



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 4 December 2015

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Mrs Rona Aldrich; Professor Jane Aaron; Messrs Chris H. Macey; T. Hywel James; Dafydd John Pritchard; W. Gwyn Williams; Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Mrs Lorna Herbert Egan; Dr Cathryn Charnell-White; Councillor Siân Thomas; Councillor Fiona Gordon.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwel Evans; Sion Ilar; Dr Huw Meirion Edwards; Dr Lucy Thomas; Ms Helena O'Sullivan; Mrs Emma Davies.

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; Chris Edwards; Robat Arwyn; Ms Marian Delyth; Mrs Susan Jenkins; Ms Bethan Gwanas; Mrs Linda Tomos; Mrs Mair Treharne; Councillor Keren Bender.

### **1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to those who were present for the first time, namely Councillor Siân Thomas (Carmarthenshire), Dr Cathryn Charnell-White (co-opted member), Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis (co-opted member), Mr Chris H. Macey (Honorary Treasurer), Professor Jane Aaron (Honorary Secretary, following the appointment of Mrs Rona Aldrich as Vice-Chair) and Mrs Mair Treharne (WJEC) who was representing Mrs Susan Jenkins.
- 1.2 Condolences were expressed with Miss Wendy Roberts (Schools Officer), who had lost her partner in October.
- 1.3 Marian Delyth was congratulated on her recent publication, *Enlli – tu hwnt i'r swnt*, and Bethan Gwanas was congratulated on her latest novel for adults – *I Botany Bay*. Medi Jones-Jackson (Children's Books and Reading Promotion Officer) was also congratulated on the birth of her son, Elis Gwynedd, at the end of August.
- 1.4 Best wishes were conveyed to Ben, the son of Emma Davies (Head of Finance), who had recently undergone surgery.
- 1.5 Best wishes were conveyed to Ifana Savill (Grants Officer), who had retired at the end of October after 35 years of service. She was warmly thanked for her contribution and sterling work for the Books Council over the years.
- 1.6 With Gwyn Williams's term as a co-opted member coming to an end, the Chair thanked him for all his support for the Council's work over the years.
- 1.7 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to retire from the meeting at the appropriate times.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 3 July 2015, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Tender in respect of Welsh-language Magazines

The Chief Executive presented the context to the Welsh-language magazines tender, noting that the Council supported a wide range of materials. He also noted that a review of the field had been conducted by Andrew Green, and that the recommendations had been fed into the tender's specifications.

It was noted that a good number of applications had been received, including three brand new applications; companies had been invited to attend interviews before a Sub-panel chaired by Gerwyn Williams, a member of the Welsh-language Publication Grants Panel.

Funding was awarded to fifteen magazines, and it was decided to readvertise the tender for a literary title, with further interviews being held in mid November. It was noted that these franchises will come into force on 1 April 2016.

### 3.2 Swansea Reading City Scheme

The Chief Executive reported that an outline application had been submitted to the Lottery for an ambitious scheme to promote reading and books in the Swansea area, namely the Swansea Reading City Scheme.

It was noted that the application had been approved for further development, and the full application will have to be submitted by mid January.

Meetings had been held with partners in the Swansea area, and extensive consultations had taken place with various groups in the city. The feedback from these groups will be included in the application.

### 3.3 @LlyfrDaFabBooks Schemes

The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council had brought the Book Club to an end at the beginning of the summer, in the wake of a continuing decline in sales, but the commitment to promote the field remained as strong as ever. Following consultation with publishers and booksellers, the @LlyfrDaFabBooks brand had been developed and launched at Ysgol Trewen, Ceredigion, and through the social networks.

An author tour was arranged in mid November with Meleri Wyn James, author of the *Na Ne!!* series, visiting ten schools in north Wales. Local booksellers were also present at each school to ensure sales. Further tours will be arranged next year, based on both Welsh- and English-language titles.

