



# CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 29 November 2013

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Fiona Gordon (Swansea)  
Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)  
Councillor Alun Lenny (Carmarthen)

Welsh County Librarians

Mr Chris Edwards

CILIP Cymru/Wales

Mrs Carol M. Edwards

The Welsh Academy

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones

The Council's Panels

Mr David Barker (Chair of the Children's Books and Reading Promotions Panel)

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Co-opted Member

Mrs Rona Aldrich  
Mr W. Gwyn Williams

Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive)  
Mr Arwyn Roderick (Director of Finance and Business)  
Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf (Head of Human Resources)  
Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Head of the Editorial Department)  
Mr Neville Evans (Distribution Centre Manager)  
Mr Richard Owen (Head of the Publishing Grants Department)

Officers

Dr Lucy Thomas  
Mrs Delyth M. Phillips  
Mrs Sharon Owen

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ioan Thomas; Wyn Ellis Jones; Chris Bithell; Anita Hobbs; Stuart Egan; Graham Davies; Huw Thomas; Messrs. W. Gwyn Jones; Alun P. Thomas; Gareth Davies Jones; Gwydion Hughes; T. Hywel James; Ioan Kidd; Dr Hywel Owen; Messrs. Terwyn Tomos; R. Arwel Jones; Mrs Mererid Morgan; Ms Marian Delyth;

Mr Sion Ilar Joyce (Head of the Design Department); Mr D. Philip Davies (Director of Information and Promotion).

## 1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mr Chris Edwards (Vale of Glamorgan), representing the Chief Librarians, and to Mrs Sharon Owen (Children's Books and Reading Promotion Officer), both of whom were attending their first meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair, on behalf of the Council, extended sympathy to the following: Miss Jane Hopkins (Secretary of the Grants Department and the Design Department) who had lost her mother; Mr D. Geraint Lewis (Honorary Secretary of the Council) on losing a brother-in-law; Mrs Mererid Morgan (WJEC) who had lost her father; the family of the late Mr Roger Davies (who had provided generous support for the Book Day Lecture); and the family of the late Mr Afan ab Alun (a former member of staff who had worked at the Distribution Centre for 42 years until his retirement in 2010).
- 1.3 Congratulations were extended to Mr W. Gwyn Jones (Honorary Treasurer) and Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair), both of whom had become a grandfather recently, and to Mr Ioan Kidd, who had recently published *Dewis*, his latest novel for adults.
- 1.4 Good wishes were extended to Mr Gareth Davies Jones (Vice-chair) following his recent operation, to Geraint Williams and Peter Morgan, two members of staff at the Distribution Centre who had recently undergone surgery, and to those who are currently awaiting treatment.
- 1.5 Best wishes were extended to three members of staff who will be retiring before the end of March 2014, namely Neville Evans (Distribution Centre Manager); Arwyn Roderick (Director of Finance and Business) who had given almost 20 years of service to the Council, and Richard Owen (Head of the Publishing Grants Department) who had given over 30 years of service. They were warmly thanked for their sterling work and contribution to the Books Council over many years.
- 1.6 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest, and to absent themselves from the meeting at the appropriate times. All members were also requested to sign the Register of Interests.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting, held on 28 June 2013, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Child Poverty Strategy – Progress Report  
The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council had drawn up a Child Poverty Strategy last year, and the document had been approved by Huw Lewis, the Heritage Minister at the time.

A Progress Report had been prepared and distributed to members. Specific reference was made to the well-balanced programme of Welsh materials published during the year, and to the additional funding received from the Welsh Government in order to commission a series of English-language books (both fiction and factual) suitable for children aged 7–11 years. It was also noted that the Council's reading promotion activities had made a contribution, and reference was made to the concern felt in the wake of funding cuts in this important field.

### 3.2 Developments in E-publishing

In the absence of Phil Davies, the Chief Executive read a report prepared by him, noting that 880 e-books are currently available on the Gwales website, 156 being Welsh-language titles. In addition, Amazon had now agreed to sell Welsh e-books, and an increase in the provision is anticipated as publishers respond to this development.

Reference was made to the Welsh Books App/Ap Llyfrau Cymru which had been launched at the National Eisteddfod in the presence of Carwyn Jones and John Griffiths. Eight Welsh titles and one English title are currently available, together with the Council's *Catalog Llyfrau Plant* (catalogue of Welsh books and resources) which can be downloaded free of charge. It is anticipated that the Welsh Government's Department of Education and Skills will be encouraging the publishers of educational materials to use the provision for educational resources. A further development in the field was to draw up a similar scheme for use by publishers of magazines.

