



# CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

## **HALF YEARLY MEETING**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 1 July 2016

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

### Local Authorities

Councillor Chris Bithell (Flintshire)

Councillor Hugh Jones (Wrexham)

Councillor Dai Jones (Powys)

Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)

Councillor Siân Thomas (Carmarthenshire)

Councillor Stuart Egan (Vale of Glamorgan)

Councillor Ernie C. Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil)

### Welsh County Librarians

Mr Richard Bellinger (Bridgend)

### National Library of Wales

Mrs Linda Tomos

### The Welsh Academy

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

### The Council's Panels

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

Mr Robat Arwyn (Chair, Welsh-language Publishing Grants Panel)

### Vice-Chair

Mrs Rona Aldrich

### Honorary Secretary

Professor Jane Aaron

### Honorary Treasurer

Mr Chris Hywel Macey

### Co-opted Member

Dr Cathryn Charnell-White

### Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive)

Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Centre)

Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publishing Grants Department)

Ms Helena O'Sullivan (Head of the Sales and Marketing Department)

Dr Huw Meirion Edwards (Head of the Editorial Department)

Mr Sion Iilar (Head of the Design Department)

Mr Dyfed Evans

Mrs Delyth G. M. Phillips

Mr R. Arwel Jones  
 Miss Emma L. Evans  
 Ms Sharon Owen  
 Mrs Angharad Wyn Sinclair

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Ioan Thomas; David W. M. Rees; Messrs. Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; T. Hywel James; Gareth Griffiths; Dr Hywel Owen; Dr Daniel G. Williams; Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Ms Marian Delyth; Ms Bethan Gwanas; Mrs Emma Davies.

## **1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

At the start of the meeting, the Chair noted that the Chief Executive had informed him of his wish to retire at the end of January 2017 and that the Executive Committee had agreed on a procedure to appoint a successor.

Elwyn took the opportunity to thank members for all their support during his period as Chief Executive.

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and extended a special welcome to those who were attending for the first time, namely Councillor Dai Jones (Powys), Councillor Ernie Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil), Mr Richard Bellinger (Chief Librarian of Bridgend County Borough Council), and Mr Robat Arwyn (Chair of the Welsh-language Publishing Grants Panel).
- 1.2 Condolences were expressed with the following on their recent losses:  
 Mr T. Hywel James (Chief Librarian of Gwynedd) on losing his son, Rhidian, in January;  
 Mr Ion Thomas (Chair of the Friends of the Books Council) on losing his father in February;  
 the family of the late Professor Emeritus Gwyn Thomas – a former member of the Books Council's Publication Grants Panel, who died in mid-April.
- 1.3 Councillor Stuart Egan was congratulated on being elected Mayor of the Vale of Glamorgan 2016/17.
- 1.4 Angharad Wyn Sinclair (née Tomos) (Reading Promotion Schemes Manager) was congratulated on her recent marriage, and best wishes were conveyed to Elin Prysor Williams (North Wales Trade Representative) on her marriage the following day, 2 July.
- 1.5 Delwyn Gwalchmai (Assistant in the Distribution Centre) was congratulated on the recent birth of his first grandchild, and Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publishing Grants Department) was congratulated on becoming an aunt for the first time.
- 1.6 Thanks were conveyed to Angharad and Mererid, daughters of the late Roger and Catrin Puw Davies, for a gift in memory of their parents given as a contribution towards the Book Day lecture, delivered this year by Meilyr Rowlands.
- 1.7 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to absent themselves from the meeting as necessary.

## **2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 4 December 2015, were confirmed.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

#### 3.1 Operational Plan 2016/17 / Financial Award Letter

The Chief Executive reported that a copy of the Operational Plan had been distributed to members with the papers, and he was pleased to note that it had been approved by Ken Skates and Edwina Hart before the election.

