



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 30 June 2017

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Mrs Rona Aldrich; Professor Jane Aaron; Messrs Chris H. Macey; Gwydion Hughes; Richard Bellinger; Pedr ap Llwyd (representing Mrs Linda Tomos); Ms Marian Delyth; Ms Bethan Gwanas; Dr Cathryn Charnell-White; Mrs Lorna Herbert Egan.

Staff: Ms Helgard Krause; Messrs Arwel Evans; Sion Ilar; R. Arwel Jones; Dr Huw Meirion Edwards; Dr Lucy Thomas; Ms Helena O'Sullivan; Mrs Helen Jones; Menai Lloyd Williams (minutes).

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gareth Griffiths; Dafydd John Pritchard; Robat Arwyn; Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis; Professor Daniel G. Williams; Mrs Kathryn Parry; Mrs Linda Tomos; Councillor Lynford Thomas; Councillor Hugh Jones; Councillor Sonia Reynolds; Councillor John T. Davies; Councillor Alan Jones; Councillor Huw Thomas; Mrs Emma Davies.

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to those attending for the first time: Helgard Krause, Chief Executive of the Council, who had been in post since February; Bethan Gwanas (on behalf of the Friends); Pedr ap Llwyd (representing Mrs Linda Tomos, National Library of Wales); Helen Jones (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department); R. Arwel Jones (Grants Officer – Welsh-language – and Head of the Publication Grants Department over a period of maternity leave). Councillor Ernie Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil) was welcomed back following the recent elections.
- 1.2 Condolences were expressed with the following on their recent losses:  
Mr R. Arwel Jones (Grants Officer – Welsh-language) on losing two aunts early in the year; Miss Megan Jones (Administrative Assistant in the Finance Department) on losing an aunt in February; Mr Arwyn Roderick (former Head of the Finance Department) on losing his mother at the beginning of June; and Mrs Ann Davies (Receptionist) on losing her mother-in-law in mid-June.
- 1.3 The following were congratulated:
  - Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publication Grants Department), who will be going on maternity leave at the beginning of September.
  - Professor Daniel G. Williams on the publication of *Wales Bird: Aderyn Rhiannon* – a book examining the influence of Dylan Thomas as an international icon.
  - Councillor Lynford Thomas on being elected Chair of Ceredigion County Council for the current year.
  - Councillor Huw Thomas on being selected as the new leader of Cardiff City Council following the recent elections.
  - Professor M. Wynn Thomas on the recent publication of a collection of his essays in the book *All that is Wales*.

- 1.4 Best wishes were conveyed to Emma Davies (Head of the Finance Department) who is currently absent on sick leave.
- 1.5 Members wished Mr T. Hywel James (Chief Librarian of Gwynedd) all the best on his retirement after serving for 36 years as a Librarian in Gwynedd, and he was thanked for his contribution and his interest in the Council's work over the years. Two members of the Council's staff will be retiring over the summer, namely Wendy Roberts (Schools Officer) after almost 20 years' service, and Ann Davies (Receptionist) after 11 years' service. Both were thanked for their contribution and sterling work for the Books Council.
- 1.6 Warm thanks were paid to Angharad and Mererid, daughters of the late Roger and Catrin Puw Davies, for their gift in memory of their parents given as sponsorship towards the Book Day lecture, delivered this year by Peter Florence.
- 1.7 Thanks were paid to the councillors who had been members of the Executive Committee and the Council over the years, and who have now retired from their duties.
- 1.8 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 previous meeting, held on 2 December 2016, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Financial Settlement for 2017/18  
The Chief Executive reported that the Welsh Government had now confirmed the budget; it showed an increase of 3.5% (£123,000) to the Council on the 2016/2017 settlement, and a £30,000 cut in the annual capital funding (from £60,000 to £30,000); there would, however, be an opportunity to apply for end-of-year money.
- 3.2 Swansea Reading City Scheme  
Members were reminded that the Council had developed an application to the Lottery Fund in respect of an ambitious scheme to promote reading in the Swansea area, in partnership with the local authority and the University. The application was unsuccessful on this occasion, and although the intention is to re-visit the scheme in the future, it is not a priority at the present time.
- 3.3 The Bookseller  
Lucy Thomas reported that a positive and constructive meeting had been held with representatives of the magazine *The Bookseller*, which had led to giving attention to the literary scene in Wales. A special supplement to the magazine had been produced with the May 2017 issue – it included an interview with Helgard and a focus on books from Wales. The response was so favourable that it is intended to produce a similar supplement next year.
- 3.4 Independent Review of Support for Publishing and Literature in Wales  
This matter was discussed at the end of the agenda. **Declaration of Interest:** Pedr ap Llwyd declared an interest and retired from the meeting before any discussions had taken place.

