

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Cleveland Bay Horse Society**  
**Council Meeting**  
**Tuesday 27th January 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), Michelle Snooks (MS2), Coleen Benfold (CB), Sarah Ramsden (SR), and Beverley Heffernan (BH).

**Absent:** Sarah Kirk (SK), and Tracy Williams (TW)

**Apologies:** N/A

**General Business:**

MS opened the meeting, confirmed that the meeting was quorate, and advised that the meeting was being recorded. MS declared a conflict of interest in reference to the approval of probationary judges.

Minutes of Previous Meetings

Council reviewed the minutes. A number of minor corrections were identified. Subject to these amendments, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report

CL advised that a written report would be circulated the following day. CL reported that approximately £17,000 of the HBLB grant had been spent, with a reduction in expenditure due to a drop in registrations (circa. 30 in 2024 versus 15 in 2025). Current balances were reported as approximately £1,672 in the current account, £66,493 in the savings account, and just over £400 in the PayPal account. The 2026 HBLB grant has not yet been received.

CL explained that Weatherbys had now opened a UK bank account to avoid Irish bank transfer charges; reducing Society costs. Major recent payments included insurance, tissue sample storage, semen storage, and grants, with no other significant new expenditure being reported.

Membership numbers on Grassroots were outlined - around 180 records in total, with roughly 94 UK single annual members, 19 joint annual memberships, 27 life members, and a mix of overseas single, joint, and life members, giving an estimated total in the region of 170–180 members; a small increase on the previous year.

## **Breed Committee:**

DC presented the Breed Committee report, which had been circulated in advance. Discussion focused primarily on passport production, registration costs, semen management, and DEFRA alignment with the grading register.

### Registration Fees, Postage and Pricing

Council held an extended discussion on registration and passport fees. It was noted that the Society was currently subsidising passport production, with printing, DEFRA compliance, postage and administrative time exceeding the fees charged. Comparative figures from other breed societies were discussed; demonstrating that CBHS fees were below the sector norm. BH and SR, referenced external examples (e.g. US registries, Sport Horse, and Irish Draught Societies) where fees were significantly higher and postage was charged separately at rates of £10 - £15, for tracked / recorded services. CL explained that current CBHS practice absorbs standard postage within the registration fee, and that legal requirements necessitate passports sent overseas have to be tracked - costing approximately £12.50.

Council agreed that continued operation at a loss was not sustainable, and risked diverting funds from core conservation and promotional activities. It was agreed that registration fees must increase and that postage should not continue to be absorbed in full; the principle of charging separately for tracked postage and offering members a choice was strongly supported.

After discussion, Council agreed that a full, updated price list covering registrations, transfers, over-stamps, replacement passports and postage options should be prepared and approved by email. It was agreed that CL and relevant officers would draft a comprehensive new fee schedule for circulation by mid-February (around 14–15 February) to allow email approval of the final schedule in time for publication and implementation on the 1st of March 2026.

### Grassroots & SPARKS

DC clarified that the society can now specify the parameters for annual SPARKS calculations, including which stallions and mares (by age and status) are included, rather than the system continuously updating without manual configuration. CL suggested examining the list of two-year-old colts due to reach 28 months in the coming breeding season so they can be included in the 2026 SPARKS calculations if they become eligible for licensing.

Council agreed that the Breed committee would work with Grassroots to set suitable parameters and a date to run the 2026 SPARKS calculation. It was also noted that a webinar or online session would be useful to guide members through SPARKS, explaining how to access and interpret the information.

### Semen Storage and Incentive Proposal

Council discussed a Breed Committee proposal relating to stored, society owned semen – to invoice for allotted semen only on production of a live foal. The intention outlined, was to make semen available to mare owners in a way that supported breed sustainability, without exposing the Society to undue financial risk – selling mixed quality semen (the committee recognised that some semen doses were of variable quality due to age and historic storage conditions).

The council discussed different trigger points for payment, including positive pregnancy scans versus live foal outcomes. It was agreed that payment based on pregnancy alone did not adequately reflect the risk borne by mare owners. The committee agreed that final pricing and contractual wording would be incorporated into the revised fee schedule.

### DEFRA Grading Update

The Council discussed DEFRA grading requirements, including the eligibility criteria of breeds, progression timelines, and the interactions of the policy with existing CBHS grading structures. DC confirmed that some parameters still required clarification. MS proposed, and the committee agreed that the Breed Committee would finalise the remaining grading details and report back to Council.

### **Publicity and Promotions:**

CO presented the Publicity and Promotions update. Council noted the importance of timely circulation of reports and consistency of messaging across platforms. No specific issues were raised, and members confirmed that the report had been read and noted. CO confirmed that the foal registrations for 2024 and 2025 would be published in both the Breed Directory and Magazine.

### **Show Committee:**

EK outlined the show report circulated prior to the meeting; highlighting sponsorship arrangements across multiple classes, including rosettes for young-stock, hunter classes and various “best turned out” sections at different shows. A generous one-off "President's Challenge" (sponsored by MW) was also presented consisting of a £500 showing prize pot; the prize is intended to be divided into four sections of £125 each. EK explained that the Show Committee was working to structure this in a fair way that allows people from all around the country to compete.

### Windsor Show Stand

CL reported that the Society has a verbal agreement for a stand at Windsor and is awaiting written confirmation of the location. It was confirmed that the Society will have a stand regardless of placement - either in the usual spot or potentially in a new area that is likely to have higher footfall, and that could, in future, allow for a Cleveland Bay horse to be present for public engagement. CL confirmed she has submitted a show charity application.

### Judges and Probationary Judges

MS absented himself from this section of the meeting due to conflict-of-interest reasons. SR reported on the probationary judges process and feedback from CPD forms and assessments. Council reviewed assessor reports and feedback, noting strong performance and consistency from candidates. It was confirmed that two candidates had now completed all the required elements of the probationary process. CO proposed accepting the recommendations to progress both candidates onto the full panel, CL seconded and the Council unanimously approved the motion. Council reiterated that newly confirmed judges remained restricted from judging major shows, including Royal Windsor and the Great Yorkshire Show, during their initial period, in line with the Judges' Code of Conduct.

SR reported that two additional experienced judges had expressed interest in assessment, and suggested holding probationary assessments on a two-year cycle to manage resources. Council recognised that - the limited number of shows, the concentration of shows in Yorkshire, and the need for probationers to attend three shows each, all constrain how many probationary judges can be supported at one time.

### **Any Other Business:**

#### Royal Patronage

Council discussed the ongoing absence of confirmation regarding a royal patronage. Members discussed appropriate timing and protocol for further approaches. MW, in conjunction with MS, to progress enquiries with the Royal Household. If no response is received by the end of March 2026, Council agreed to consider next steps.

#### AGM Motion: "Breeders List" be reclassified as "Breeders and Stallion Owners List"

The Council discussed an AGM motion to change the "Breeders List" to "Breeders and Stallion Owners List." The Council consensus was against this change, with CO pointing out a Stallion list already exists within the magazine. Instead of changing the name, the committee unanimously agreed to extend the time frame for inclusion on the breeders list from three to five years (meaning breeders who have registered foals within the past five years would be included).

#### Rules and Governance

BH confirmed that revised regulations had been updated to better align with the Articles of Association and previous Council decisions. It was noted that these revisions had already been circulated once and required comments before formal sign-off. Council agreed that approval could be progressed electronically to avoid unnecessary delay.

**Meeting Adjourned: 21:06 PM**

**Next Meeting Scheduled: 31/03/2026**