He noted that the foreword referred to some of the changes that had occurred in recent times, including developments such as e-books, promoting and selling books on-line, and the changes in people's leisure time patterns. He emphasized how important it was for the Council and the publishing industry in general to realise the significance of these changes, and to be willing to adapt, whilst at the same time maintaining the core principles of supporting and promoting the book trade.

He was also confident that the content and thrust of the Operational Plan built on the work achieved in the past; it emphasized the need to ensure a wide range of appealing, high-quality materials for children and adults, and to devise new and imaginative ways of promoting books and reaching readers. The content of the Plan naturally tied in with the new Strategic Plan, and the Council is always willing to assess and adapt its plans and procedures as necessary.

Having completed the Operational Plan, the Council had received the Financial Award Letter for the 2016/17 financial year. The relevant letter for the work on the reading promotion schemes had also been received.

#### 3.3 Strategic Plan

The Chief Executive noted his thanks regarding the process of consulting on the Strategic Plan. He reminded members that a draft plan had been included with the Annual Meeting papers in December, and that the Council had at the time consulted with the book trade regarding the contents. Copies were sent to publishers, booksellers and members of the Society of Chief Librarians. He thanked everyone for their response, and especially to Hywel James for his supportive and constructive comments on behalf of the Chief Librarians. There was a positive response to the draft, and it had been possible to include many of the comments received. An updated version had been presented to the Chief Officers at their last meeting, and the final version will be placed on the Council's website in the near future.

As with the Operational Plan, the Strategic Plan also included an emphasis on publishing a range of high-quality books and on promotion, together with the need for cooperation to ensure a viable industry. Particular attention was also given to the importance of books and reading within the Welsh Government's programme of work.

#### 3.4 Developments in the field of magazines

Lucy Thomas, Head of the Publishing Grants Department, presented a report on the developments in the field of Welsh magazines, following the tender process that was held in the autumn of last year. The latest funding cycle began on 1 April 2016, with 15 magazines being supported. Two new magazines are being launched this year. The first, *Mellten*, a comic for children, was launched at the Urdd Eisteddfod. Edited by the cartoonist Huw Aaron and published by Y Lolfa, readers have responded enthusiastically to the new comic. The publishers of the new literary magazine, *O'r Pedwar Gwynf*, will be launching the first issue at the National Eisteddfod. The editors are Sioned Puw Rowlands and Owen Martell, with Mari Siôn as Editorial Manager and Producer. The new title will be a lively combination of a printed magazine and digital on-line material.

A new element of the scheme to support magazines is a training programme. The first course for publishers of Welsh-language magazines was held in Aberystwyth in April, where there was an opportunity to share ideas and discuss possible partnerships, together with sessions on rights, design and editing.

This reflects the same new regime as the one followed with the English-language magazines – a move that has been welcomed by the publishers. A course on strategies to increase income was held in Cardiff in December, and a course on increasing digital subscriptions was held in Swansea in April.

### 3.5 Celebration Volume

The Chair noted that all the articles had now been translated, and that the next step would be to prepare the volumes for printing.

### 3.6 Friends of the Books Council

The Chief Executive noted apologies on behalf of Marian Delyth and Bethan Gwanas, who were absent due to other commitments, and he presented a report on their behalf. An information pack had been distributed to members of the Friends in March, and the next pack is currently being prepared.

Once again this year, the Friends will hold a reception at the National Eisteddfod, where there will be an opportunity to attract new members. The Steering Committee is also planning for the annual meeting to be held in the autumn.

## 4 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 4.1 Grants 2016/17

The Chief Executive presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current year, that reflected the same funding as the previous year. A paper was also presented noting the additional capital funding (a one-off payment of £183,601) received last year in respect of the work on the buildings and on technological developments.