The Chair noted the need to present a paper to the Welsh Government through Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary, regarding support for some of the recommendations to transfer responsibilities in the wake of the Independent Review of Support for Publishing and Literature in Wales.

Thanks were paid to the Chief Executive, and to Lucy Thomas and Arwel Jones, for preparing the document. Copies were distributed to those present, and after they had been

given an opportunity to read the paper members discussed the contents and made comments. At the end of the discussion, the Executive Committee were unanimous in their decision to submit the paper, having added some further details, to the Cabinet Secretary.

### 3.5 IT Systems

It was reported that the company responsible for the Vista system at the Distribution Centre for the past twenty years will be ending their support for the system in 2022. It will be necessary to spend some time searching for a new system and drawing up a list of specifications; an individual has already started on this task, drawing up a document containing 200 questions to send to companies who had shown an interest. The document was sent to 15 companies with the intention of drawing up a shortlist of 5 or 6 companies, before inviting them to meet the staff who work with the system on a day-to-day basis. It is hoped that a report can be submitted to Cabinet Secretary Ken Skates by the end of September, as the scheme will require a substantial investment. These exciting plans were warmly welcomed, and it was noted that Arwel Evans, Head of the Distribution Centre, would be leading on the project.

Pedr ap Llwyd noted that the Council had gone for the 'Rolls Royce' option twenty years ago, choosing a system that was, in its day, purpose-built. It would now be necessary to secure a company that could provide support throughout the development of the new system and beyond.

## 4 **CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Chair referred to a paper, which had been circulated to members, recommending changes to the Constitution. The following recommendations were approved for presentation to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

### **Addition to the current clause**

IV(d) MEMBERSHIP: Representatives

Add 'observer status only on the Council'  
[neu observer status on the Council only x 2 ??]

Estyn

Amended clause to read:  
Estyn – observer status only on the Council

## 5 **THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

### 5.1 Operational Plan for 2017/18

A copy of the plan was presented for the attention of members, noting that it had been approved by Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure.

### 5.2 The Welsh Government: Financial Award Letter

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the financial award letter had been received from the Welsh Government.

### 5.3 Six-monthly Meeting

It was reported that a positive and constructive six-monthly meeting had been held with the Cabinet Secretary, Ken Skates. It was explained that a number of events – including a unique train journey, Tales on the Rails, for local schoolchildren – were being organised to celebrate the Year of Legends.

### 5.4 Visit by the Cabinet Secretary for Education

The Chief Executive reported that she had met with Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, during a meeting to launch the latest titles in the Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads series, held at the Senedd on 14 February. An invitation had been extended to Kirsty Williams to visit Castell Brychan, and it was confirmed that the visit will go ahead at the end of August.

The Chief Executive also reported that she had joined a meeting, led by Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, to discuss the curriculum.

## 6 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 6.1 Grants for 2017/18

The Chief Executive presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current financial year. These included financial contributions from the Department for Culture as well as the Education Department.

### 6.2 Finance Department: the current situation

The Chief Executive reported that the Head of the Finance Department had been on sick leave for over six months, and had submitted a note to cover a further period. Alex Hobson, the Administrative Assistant (Finance), had left at the end of March. The Chief Executive noted the need to hold an audit of financial skills within the Council to determine what the requirements are. The question was asked whether a part-time post was sufficient for the Head of the Finance Department, as it is crucial to the operation of the Council as a whole. It was reported that Chris Burton-Brown, who is a chartered accountant, will hold an audit in September on the financial side and prepare a paper on his findings. The Chief Executive will report back in the Annual Meeting.

