorded and interest in the breed was described as exceptional, with visitors from across the country and overseas and a number of enquiries as to where Cleveland Bays might be purchased. Council noted that the Society does not promote its position as strongly as it might, and that the breed's conservation status is not widely understood by the visiting public.

Fundraising on the stand was well supported, with the golden ticket draw proving a particular attraction, although a small number of visitors had declined to complete card payments. Council agreed that a simpler and quicker card payment facility should be obtained. It was further agreed that the stand requires a minimum of two Council members in attendance. MS proposed a motion of thanks to CB and BH, and to all who had assisted, which Council endorsed.

Visit to the United States

MW reported on his recent visit to the United States, where he had judged at a show attended by nineteen Cleveland Bays, seven of them purebred, with horses travelling from New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia to what is regarded there as a preliminary fixture. MW commended the standard of the animals presented, the effort made by exhibitors, and the enthusiasm of the breeders he met over the course of the visit, and told Council that the experience had revised his own view of the American membership. CO noted that she had received enquiries from exhibitors as to the dress expected of them. Council agreed that MW would be invited to write an article on the visit for the magazine.

Judging and Class Procedure

SR reported on her judging appointment at Windsor, noting that the entries, turnout and standard of presentation represented the strongest year to date, and that feedback from other judges, stewards and officials had been consistently positive.

SR raised one concern regarding audible comment from a competitor during a ridden class, arising from an expectation that horses would not be ridden and stripped for conformation, and proposed that the Show Committee set out the procedure to be followed at the major shows so that competitors are left in no doubt as to what is required. CO agreed to include a "what to expect" section in next year's show directory setting out the format of each class. MW supported the proposal and asked that it extend to overseas competitors, practice differing considerably between countries.

MW suggested that an informal online session for the judging panel would allow procedure to be discussed and consistency maintained. SR supported the proposal and confirmed that she had already circulated to the existing panel the guidance issued to new judges, so that all members were working to the same material.

Judges' Panel

Council considered the position of a former panel member – J. Firth - who had passed the inspectors' assessment alongside SR, and who had subsequently stood down for a period. SR confirmed that the assessment had been a rigorous written and practical process, and that the candidate had also completed two further assessments with her. Council agreed that it would be inappropriate to require her to repeat the probationary process, and that the appointment should properly be regarded as a reinstatement. CO noted that the rules applying to new appointments should nonetheless be observed, and that she should not judge the major shows in her first year. The proposal was made and seconded by the Show Committee, and approved by Council.

Clinic

Council confirmed that the clinic will proceed. Numbers remain finely balanced and members were asked to encourage attendance, it being noted that places are available to those attending on foot as well as with a horse.

Any Other Business:

Royal Patronage

MS reported that an acknowledgement had been received confirming that the Society's approach had been passed to the relevant office for consideration, and that nothing further had been heard. CB reported a conversation at Royal Windsor with a contact within the carriage driving community, who had subsequently made an informal enquiry and indicated that interest might exist. Council was advised that any approach of this nature would require to be directed to the appropriate office. MW expressed strong support, observing that a patronage held by a younger member of the Royal Household would be of considerable value to the breed. Council agreed that CB and MW would progress the approach together, with careful attention to protocol and tone, and that the correspondence should clearly be issued on behalf of the Society.

Membership Application – Previously Refused Applicant

MS advised Council that a further application had been received from an overseas applicant whose previous applications had been refused. BH confirmed that the position had been set out in correspondence issued in October 2024, which stated that future applications would not be considered, the application being declared ineligible inline with the Society's Articles. Council noted that the matter was raised for information rather than for decision, the position having been determined by a previous Council following legal advice. BH agreed to circulate the October 2024 letter to Council.

Rules and Grading Register

BH confirmed that work on the rules update remains in progress and that she would follow it up over the summer. Council discussed the revisions required to the grading register in order to satisfy DEFRA. The register must accommodate animals of 50 per cent Cleveland Bay breeding, the current threshold being 75 per cent, requiring the addition of a further level and a consequent movement of the existing grades. Council also considered the requirement to specify the breeds which may be used, noting that the outcross has historically been predominantly Thoroughbred, that heavier breeds should be excluded, and that breeds available to overseas members must be accommodated notwithstanding that DEFRA's interest is confined to the United Kingdom. Council agreed that the list should be capable of amendment in future, and it was confirmed that DNA testing continues to be required on the purebred side. Council agreed to delegate the final construction of the list to the Breed Committee, subject to the requirement it could be reviewed upon request by members. SR offered historic correspondence from the period in which the register was last restructured, which MS agreed would be useful.

Blenheim Palace

DC reported that two horses are ready to attend, that he requires assistance with an overnight given the distance involved, and that final arrangements with the organisers, including whether a fee is payable to the Society, have yet to be confirmed. The proposed format comprises a talk of some thirty to thirty five minutes in the stable area while the horses are harnessed, followed by a drive around the grounds, repeated in the afternoon across both days. Dates of 26th and 27th July were noted, subject to possible change.

Council Attendance

CL noted that under the Articles a Council member who misses three consecutive meetings is required to stand down, and that this now applied to more than one member. Council recognised that those concerned are volunteers and that the position should be handled sensitively, the requirement relating to Council membership rather than to membership of the Society. BH asked that absences continue to be recorded in the minutes.

Council Workload

MW observed that a disproportionate share of the Society's work continues to fall to a small number of members, offered his own capacity, and asked that work be distributed more widely. Council acknowledged the difficulty of delegating work which requires familiarity with the Society's systems, and agreed that attendance at meetings is necessary to appreciate the scale of what is involved. SR remarked that the volume of work had been greater than she had anticipated on joining, and that Council was nonetheless working well and in the same direction.

Memberships and Prefix Applications

Council reviewed new membership and prefix applications.

The following membership applications were approved:

- Rosa Ford
- Dawn Odgers
- Samantha Josephine Wills
- Stephanie Newell
- Sue Gordon
- Patricia Kackert (Overseas)
- Macy Covert (Overseas)

Prefix applications for Oakstone, in the name of James Green, and BreninBrenhinesPM, in the names of Andrew Millard and Leanne Pike, had been pre-approved and were recorded. The applications were proposed, seconded and approved by Council.

Meeting Adjourned: 21:38 PM
Next Meeting Scheduled: TBC