



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

ANNUAL MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 2 December 2016

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Gwynedd)
Councillor Siân Thomas (Carmarthenshire)
Councillor Ernie Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil)
Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)

Welsh County Librarians

Mr Gareth Griffiths
Mr Richard Bellinger

Welsh Government

Dr Hywel Owen

CILIP Cymru Wales

Mrs Carol M. Edwards

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)

Vice-Chair

Mrs Rona Aldrich

Honorary Secretary

Professor Jane Aaron

Co-opted Members

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 Iar (Head of the Design Department)
Mrs Helena O'Sullivan (Head of Sales and Marketing)
Mrs Helen Jones (Head of Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department)

Officers

Mrs Delyth M. Phillips

Miss Emma Evans

Mr Dyfed Evans

Mr R. Arwel Jones

APOLOGIES: Councillors Chris Bithell; Dai Jones; Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; T. Hywel James; Robat Arwyn; Professor Daniel G. Williams; Mrs Linda Tomos; Ms Bethan Gwanas.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mrs Helen Jones (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department) who was attending her first meeting.
- 1.2 Sincere condolences were expressed with the following on their recent losses: Mr Robat Arwyn (Chair of the Welsh-language Publishing Grants Panel) on losing his father; Mrs Delyth M. Phillips (Information Officer) on losing her father, and Mr Peter Morgan (Floor Manager at the Distribution Centre) also on losing his father – all three during September; Miss Jane Hopkins (Secretary of the Publishing Grants Department) on losing her aunt in October, and Mrs Siân Evans (Administrator in the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department) who had lost her uncle in an accident the previous week.
- 1.3 Marian Delyth was congratulated on the publication of her book *Wales in 100 Places*, and Daniel G. Williams was congratulated on being appointed Professor in the English Department, Swansea University.
- 1.4 Dyfed Edwards (Assistant Head of the Distribution Centre) and Megan Jones (Administrative Assistant, Finance) were both congratulated on completing 20 years' service to the Council.
- 1.5 Best wishes were conveyed to Delyth M. Phillips (Information Officer) who was leaving after almost 10 years' service to the Council, and to Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive) who would be retiring at the end of January 2017 after almost 20 years' service. He has been Chief Executive since 2009. They were both warmly thanked for their contribution and for their sterling work for the Books Council over the years.
- 1.6 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to retire from the meeting as necessary. Their attention was also drawn to the declaration of interest forms to be completed by all members.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half-yearly Meeting, held on 1 July 2016, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The WBC's New Chief Executive

Following the Chief Executive's announcement at the previous meeting of his intention to retire at the end of January, the Chair reported on the process followed in order to appoint his successor. He thanked the Chief Officers for their support throughout the process, and noted that Helgard Krause had been appointed to the post.

Helgard hails from Germany and graduated at Berlin University before following a course in English literature at Sussex University. She worked for several publishers before joining the Welsh Books Council as Overseas Marketing Officer, and was later appointed Head of Sales and Marketing. She is currently Director of the University of Wales Press.

Elwyn added that she had extensive knowledge of the publishing industry in Wales, from the point of view of the publishers and the booksellers. He had already held one meeting with Helgard, and a further meeting had been arranged to discuss the transfer of duties.

3.2 Financial Settlement 2017/18

The Chief Executive reported that the Welsh Government had recently announced their draft budget, showing an increase of 3.5% (£123,000) for the Council on the 2016/2017 settlement. The budget is expected to be confirmed in the near future.

It was noted that this settlement was good news for the industry, and would help the Council to maintain the developments seen over recent years.

It was disappointing, however, to learn that the Council will face a cut of £30,000 in its annual capital funding (from £60,000 to £30,000), but there would be an opportunity to apply for end of year funding.

3.3 Child Poverty Strategy

The Chief Executive noted that the Council had prepared a Child Poverty Strategy during Huw Lewis's time as Heritage Minister with responsibility for the Council. The WBC now prepares an annual progress report to present to the civil servants, and a copy had been enclosed with the papers.

It was noted that there are four aims to the Council's strategy, namely supporting appropriate material, sharing information, promoting literacy, and family inclusion.

The Council was of the opinion that the variety of books published in both languages for children and young adults had improved over recent times. There are now books highlighting important issues such as bullying and depression, and activities such as the Book Day schemes and @LlyfrDaFabBooks tours emphasize the importance of books and reading. Books for adults are also given prominence, with titles in the Quick Reads/ Stori Sydyn series being published annually and helping to promote reading as a family activity.

