

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 25 June 2004

PRESENT: Dr J. Lionel Madden (Chairman); Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Williams; Gareth Davies Jones; R. Alun Charles; Alun Creunant Davies; Rhys Bebb Jones; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Dr Huw Meirion Edwards; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Professor M. Wynn Thomas; Councillor Christopher Bithell; Councillor Mrs Dorothy M. J. James.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Messrs Elwyn Jones; Elgan Davies; D. Philip Davies; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams; Dr Kirsti Bohata.

APOLOGIES: Messrs Richard Houdmont; Gareth William Jones; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; John Valentine Williams; Alun P. Thomas; Milwyn Jarman; Dewi Morris Jones; Mrs Mary Palmer; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Mrs Catrin Puw Davies.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and congratulated all those Councillors who had been re-elected in the recent general elections. He noted that the Books Council was in the process of contacting the local authorities to confirm the names of their representatives on the Executive Committee and the Council.

1.2 The Chairman referred specifically to the Vice Chairman, Councillor Gareth Williams, who had decided to retire. He said that Councillor Williams had represented local government on the Books Council for 27 years, serving as Vice Chairman since 1997.

As a result of Gareth Williams's retirement, the Chairman outlined a process for appointing a successor, recommending that the Chief Officers and the Nominations Panel should meet to consider suitable names. The procedure would then be to put forward a name in the next Executive Committee for confirmation by the Council. It was agreed that this procedure should be recommended to the Council in the afternoon.

1.3 Mr Alun Creunant Davies and Professor Emeritus R. Geraint Gruffydd were congratulated on being appointed Honorary Fellows of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Phil Davies, Head of the Books Council's Marketing Department, was also congratulated on winning the Chair at the Bryngwenith Eisteddfod.

1.4 Sympathy was extended to two members of staff on the death of their mothers, namely Ifana Savill from the Publishing Grants Department and Siriol Jones from the Distribution Centre.

1.5 Sympathy was extended to the family of Mr John Dudley Davies, a former member of the Books Council staff, and also Mrs Eirlys Ffowc Elis on the death of Islwyn

Ffowc Elis who had maintained a close relationship with the Books Council from the early days. It was agreed to record the Books Council's appreciation of the chair and desk which Mrs Elis had donated to the Books Council in memory of her husband. Islwyn Ffowc Elis had won the chair at Lewis's Eisteddfod in Liverpool in 1947, and this was the chair in which he sat whilst writing a number of his novels, including *Cysgod y Cryman*.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 December 2003 were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Basic Skills Agency: Basic Skills Book Awards

It was recorded that a catalogue of the award-winning materials had been published and widely distributed and that the Agency had created a mobile exhibition to publicise the material further.

It was noted that the Agency aimed to repeat the scheme in 2005 provided the necessary funding was received from the Assembly.

3.2 Gwales.com

The Director reported that the *gwales.com* site had been further improved and now offered much more guidance and advice for individual customers. Plans were in hand to promote the site over the coming months.

3.3 Upgrading the Vista System

Mr Arwyn Roderick reported that the Systems Information Sub-Panel had recommended that the VISTA system, now eight years old, should be upgraded. The process had been successfully completed in March 2004 without disrupting the service to customers.

4 ASSEMBLY'S POLICY REVIEW: WELSH WRITING IN ENGLISH

The Director reported that the Culture Committee's report had now been published and launched and that it was an extremely positive and constructive document. The Minister for Culture had already responded to it and had announced an additional £250,000 for this year, in order to start implementing the recommendations. Funding would be channelled through the Books Council.

The Director thanked Professor Wynn Thomas for his support and guidance throughout the review and also thanked Elwyn Jones and Kirsti Bohata for their key contributions.

Professor Thomas noted that the report was far-reaching in its implications and observed that publishing in the English language could be transformed if the recommendations it contained were implemented in their entirety. He also wished to pay tribute to the Director and staff for their contribution to the review.