It was reported that a new computer had been installed in the Distribution Centre to run all the Council's systems; thanks were paid to Owain Thomas, the Information Technology Officer, for his work in preparing for the installation of the new system.

### 3.3 Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Tegwyn Jones presented a report on behalf of the Friends of the Council, noting that two successful meetings had been held during the year. The Friends had met at the National Eisteddfod in Denbigh, and a meeting had been held in Aberystwyth to discuss the work of poet R. S. Thomas, when Professor M. Wynn Thomas was in conversation with Gwyneth Lewis and Peter Finch.

It was noted that the Friends' latest information pack had been distributed recently, and all those present were urged to become members, or to encourage others to join.

## 4 **REVIEW OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MAGAZINES FROM WALES**

Dr Lucy Thomas presented a report on the review conducted into the field of English-language magazines from Wales, explaining that responsibility for magazines had been transferred from the Arts Council to the Books Council in 2003. She further noted that the Publishing Grants Panel (English-language) wished to conduct a review in the wake of pressure on sales, and in order to ensure the best possible provision for readers.

She noted that the review had been conducted under the chairmanship of Dr Tony Bianchi, and that the report had been discussed in detail by members of the Grants Panel. The documentation was now available on the Books Council's website.

The main conclusions of the review were to extend the range of the magazines in terms of content and format, and to provide training for the successful applicants. It was also agreed to set a maximum grant in respect of the publications. In order to be able to support new schemes, it was agreed to allocate a sum of money to be used for development schemes.

The Chair thanked Lucy Thomas for her thorough work in steering the review.

## 5 **GRANTS 2014/15**

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current financial year, together with the likely position for the year 2014/15.

Reference was made to the Welsh Government's draft budget, which showed a cut of £200,000 in the Council's grant for the forthcoming year. The Council was currently discussing how to distribute the money between the core funding and the publishing grants. The Publishing Grants Department was already in discussion with members of the Panels, and it was intended to

hold discussions with publishers in the near future. The Council was also in the process of holding discussions with the staff regarding the effect any cuts would have on the core funding.

## **6 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS**

The Head of Human Resources, in accordance with the Constitution, presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various Panels. She explained that representatives of the local authorities were all members of the Council, and were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. She thanked those who had served on various committees and panels in 2013.

All those present were asked to complete the Interests Register.

## **7 PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2012/13**

In the unavoidable absence of the Honorary Treasurer, W Gwyn Jones, the accounts for 2012/13 were presented to members by the Director of Finance and Business. A letter written by the Honorary Treasurer was read to the members, confirming that the accounts were correct and that he had attended a meeting with the Auditors at which the accounts were discussed.

The Chair thanked Arwyn Roderick and his staff for their work in preparing the accounts; he also thanked the auditors, Llŷr James's company, for their thorough work again this year.

## **8 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2013/14 AND ESTIMATES 2014/15**

The Director of Finance and Business presented papers stating the projected financial position for the 2013/14 financial year, together with estimates for the year 2014/15; he referred also to the likely cuts in the funding received from the Welsh Government.

## **9 APPOINT AUDITORS TO AUDIT THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2013/14 AND 2014/15**

At the recommendation of the Executive Committee, Llŷr James and company were reappointed to audit the Council's accounts for a further two years at a cost of £6,500 per annum. The recommendation was approved.

## **10 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

The Chief Executive presented the Annual Report to the members. He referred to some of the main events of the year, including the review undertaken by Beaufort into the reading patterns of Welsh speakers, the review of English-language magazines from Wales, and the additional funding received in order to commission English-language books for children. The main link between the various elements was the importance of providing a wide variety of high-quality materials for readers.

He referred to the success of the reading promotion schemes and the changes made to this year's programme as a result of cuts in funding. He also referred to the Welsh Government's likely financial settlement, noting that the Council had already opened discussions regarding the effect the settlement would have on the publishing grants and the core funding.

He paid thanks to the staff for their commitment and hard work during the year, and thanked all members of the various panels and committees. He referred specifically to the support of the Chief Officers and to the commitment of the Chair to the Council's work.

Mrs Rona Aldrich thanked the Chief Executive and the staff for their work.