Elwyn reminded members that this aspect was given due attention in the Strategic Plan, and appointing Helen Jones, with her background in education, as Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion, would enable the Council to further develop the field.

It was also noted that an invitation had been extended to Kirsti Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, to visit the Council and there would be an opportunity on that occasion to make a presentation showing the extent of our work.

3.4 Celebration Volume

The Chair reminded members that the Council, as part of the 50 year celebrations, had commissioned a volume looking at various aspects of the Council's work. The articles have now been completed, edited and translated.

Recently, a small group had convened to discuss the work, and thanks were paid to Geraint Lewis and Phil Davies for joining with the Chair and members of staff. It was agreed to publish two separate volumes, and Sion Iilar had already started on the work of designing the book and selecting appropriate photographs.

3.5 Library of Wales Series

Lucy Thomas presented a report on the Library of Wales series, which was established to provide access to some of the English-language classics from Wales. The two latest

titles in the series, namely novels by William Glynne-Jones, had been launched at an event held in Llanelli at the beginning of October in the company of Dai Smith, the series editor, the local Assembly Member, Lee Waters, and members of the author's family.

When the fiftieth volume in the series is published in the near future, there will be an opportunity to assess the future of the series.

3.6 Friends of the Books Council

Marian Delyth reported that the Friends had been busy recently. A reception was held on the field of the Abergavenny National Eisteddfod, where the author Jon Gower had been invited to address members. The Steering Committee met in mid-October, and it was agreed to launch a new membership drive offering a book token to any current member who recruited a new member. A target of gaining 100 new members within the year was set.

Later the same day, the Annual Meeting was held at the National Library, where Wynn Thomas was in conversation with Alan Llwyd about his recent biography of the poet Gwenallt.

It was also noted that the latest information pack, together with the new issue of the newsletter *Y Cyfaill/The Friend*, had been distributed to members.

4 **GRANTS 2017/18**

Emma Davies, the Head of Finance, presented a paper noting the grants received from the Welsh Government in respect of the current financial year, noting also the funding earmarked for the Council in the draft budget in respect of the 2017/18 financial year.

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

In accordance with the Constitution, the Chair presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various Panels. He explained that all representatives of the local authorities were members of the Council, and represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. He thanked all those who had served in 2016 for their support, and emphasized the importance of the relationship between the local authorities and the Council.

As was the custom, all members were asked to complete the Register of Interest forms.

6 **PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2015/16**

In the absence of Chris Macey, the Honorary Treasurer, Emma Davies presented the accounts in respect of the 2015/16 financial year; she elaborated on some specific aspects, including the financial challenges facing the Distribution Centre. She thanked Llŷr James's company for auditing the accounts.

7 **LIKELY FINANCIAL POSITION IN 2016/17 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2017/18**

Emma Davies presented the estimates in respect of the 2016/17 and 2017/18 financial years. She noted that these figures also highlighted the challenges facing the Distribution Centre.

The Chief Executive noted that this was currently one of the main challenges, and the Council was working on a number of schemes to cut costs. Arwel Evans, Head of the Distribution Centre, had already been looking into storage, packing and distribution costs.

8 PRESENTATION OF THE 2015/16 ANNUAL REPORT

In presenting the Annual Report to the attention of members, the Chief Executive noted that he was now more aware than ever of the importance of the Books Council as a national institution. He referred to the Council's role in supporting a wide variety of high-quality materials, in promoting reading, and in the work of ensuring a flourishing and innovative industry.

He noted that each one of the Council's Departments contributed to this vision, and that preparing the Strategic Plan last year had been a means of drawing the various elements together. In referring to the work of the Council, he took the opportunity of thanking the Welsh Government for their support, and especially the Ministers who had at various times been responsible for the WBC.

Referring to his imminent retirement, he noted that he had witnessed many important developments during his period leading the Council; these included developments in the field of English-language books for children, the new energy in the field of magazines in both languages, and various digital developments.

He thanked all members of the Council and the staff for their support throughout his period as Chief Executive, and conveyed his good wishes to his successor, Helgard Krause, as the Council opened a new chapter in its history.

The Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis thanked the Council staff for their sterling work, noting that the Annual Report testified to their success.

As this was the Chief Executive's last meeting before his retirement at the end of January, a gift was presented to him on behalf of the members.