5 JOINT MARKETING STRATEGY

The Head of the Marketing Department reported that the Joint Marketing Strategy Working Group had met recently in order to prioritise the recommendations and discuss the financial costs.

A bid for additional funding would be submitted to the Assembly Government for the 2005/06 funding round.

He stated that £75,000 of the Publishing Grant Department's funding on the Welsh-language side would be earmarked for elements of the Marketing Strategy and that the Working Group appreciated having been given the opportunity to give their views on the recommendations. In addition, a proportion of the £250,000 which had been allocated by the Minister for Culture to promote Welsh writing in English was relevant to the Strategy.

6 PROJECT SCHEMES

6.1 World Book Day

Elwyn Jones, Head of Administration and Public Relations, reported that World Book Day 2004 had been extremely successful and that schools and colleges had used it as a theme to promote books and reading.

It was noted that the Books Council was greatly indebted to the local authorities for their support in ensuring the day's success, and to all the other partners who had supported the Day.

It was reported that the Steering Committee had invited Mr Gareth Davies Jones to prepare an evaluative report on the event, requesting special emphasis on the activities of four areas, namely Powys and Torfaen (schools); Gwynedd and Rhondda Cynon Taf (libraries). The report would be submitted to the Assembly in due course.

It was reported that Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, had announced that funding had been allocated to hold a similar event next year.

All the members of the Steering Committee were thanked for their work and also Delyth Humphreys from the Council's Children's Books Department for coordinating the scheme.

Mr Gareth Davies Jones thanked the relevant local authorities for the welcome he had received during his visits, observing that the activities clearly supported the Assembly's literacy strategy.

6.2 Culturenet Cymru: Books from the Past

It was noted that the site is now live and that a launch event had been held in the National Library on 17 May. Five Welsh-language books and four English-language books had been placed on the site and it is hoped that more titles will be added next year. Culturenet Cymru hoped to commission a feasibility study that would help to develop the site for the future.

7 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2004/05 CORPORATE PLAN 2005/06–2007/08

The Director reported that the Assembly had requested an Operational Plan as well as a Corporate Plan this year, and that because of the timetable, they would have to be submitted to the Assembly before the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Chief Officers were authorised to approve the documents on behalf of the Executive Committee.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 13 November 2003
- 8.1 Steering Committee: World Book Day, 18 November 2003
- 8.2 Children's Books Panel, 11 December 2003
- 8.3 CD-ROMs Panel, 16 January 2004
- 8.4 CD-ROMs Panel, 14 May 2004
- 8.5 Trade Representation Scheme: Steering Committee, 1 April 2004
- 8.6 Trade Representation Scheme: Steering Committee, 26 May 2004
- 8.7 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 11–12 March 2004
- 8.8 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 22–23 April 2004
- 8.9 Marketing Panel, 25 May 2004

9 THE DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

Dafydd Charles Jones stated that the Distribution Centre had been successful last year ensuring an increase of 4.92% in sales against a target of 5%.

He foresaw that it would be a challenge to try and improve on two good years (7.02% the previous year). He noted that a number of activities had been planned for the summer, including stalls at the Urdd Eisteddfod and the Hay Festival, as well as the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod and that concerted efforts had been made with the Book of the Year campaign and Summer Reading.

10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

Arwel Glyn Roberts – Administrative Officer
 Date appointed: 6 May 2004
 Starting date: 1 September 2004
 A two-year initial appointment.

Matthew Charles Howard – Representation Scheme: Sales Representative
 Date appointed: 17 June 2004
 Starting date: 1 July 2004
 A two-year initial appointment.

11 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF YEARLY MEETING

Elwyn Jones noted the arrangements for the Half Yearly meeting which would be held during the afternoon, when presentations would be given by Kirsti Bohata on Welsh Writing in English and Lila Piette and Shoned M. Jones on the work of the Schools Project.