A flagship event will be held early in the new year at Cardigan Castle, where several authors will be presenting their work to pupils from local schools.

These exciting developments were warmly welcomed by members, and thanks were paid to the staff of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department for their hard work and enthusiasm.

### 3.4 Alun Lewis / T. Llew Jones Centenary Celebrations

It was noted that the Council had supported activities at the Hay Festival to note the centenary of Alun Lewis, and the Friends of the Books Council had arranged a successful event at Aberdare, where Wynn Thomas was in conversation with John Pikoulis about the poet's life and work.

During the same period, the Council had played a part in the celebrations to note the centenary of T. Llew Jones, and schools were once again encouraged to join in the events. A poster of the poem 'Cwm Alltcafan' was commissioned and distributed to schools.

The Council also supported activities arranged by the T. Llew Jones Memorial Fund by designing noticeboards featuring the author's work, which were unveiled at strategic sites. The Council had received a letter of thanks from the Chair of the Memorial Fund.

## **4 WELSH GOVERNMENT**

### **4.1 Visits by Welsh Government Ministers**

The Chief Executive reported that Ken Skates, the Deputy Minister, had visited the Council's stand at the Meifod National Eisteddfod, where there had been an opportunity to draw his attention to the wide range of books published in both languages. He also visited Castell Brychan and the Distribution Centre in September, where once again staff were able to emphasise the standard of the output, the latest digital developments, and the business aspect of our work.

Edwina Hart, the Economy Minister, also visited the Distribution Centre in the company of Elin Jones, the local Assembly Member. Once again, emphasis was placed on the Council's vital role in promoting and developing the business aspect of the sector.

### **4.2 Six-monthly meeting**

The Chair noted that the Deputy Minister, Ken Skates, was holding regular meetings with the Council, and there had been an opportunity in each meeting to report on developments within the publishing industry. In recent meetings there was, naturally, considerable emphasis placed on the financial situation. A further meeting will be held next week when the Education Minister, Huw Lewis, will be present.

### **4.3 Thematic Years**

It was reported that the Council had welcomed the Deputy Minister's announcement encouraging organisations within the culture portfolio to promote their activities under the thematic years banner, starting with the Year of Adventure in 2016.

The Council is of the opinion that this will provide an excellent opportunity for publishers to promote new books, together with a backlist of suitable titles. In addition, the Council is eager to ensure cooperation between various organisations in order to attract the best possible publicity for the campaign.

Members were also reminded that celebrations to note Roald Dahl's centenary will be held next year, and it will be possible to include these activities within the thematic years campaign.

## **5 GRANTS 2016/17**

The Head of Finance presented a paper noting the grants received in 2015/16. The Council was still awaiting information regarding the settlement for the 2016/17 financial year.

## **6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

### **6.1 Sales and Marketing**

Helena O'Sullivan, Head of the Council's Sales and Marketing Department, reported that sales in the current period continued to be challenging, although there had been an increase in sales at the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod.

The Department was currently in the middle of the busy Christmas period, with all the books supplements distributed, advertisements appearing in the press, and television advertisements being broadcast. The Department was also cooperating closely with publishers and booksellers to arrange several book launches and author signing sessions.

A Bookshop Week was held again this year in cooperation with Radio Cymru, and in September a second meeting was held for the English-language publishers in Wales.

## 6.2 Distribution

Arwel Evans, Head of the Distribution Department, reported that keeping a close watch on debtors remained a priority, and he was very pleased to note that it had been possible to keep the total sum overdue to 0.97% of the year's receipts. This was quite a feat, as the target was 2%, and he thanked booksellers for their cooperation.

He noted that the task of benchmarking the Centre's work continued, with 98% of all new books being recorded on the Vista system within 24 hours of arrival. He added that the Centre had experienced an extremely busy period in the run-up to the Agricultural Show and the National Eisteddfod.

