



# CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

## **HALF YEARLY MEETING**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth  
DATE: 24 June 2010  
PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

### Local Authorities

Councillor Jim Criddle (Caerphilly)  
Councillor David Rees (Pembrokeshire)  
Councillor Alwyn Gruffudd (Gwynedd)  
Councillor Lynda G. Williams (Neath Port Talbot)  
Councillor A. D. Hampton (Vale of Glamorgan)  
Councillor Chris Davies (Merthyr Tydfil)

### ESTYN

Mrs Ann Keane

### Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones  
Dr Brynley F. Roberts

### The Council's Panels

Mr David Barker

### Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

### Honorary Treasurer

Mr W. Gwyn Jones

### Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams

### Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Director)  
Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf (Head of Administration)  
Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Manager of the Distribution Centre)  
Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department)  
Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance, Business and ITC)  
Mr Phil Davies (Head of Information Services)  
Mr Richard Owen (Senior Grants Officer)  
Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Senior Editorial Officer)  
Mr Dyfed Evans  
Dr Lucy Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eurfryn Davies; Keith Morgan; B. Towyn Evans; Nigel Steele-Mortimer; Ron Page; Eirwyn Williams; Peter H. C. Davies; Margaret E. Davies; Morfudd M. Jones; Messrs. D, Geraint Lewis; Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes;

Leighton James; Alun Treharne; Rhys Bebb Jones; R. Arwel Jones; Dafydd John Pritchard; Ioan Kidd; Neil Bennett; William Howells; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Steve Hardman; Alan Watkin; Ms Gillian Evans; Mrs Ann Jones.

Staff: Mr Tom Ferris (Head of Sales and Marketing); Mr Sion Ilar (Senior Design Officer).

## 1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Moelwen Gwyndaf, Head of Administration, and Lucy Thomas, Grants Officer (English-language), who were attending their first meeting of the Council.
- 1.2 Mr Arwel Jones was congratulated on the birth of his son, and Mrs Ann Keane was congratulated on her appointment as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector – Estyn.
- 1.3 Best wishes were conveyed to Ann Davies, the Receptionist at Castell Brychan, who was receiving medical treatment.
- 1.4 Mr Roger Davies was warmly thanked for his gift of £500 in memory of his late wife, Mrs Catrin Puw Davies, to be used to sponsor the Book Day lecture, presented this year by Sir Deian Hopkin.
- 1.5 The Chairman referred to two members of staff who were retiring from the Council after twenty-one years' service, namely Dafydd Charles Jones, the Manager of the Distribution Centre, who was retiring at the end of June, and Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, who would be retiring at the end of November. The Chairman warmly thanked Dafydd, referring to his close relationship with the booksellers, and his commitment to his work over twenty-one years.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 26 November 2009, were confirmed, with two amendments – to note that this was Elwyn Jones's first meeting as Director, and also to note the attendance of Councillor A. D. Hampton.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Support for the Welsh-language Press: Golwg 360

The Director reported that the on-line news service Golwg 360 had been well received and that it was competing with the BBC as regards the speed of the service. It was noted that the elements *Lle Pawb* and *Y Maes* were now live; it is possible to send stories directly to mobile phones, and visits to the site are increasing daily.

A marketing campaign was organised by the Company during the Urdd Eisteddfod; announcing the winners on the site attracted new readers. They are also gaining new readers by developing their sports coverage.

It was also noted that the Council had commissioned a review of the service, to be conducted by market research consultants Wavehill. In addition to interviewing staff at Golwg 360 and representatives of the Books Council, a questionnaire had been widely distributed to gather responses. Wavehill will also be organising two focus groups to verify the findings of the questionnaire, and will present their report in July.

The current contract with Golwg 360 will terminate at the end of March 2011.

In response to a question asking whether or not funding would be available after next year, it was noted that no confirmation had yet been received from the Assembly Government.

### 3.2 Additional Funds: Creative Editor Posts

Following the receipt of an additional sum of £300,000 from the Assembly Government towards Welsh-language publishing, the Director reported that a number of new creative editors had been appointed by the publishers. The Council was arranging training for them, with the first course being held in July. The Council had invited Mairwen Prys Jones, former Head of Publishing at Gomer, to coordinate the courses.

A discussion was held on the importance of working with other partners, such as Tŷ Newydd; it was hoped that this could eventually lead to the establishment of a qualification and a career structure in the field.