## 5 PRESENTATIONS

### 5.1 The Department of Education's Reading Promotion Schemes

Angharad Sinclair, Reading Promotions Project Manager, presented a summary of the three projects that are part of the Reading Promotion Schemes, namely Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn, Book Day and the Summer Reading Challenge. It was explained that these projects were funded separately from the Books Council's core work, through a direct grant from the Welsh Government's Education Directorate. It was noted that, although these are the main schemes, the Department also contributes to projects such as Reading On and Chatterbooks, together with other events such as the recent Centenaries of Dylan Thomas, T. Llew Jones and Roald Dahl.

The main theme linking these schemes is promoting the importance of reading for pleasure. She showed several examples and photographs of some of the resources created as part of these projects. Among them were posters created and printed annually in order to distribute them to schools, libraries, colleges, bookshops, prisons and hospitals throughout Wales.

Angharad noted the competitions arranged with partners such as S4C, Yr Urdd, Twf, and *Papurau Bro*, together with the annual Book Day lecture which has been delivered by several guest speakers including Meilyr Rowlands, Chief Inspector of Estyn (2016); the artist and author Jackie Morris (2015); Mairwen Jones (2014) and Trevor Fishlock (2013). A summary was given of some of the annual events for children held in various parts of Wales (2014: Cardiff with 700 children; 2015: Rhyl with 1000 children and 2016: Swansea with 650 children).

Angharad gave details of the Summer Reading Challenge that is held annually over the summer holidays. The Challenge is arranged jointly between The Reading

Agency charity and public libraries, and is supported in Wales by the Books Council and the Welsh Government. This is the main programme to promote reading for pleasure with children of primary school age, and every one of Wales's local authorities offer an opportunity to join in the fun. Every year, the Challenge presents a new theme, in order to encourage children aged between 4 and 12 years to read six or more books during the summer holidays.

In 2015, with support from the Welsh Books Council and the Welsh Government, a new bilingual scheme was developed – Hac Darllen/Reading Hack. The aim of this pilot scheme was to encourage library authorities in Wales to connect with young volunteers that would be willing to help support the Summer Reading Challenge and other activities in their libraries. Fifteen authorities – a very high number – accepted the offer to receive bilingual Reading Hack materials completely free of charge, and 174 young people – a record-breaking number (the total in 2014 was 20) – took part in the scheme throughout Wales.

It was noted that the new Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads titles for 2016 had been launched on 24 February 2016 at the Senedd Building, Cardiff Bay, by Huw Lewis AC, the Minister for Education and Skills. The 2016 Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn titles were published by Y Lolfa and Accent Press.

## 5.2 Selling Books, Marketing and Encouraging Readers

Helena O'Sullivan, Head of the Sales and Marketing Department, and Emma Evans, Marketing Officer, gave a presentation to show how the Council sells and markets books. Firstly, they referred to the close cooperation that exists between the Sales and Marketing Department and the Distribution Centre itself. As the Distribution Centre is entirely self-supporting, any profit made is reinvested in the Centre's work, thereby emphasizing the importance of selling as many books as possible.

It was noted that some 1,200 new books are published annually, and added to the 18,000 titles, that are available at the Distribution Centre at any one time. There is regular contact and cooperation between the publishers and the booksellers throughout the year, with events including the sales conferences, and meetings of Cwlwm Cyhoeddwy and of the English-language publishers. In addition to books from Wales, it was noted that the Council also stock books of Welsh interest from publishers outside Wales.

The Books Council also sell books to various other outlets – independent bookshops throughout Wales, Waterstones, WHSmith, Cadw centres, National Museum of Wales sites etc. The Council is also looking at opportunities to sell beyond Wales, and an important element of that work is distributing on behalf of the main publishers to UK companies such as Gardners and Bertrams.

Without the close cooperation between the Distribution Centre and the Sales and Marketing Department, we would not be able to execute our work successfully.

Linda Tomos asked how the Council monitored the success of various marketing schemes; Helena noted that they collected feedback on a regular basis – especially from booksellers. This was part of the normal process of appraising the schemes from year to year.

The Chair thanked members of staff for their presentations.

## 6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.