He conveyed his good wishes to Gwilym and Megan Tudur, Siop y Pethe, Aberystwyth, who had recently retired after 46 years as the shop's owners.

## 6.3 Editorial/Design Services

Sion Ilar reported that the Design Department had worked on 100 titles during the year, and with the assistance of a small team of designers and illustrators it had been possible to provide publishers with a service of a high standard.

The department had worked on the National Eisteddfod prize-winning titles, and on the latest Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn books. They had also been extremely busy with the Council's own internal work, and with several items in connection with the T. Llew Jones centenary celebrations, including commissioning the artist Andy Robert Davies to create a poster of the poem 'Cwm Alltcafán'.

Huw Meirion Edwards noted that almost a year had passed since he took up his post as Head of the Editorial Department, and during that time they had worked on a steady stream of Welsh- and English-language typescripts. He too thanked a small team of external editors for their assistance.

A personal highlight for him had been the opportunity to work on *Y Gân Olaf*, the last volume of poems by the late Gerallt Lloyd Owen; the Department will now turn their attention to the new titles in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series, thus emphasising the wide variety of work undertaken.

## 6.4 Information Services

The Chief Executive reminded members that Phil Davies and Delyth Phillips had given a full presentation of their work at the previous meeting. Following Phil Davies's retirement in the summer, Lowri Davies had joined the Department from the Sales and Marketing Department.

It was noted that the Department was responsible for ensuring that information about books from Wales – both print and digital titles – was correct and up-to-date, and easily accessible by the trade and the general public.

It was noted that 1,549 e-books are now available to purchase on the gwales website.

## **7 STRATEGIC PLAN**

As noted in the Half-yearly Meeting, the Chief Executive reported that the Council was preparing a five-year strategic plan. He noted that a draft version had been included with the committee papers, and copies had been distributed to the publishers, booksellers and libraries for consultation.

It was explained that the plan noted the importance of defending a number of the Council's core functions in order to ensure that the publishing industry rests on firm foundations and is able to develop over the forthcoming period. Reference was also made to some other points, such as changing the English title of the Council and developing a scheme to help teachers to promote books in the classroom. It was noted that the plan closed with a list of the Council's aims and the way in which the industry is able to contribute to the Welsh Government's programme.

Several members welcomed the fact that the Council was preparing a strategic plan, and the contents were approved. Hywel James said that it would be further strengthened by the addition of more attention to the needs of readers.

## **8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 27 October 2015
- 8.2 Nominations Panel, 16 November 2015
- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 17/18 November 2015
- 8.4 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 6/7 July 2015
- 8.5 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 10 November 2015

## **9 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL**

### **9.1 Membership of the Council, the Executive Committee and Panels**

The Chief Executive presented a list of members of the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. He reported that local authority representatives were members of the Executive Committee in rotation, and he thanked those members who were coming to the end of their tenure. He emphasised the fact that the Council greatly appreciated the commitment of all members, together with the support of a host of volunteers.

All lists were confirmed for presentation to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

## **10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

A report was presented on the appointments made since the previous meeting:

Anwen Francis – Children's Books and Reading Promotion Officer (maternity cover)  
 Gwion Dafydd – Assistant to the Sales and Marketing Department  
 Iona M. Bailey – Publishing Grants Officer (Finance)  
 E. Vera Bowen – Administrative Assistant (Grants Department)

## **11 ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT 2014/15**

It was agreed to present the reports to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

**12 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2015/16 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2016/17**

The reports to be presented to the Council were confirmed, and it was explained that the Council had not yet received information from the Welsh Government regarding the financial settlement for the forthcoming year.

**13 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS TO AUDIT THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2015/16 AND 2016/17**

The Treasurer's recommendation, namely to appoint Llŷr James's company for a further two-year period at a cost of £6,700 per annum, was confirmed.

**14 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

Members were thanked for their attendance at the Executive Committee, and it was noted that the annual meeting would follow at 2 pm.