Thanks were conveyed to all for their patience, and especially to Arwyn Roderick (former Head of the Finance Department) for his sterling work in helping the Department. Chris H. Macey noted that he too would be keeping an eye on the situation, and he was thanked for his help. Rona Aldrich, the Vice-Chair, thanked the Chief Executive for the arrangements put in place during the current period.

## 7 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

### 7.1 Sales and Marketing / Information Services

Helena O'Sullivan, Head of the Sales and Marketing Department, reported that the year had been challenging in terms of sales; nevertheless, it was pleasing to note that there had been a small increase at the end of the year.

The importance of co-operating with, and supporting, the independent bookshops was noted; this had been achieved by means of various events such as the Cardiff Children's Literature Festival, several Book Day events held at bookshops, a Summer Festival under the auspices of Merched y Wawr, and Tafwyl, to name but a few. The sale of children's books during February and March succeeded in selling over 4,000 books. It was noted that Waterstones had decided to appoint a buyer to look at books from Wales, similar to the situation in Ireland and Scotland; this will provide an opportunity to work closely with them in order to raise the profile of books from Wales. It was pleasing to note that the collaboration over three years to sell books directly to Cadw had now shown an increase in sales. The Department had co-operated with them on several events during the Year of Legends.

Since the previous meeting, the statistics for the television adverts had been received – between them, the three adverts had been shown 275 times, reaching over 2 million viewers during November and December. Several catalogues had been produced – Chwedlau/Myths and Legends, Hedd Wyn a'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, Llyfrau'r Haf and Summer Reads – and visits were made to various events such as the Wales Spring Fair, the International Language Commissioners' Conference and the London Book Fair.

Cwllwm Cyhoeddwy Cymru held their annual festival, y Fedwen Lyfrau, at Aberystwyth Arts Centre in May; the event was very successful again this year.

It was reported that the Council had worked with Siop y Bont at the Urdd Eisteddfod held at Bridgend, and had also attended the Hay Festival. It was pleasing to be able to report on the increase in sales at both festivals, and sales were the best they had been for many years. *Brecon Beacons Myths and Legends*, Horatio Clare, was the best seller according to the table produced at the end of the first weekend.

The Sales Conferences were held on 27/28 June, and Canolfan Peniarth were welcomed to their first conference.

It was reported that Information Services now form part of the Sales and Marketing Department; all the staff are situated in one location at the Distribution Centre, making it easier to share and collect information. The new Gwales/Shop website is now live for trade and booksellers' accounts, and to date 90 users have placed over 2,400 orders. Since the beginning of the year, following work on improving our social media accounts, there has been an increase of some 10% in the numbers following us on Facebook and Twitter – @llyfraucymru / @welshbooks.

## 7.2 Distribution

Arwel Evans, Head of the Distribution Department, reported that 60,000 books had been distributed since the previous meeting, over the busy Christmas period. Yodel had succeeded in distributing 98.94% of the 2,000 parcels sent within 24 hours of them leaving the Distribution Centre.

Our annual stocktake is undertaken in January, and this year 4.32% changes were made, compared with 4.38% in 2016. Arwel Evans thanked the staff of the Centre for their work during this period.

It was noted that there had been a similar flurry of activity in the office during March, between the end of the financial year and collection of late payments. Once again, the level of debtors was kept under control – 0.45% this year (target 2%), compared with 0.74% (2016) and 0.97% (2015).

It was reported that the Hay Festival and the Urdd Eisteddfod had been held over recent weeks; 5,162 books were distributed to Hay and 6,625 books to the Urdd Eisteddfod. 52% (2,695) of the books sent to Hay were sold, as were 48% (3,230) of the books sent to the Urdd Eisteddfod. There was an increase of 24% in sales at the Hay Festival, and an increase of 10% in sales at the Urdd Eisteddfod; there was also an increase of 10% in the number of books sold.

This year we conducted an experiment in which orders were created at an earlier stage so that the time for collection and packing could be extended, and this proved to be a great success. The orders were collected two weeks in advance of both festivals, thus taking some of the pressure off the normal preparation work.

