



# CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 4 December 2015

PRESENT: Mrs Rona Aldrich (Vice-Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Gwynedd)

Councillor Fiona M. Gordon (Swansea)

Councillor Siân Thomas (Carmarthenshire)

Councillor Stuart Egan (Vale of Glamorgan)

Councillor Huw Thomas (Cardiff)

Welsh County Librarians

Mr T. Hywel James

CILIP Cymru/Wales

Mrs Carol M. Edwards

National Library of Wales

Mrs Linda Tomos

WJEC

Mrs Mair Treharne

The Welsh Academy

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Ms Marian Delyth

The Council's Panels

Mrs Lorna Herbert Egan (Chair of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel)

Honorary Secretary

Professor Jane Aaron

Honorary Treasurer

Mr Chris H. Macey

Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams

Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis

Dr Cathryn Charnell-White

Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive)

Mrs Emma Davies (Head of Finance)

Dr Huw Meirion Edwards (Head of the Editorial Department)

Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Department)  
 Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publishing Grants Department)  
 Mr Sion Ilar (Head of the Design Department)  
 Mrs Helena O'Sullivan (Head of Sales and Marketing)

Officers

Mrs Delyth M. Phillips  
 Ms Anwen Pierce  
 Mr R. Arwel Jones

APOLOGIES: Professor M. Wynn Thomas; Councillors Chris Bithell; Hugh Jones; Joy Rosser; David W. M. Rees; Keren Bender; Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; Chris Edwards; Robat Arwyn; Dr Hywel Owen; Mrs Susan Jenkins; Ms Bethan Gwanas

## 1 VICE-CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Vice-Chair welcomed members to the meeting. She extended a special welcome to those who were attending their first meeting, namely Councillor Siân Thomas (Carmarthenshire), Mrs Linda Tomos (National Library), 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), Dr Huw Meirion Edwards (Head of the Editorial Department), Mrs Emma Davies (Head of Finance) 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 of the Council coming to an end, Rona Aldrich referred to his interest in the Council's work since the earliest days, and thanked him for his staunch support for the organisation 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. Attention was also drawn to the forms regarding declaring an interest which all members had to complete.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Half-yearly meeting, held on 3 July 2015, were confirmed.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

#### 3.1 Child Poverty Strategy – Progress Report

The Chief Executive reminded members that the Council had been invited in 2002 to draw up a Child Poverty Strategy at the request of Huw Lewis, who was the Heritage Minister at the time. Since then, the Council had been reporting annually to the civil servants, and the current year's report had been included with the papers.

He further noted that the Council was of the opinion that the publishing industry had an important contribution to make in ensuring a supply of suitable and appropriate resources for a varied audience, together with ensuring access to the material.

It was noted that the Council's strategy had four aims, namely ensuring a supply of suitable material, disseminating information about the material, promoting literacy and contributing towards family inclusion.

The Chief Executive noted that the Council's policy of promoting both original books and adaptations ensured a variety of materials, and included books discussing particular themes, such as bullying. The Council also emphasized the importance of ensuring that information about the books reached the children, families and schools, and the way in which the @LlyfrDaFabBooks brand had been developed this year was an indication of this.

He noted that the focus of the Book Day activities was on promoting literacy; he also referred to the success of the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series for reluctant readers, noting that this scheme will have to be adapted next year in the wake of the Welsh Government's budget cuts.

#### 3.2 Celebratory Volume

In the absence of M. Wynn Thomas, the Chief Executive reported that all the articles were now in hand and that the Chair was editing the material. A meeting had been held to discuss the book's format.

#### 3.3 Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Marian Delyth noted that the Vice-Chair of the Friends, Bethan Gwanas, had apologised that she was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that the Friends had held a successful reception on the National Eisteddfod at Meifod, and since then an information pack had been distributed to members.

The Chief Executive added that the Friends had held a very successful annual meeting at Aberdare, where M. Wynn Thomas was in conversation with John Pikoulis about the life and work of Alun Lewis.

#### 3.4 Reading Promotion Scheme – Progress Report

In the absence of Angharad Tomos, the Chief Executive noted that the National Year of Reading Report had been sent to the civil servants at the Education Department, and that copies had been included with the papers.

It was noted that eight titles in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series had been published this year, and launched at a very successful event in Cardiff Bay in the company of Huw Lewis, the Education Minister. Every title had been published as printed books and e-books, and an extensive marketing campaign had been held, which included the social networks.

The artist, illustrator and author Jackie Morris was the guest speaker at this year's Book Day Lecture, and a special evening was spent in her company. The event was once again sponsored by Angharad and Mererid Puw Davies in memory of their parents.

One of this year's highlights was the 'selfie' campaign, supported by members of the Wales rugby squad, with individuals being encouraged to send photos of themselves with their favourite book. This year's Biggest Book Show on Earth was held in Rhyl, where 900 children between 9 and 11 years enjoyed a unique opportunity to hear several leading children's authors discussing their work.

Angharad Tomos had collated the feedback to the events, and it is evident that the celebrations are going from strength to strength.

It was pleasing to note that all the local authorities in Wales had taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge, although there was a small decrease (0.3%) in the number of children participating. Over 60% of those completed the Challenge. It was also noted that 4,418 children had joined a library during the campaign.

### 3.5 Publishers' Training Programme

Lucy Thomas, Head of the Publishing Grants Department, reported that the Welsh Books Council had, for many years, been holding training sessions for publishers. The training is financed through the publishing grant, and over the next few months several new developments will become apparent.

Training sessions for publishers are held through the medium of both Welsh and English. The investment in training is one way of facilitating developments in the sector, whilst at the same time promoting professionalism and ensuring that publishers are aware of the latest developments in the field. As the grant supports posts in the various publishing houses, the training courses ensure that this money is utilised in the most effective way, and enables us to get the best out of the staff supported by us.