### 3.2 Reading Promotion Schemes

The Director reported that this was an important field that had developed over the years, with several different schemes interweaving in order to promote reading. The Council is also cooperating with the Assembly's Basic Skills Department on the Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads scheme to encourage reluctant readers.

The Director was pleased that similar funding had been confirmed for the current year, noting that the Council would need to ensure that the schemes complemented the Assembly's Literacy Scheme.

### 3.3 Friends of the Books Council

Tegwyn Jones, Chair of the Friends, reported that the latest issue (the 15th) of *Y Cyfaill/The Friend* had appeared since the last meeting, featuring a number of interesting articles. The issue also noted the intention of Richard Morgan to retire as Treasurer of the Friends, and members were currently in the process of seeking a successor. Tegwyn Jones stated that a meeting was to be held the following day to discuss the contents of the next issue.

The Annual Meeting will be held in the autumn and, as is the custom, an author will be interviewed by the Chairman of the Council.

An information pack will be distributed before the Eisteddfod, containing the latest information about the book trade, together with a book voucher. The membership remained constant at about 340.

## 4 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 4.1 Grants 2010/11

The Head of Finance, Business and Information Technology presented a paper outlining the grants situation for the current financial year.

### 4.2 Financial Situation 2011/12–2013/14

The Director reported that the Council, on the basis of the funding from the Assembly, and the Minister's Remit Letter, had developed their Operational Plan for the year 2010/11.

The Director noted that the financial situation over the next few years was unclear, but the Council was likely to face cuts for the next three years and, possibly, some pressure on this year's budget. The Council had presented evidence to the Assembly regarding the effect of cutbacks on the Council's work. He thanked the civil servants for their cooperation. Two meetings with Assembly representatives were due to be held during the next two weeks, and the Director hoped that the situation would become clearer following these meetings.

It was agreed that, in discussions with Assembly representatives, it was important to stress the contribution made by libraries and bookshops, in addition to publishers, in the development of the industry.

In response to questions raised regarding spending in the Communities First areas, it was noted that these areas were specifically targeted in the Reading Promotion schemes.

## 5 PRESENTATIONS

### 5.1 The Distribution Centre

Dafydd Charles Jones looked back over his twenty-one years as Manager of the Distribution Centre. He was appointed in July 1989, at the beginning of Gwerfyl Pierce Jones's term as Director, and soon after Phil Davies and Pedr ap Llwyd had been appointed. It was a very exciting time and the beginning of a new era of close cooperation. At about the same time, the computer system was changed to one which was considered to be extremely sophisticated, and within a few months an extension was built to the Distribution Centre, providing additional office space on the first floor. Since then, the computer system has been upgraded several times and the work developed beyond all expectations.

Dafydd noted that he had seen many important changes at the Distribution Centre over the years, including the introduction of a next-day delivery service and a scheme offering additional discounts to independent bookshops, based on their turnover through the Centre. In 1989, the Centre's turnover was just under two million pounds, but the current figure is around five million pounds.

He referred to a number of important books published during his time as Manager, including *Geiriadur yr Academi*, the revised Welsh Bible and *Y Gwyddoniadur*, but the one that had given him the greatest satisfaction was the publication of the collection of hymns, *Caneuon Ffydd*, with the Centre succeeding in distributing 70,000 copies of various versions within a week of receiving them.

He emphasised the huge debt of gratitude he had to the committed team that had worked with him over the years, and he wished the Council well in the future.

### 5.2 Websites: gwales / Welsh Books Council

With the help of visual resources, Phil Davies drew attention to two developments that have been given priority over the past year, namely redesigning the Council's corporate website, and developing the Gwales website.

The new corporate website is proving very popular, with the number of hits increasing from a daily average of 6,178 in the period September—March to a daily average of 9,200 since 1 April, a total of over 3 million hits a year. As the Welsh Book Trade Info website is currently receiving an average of 7,439 hits per day, and gwales receiving 17 million hits a year, the three websites are now attracting a total of over 21 million hits a year.

Phil Davies referred to a number of changes to the gwales interface, including the facility for readers to create a list of recommended books of their own choice, and other books of interest were displayed when browsing specific titles.

The Chairman thanked Dafydd and Phil for their presentations.