Pedr ap Llwyd (National Library of Wales) expressed his thanks for the excellent weekly distribution service provided by the Centre.

## 7.3 Design/Editing Services

Sion Ilar, Head of the Design Department, reported that the team of three in the Department had worked on 105 titles on behalf of 11 publishers during the course of the year. These had included several original covers, together with novels and factual books, adaptations of popular titles, and a number of books designed from cover to cover.

A number of prestigious titles were among those worked on by the Department, including *The Hills of Wales*, Jim Perrin, following the work done earlier on his book *Snowdon – the Story of a Welsh Mountain*; Ifan Morgan Jones's novel, *Dadeni*, and *Gwenallt* by Alan Llwyd.

There was an opportunity also to work on the National Eisteddfod's prize-winning literary works: the Daniel Owen Memorial Award – *Ymbelydredd* by Guto Dafydd (Y Lolfa) and the Prose Medal – *Cai* by Eurig Salisbury (Gomer). The Department was also responsible for redesigning the National Eisteddfod's volume of prize-winning literary entries for the next five years, with a series of colourful covers to package the text.

It was reported that the Department had designed a large number of internal publications during the year, including a catalogue of Welsh-language children's books, Summer Reads, Festive Reads and the Annual Report.

It was noted that a meeting of the Design Panel had been held on 8 June 2017, at which a lively discussion was held; panel members aired their views regarding various perspectives in the industry regarding design standards within the field of publishing.

Huw Meirion Edwards, Head of the Editorial Department, reported that the previous six months had been less busy than the same period in 2016; as a result, a higher proportion of the books had been edited internally, with fewer sent to the freelance editors. In the period since January, 82 typescripts had arrived at the Editorial Department, on behalf of 11 different publishers.

The internal work had been very varied, from editing *Catalog Llyfrau Plant a Phobl Ifanc*, and publicity material of all kinds, to translating and refining Gwales/Shop, the new website. To date this year, 100 reviews have been commissioned and edited for inclusion on the Gwales website. The Department would like to thank Sarah Down-Roberts, who has recently relinquished her role as organiser of the Welsh-language reviews, and we look forward to working with her successor, Dr Gwenllïan Dafydd.

Huw M. Edwards reported on the collaboration between the Department and Y Lolfa and Accent Press on the Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads titles, and also with the Urdd on the volume of prize-winning literary compositions for the National Urdd Eisteddfod held at Bridgend. The staff are looking forward also to working with editors at various publishing houses and with Dr Mair Rees, the co-ordinator, on the exciting new scheme to publish 20 new books for Welsh learners over the next 18 months. Unfortunately, this year saw the end of the close relationship maintained over many years with a number of experienced editors at Gomer, but the Department is looking forward to working with the new team.

It had been a productive period for Welsh-language fiction. New works by Eigra Lewis Roberts and Ruth Richards have been published, together with very different novels by younger authors such as Rhys Iorwerth and Heiddwen Tomos. Recent titles include *Dadeni*, a satirical fantasy by Ifan Morgan Jones, and *Fabula*, a collection of experimental stories by another young author, Llŷr Gwyn Lewis; in addition, *Gwales* – a new, substantial novel by Catrin Dafydd – is currently in the pipeline.

The volumes of poetry worked on included collections by Hywel Griffiths and Annes Glynn, and one by the young poet Elan Grug Muse in Barddas's *Tonfedd Heddiw* series; readers are already looking forward to the publication of *Treiglo*, a new collection of work by Gwyneth Lewis, which will be ready by the autumn. Two plays were submitted for editing this year: Gwyn Thomas's excellent translation of *Macbeth*, and a new edition by Gwasg Gee of *Blodeuwedd* by Saunders Lewis.

Among the factual books were two beautifully designed titles from Gomer, namely *Melinau Gwlân/Woolen Mills of Wales* by Branwen Davies, and *Y Preselau – Gwlad Hud a Lledrith* by Dyfed Elis-Gruffydd. A notable publication during the year in which we commemorated the centenary of the death of the poet Hedd Wyn was *I Lygad y Ddrycin* by Haf Llewelyn, another title expertly designed by Olwen Fowler. *Bachgendod Isaac*, Derec Llwyd Morgan's autobiography of his early years, will be launched at the Anglesey National Eisteddfod, and another title by Hefin Wyn is in the pipeline – a biography of Niclas y Glais, a native of Pembrokeshire.