Other partners, such as Skillset Cymru for example, provide general training for the Creative Industries; in Wales, however, the Books Council is the only body that arranges courses specifically for publishers. This is done in close cooperation with the publishers, identifying requirements, collating feedback, and asking for suggestions when drawing up the training programme for the year.

On the Welsh-language side, the courses for editors are coordinated by Mairwen Prys Jones, former head of publishing at Gomer. The grant supports some three courses per annum – from workshops with small groups to one-day courses – and they are usually offered free of charge.

On the English-language side, two courses per annum are held, arranged by the Publishing Grants Department. The courses are led by experts in the field, such as our main partners The Publishing Training Centre, or companies specialising in specific fields, such as The Literary Platform who lead the training in the field of digital marketing. Over the years, courses have been held on designing book covers, copy-editing and creative editing, adapting books, publishing children's books, rights and contracts, financial management, drawing up a balanced list of titles, business management, marketing and digital publishing. The courses are very popular, and the feedback has been excellent. In an industry where many individuals work on a freelance basis, often alone, the courses provide a valuable opportunity for people to come together to share experiences and ideas, to learn from experts in particular fields and, most importantly, to get to know others working in the same field. The training also gives us an opportunity to discuss developments outside Wales, in order to assess how that information could be utilised and adapted in a Welsh context.

Some of the highlights of the year were a one-day conference held in January for publishers and Welsh booksellers, entitled Important Audiences and Best Sellers. As the Books Council is a body that works at the heart of the industry, we were in an ideal position to organise an event such as this. It attracted over 60 delegates, and provided an opportunity for publishers to receive feedback from booksellers. Sessions were also held on particular fields, such as books for Welsh-learners and the reading habits of

young people. In September, an experimental course was also held in English, entitled Publishing Surgeries. The idea was to have 4 specialists in digital marketing, drawing up publishing lists, rights and contracts, and brand development; the publishers were arranged in small groups, and each group was given a session with each of the experts. As publishers had been invited to submit their questions to the specialists in advance, the training was specially tailored to meet their exact needs.

It was noted that changes had been introduced to the schemes for English- and Welsh-language magazines, and in their wake the Council would also be arranging courses in this field. The first session with the English-language magazines had been held recently, in partnership with the Professional Publishers Association, on the theme 'Producing Income'. A further course on marketing will be held in the new year, with courses for the Welsh-language magazines scheduled for the forthcoming year. As the publishers of the Welsh-language magazines have not yet come together in one venue, this will be a wonderful opportunity to make new contacts and share information and also – as is becoming increasingly vital in the current economic climate – to work in cooperation. It is pleasing to note that the provision is expanding, and that there are positive developments in the field despite the economic situation.

#### **4 GRANTS 2016/17**

The Head of Finance presented a paper noting the grants that had been received during the current year; she explained that the Council had not yet been given any information from the Welsh Government regarding the settlement for the forthcoming year.

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

The Chief Executive presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various Panels, in accordance with the Constitution. It was explained that all local authority representatives were members of the Council, and were represented on the Executive Committee in rotation. He thanked those who had served in 2015, noting that their contribution and support was greatly appreciated.

All members were asked to complete the Register of Interest forms.

#### **6 PRESENTATION OF THE 2014/15 FINANCIAL REPORT**

Chris Macey, the Honorary Treasurer, presented the financial accounts for the 2014/15 financial year. He thanked Emma Davies and the staff of the Finance Department for their work in preparing the accounts, and to Llŷr James and his company for auditing them.

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

The Honorary Treasurer presented the accounts for the current financial year, which showed yet again how difficult it was for the Council to maintain and develop the industry on the current settlement. The estimates for the 2016/17 financial year were presented, although the Council had not yet received information from the Welsh Government regarding the financial settlement. It is understood that the Welsh Government will present a draft budget to the Assembly next week.

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

At the recommendation of the Honorary Treasurer, it was agreed to appoint Llŷr James's company to audit the accounts for a further period of two years, at a cost of £6,700 per annum.

## 9 PRESENTATION OF THE 2014/15 ANNUAL REPORT

In presenting the Annual Report to the attention of members, the Chief Executive noted that there were two aspects to the Council's work over the past year. There had been a deliberate attempt to safeguard all that had been achieved over recent times, in order to ensure a wide variety of high-quality materials for the readers; in addition, every opportunity had been taken to develop the industry.

A good example of developing the industry was the tender issued in respect of Welsh-language magazines, which followed soon after the completion of the similar process for English-language magazines. A number of applications of a high standard were submitted, and the provision in both languages is now on firmer financial foundations, with companies making sterling efforts to take the digital demands into consideration.

The work of appraising the current schemes was also a way of developing the field of children's books, with a number of exciting ideas under the @LlyfrDaFabBooks brand taking over from the Book Club. It was noted that the element of venture had been an intrinsic part of the Council's mission from the earliest days.

It was also noted that the Council had recently welcomed a visit by the Deputy Minister, Ken Skates, and the Economy Minister, Edwina Hart, and every opportunity was taken to show the wide range of services provided by the Council. The visit was also an opportunity to note that the Council's work often complemented the Welsh Government's programme in several key fields, and the importance of maintaining the current level of investment.

The Chief Executive also referred to the fact that the Council had contributed towards the events to celebrate the centenaries of Alun Lewis and T. Llew Jones, thus emphasizing the Council's role in serving both the English- and Welsh-medium cultures of Wales.

In his closing remarks, he noted that the Council was consulting with the industry on the five-year strategic plan which will, hopefully, aid further future developments.

Councillor Fiona Gordon, Swansea, on behalf of all members, thanked the Council for their work.