In the field of books for children and young adults, the untimely death of Gareth F. Williams will doubtless leave a void. Anwen Pierce, the Editorial Officer, has been full of praise for the work of a number of new authors whose books she has worked on recently, both original books and adaptations of popular titles by David Walliams. September will see the publication of *Straeon Difyr Dahl/Dahlighful Story Collection*, a collection of stories that won a competition for pupils at schools in Wales, arranged last year as part of the Roald Dahl centenary celebrations.

In his closing remarks, Huw M. Edwards referred to Siân Lewis's latest book, *Stori'r Brenin Arthur*. This was the last title for Gordon Jones to work on as a creative editor; over the years his quiet, unassuming contribution to publishing in Wales has been immense.

#### 7.4 Children's Books and Reading Promotion

Helen Jones, Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department, reported that the Department's work encompassed a wide and varied range of activities; she noted that their success depended very heavily on the support and co-operation of many partners. This had been the main focus of the work over the past few months since she had joined the Department.

It was reported that the sum of £140,000 had been secured from the Welsh Government's Department of Education and Skills in order to continue to co-ordinate projects such as Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn, Book Day and the Summer Reading Challenge. Four new titles in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series were launched at the Senedd in February in the company of Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education. As part of the 2018 Book Day celebrations, it is intended to hold two performances of the Biggest Book Show on Earth, one in Welsh and one in English.

The Annual Book Day Lecture was delivered this year at the Pierhead building by Peter Florence, Director of the Hay Festival. The Department is considering holding an event in 2018 to celebrate the contribution of the Tir na n-Og Awards over the past 40 years.

Helen Jones referred to a number of other projects that form part of the activities to promote reading and that show the Council's commitment to encourage children to enjoy reading for pleasure.

Lorna Herbert Egan, Chair of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, presented a report on the Tir na n-Og awards and the ceremonies held – the English-language award was presented at the CILIP Cymru Wales Conference in May, and the Welsh-language awards were presented on the main platform of the Urdd Eisteddfod at Bridgend in June.

Amongst the activities arranged by the Department, it was noted that the author tours had proved very popular with schools, authors and booksellers, and were an opportunity to develop new partnerships. The contact between the Department and schools in Wales is vital to our work – and, in particular, the service provided by our Schools Officers. Due to the illness of one member of staff it had been difficult to hit the sales target this year, but taking the circumstances into consideration this was only a small setback.

It was noted that Wendy Roberts, Schools Officer for south-west Wales, would be retiring at the end of July after over 19 years' service to the Council. She was thanked for her tireless work and quiet, efficient enthusiasm over the years.

The final rounds of the reading competitions BookSlam and Darllen Dros Gymru were held recently. The support given by the network of county organisers within the education sector, and librarians, is essential for the success of the project and is a partnership that should be strengthened in the future.

## 8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 6 April 2017
- 8.2 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 16/17 March 2017
- 8.3 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 14/15 June 2017 (tabled)
- 8.4 Publication Grants Panel (English-language), 15/16 February 2017
- 8.5 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 5 June 2017

## 9 STAFFING MATTERS

The following appointments, made since the previous meeting, were noted:

Dr Mair Rees – Consultant Editor (Books for Adults who are Learning Welsh)  
 Clare Davies – Publication Grants Officer (English-language) (maternity leave)

It was also reported that Owain Thomas (IT Officer) had resigned from his post.

## 10 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

### 10.1 Co-opted membership of the Executive Committee and the Council

It was agreed to recommend the re-election of the Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis and Dr Cathryn Charnell-White to serve on the Council and the Executive Committee for a further three-year period.

It was agreed that the Chief Officers should consider a new name to be recommended to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

### 10.2 The Society of Chief Librarians: Representatives

The Society of Chief Librarians had submitted two names to represent them on the Executive Committee and the Council, namely:

- Ceredigion – Gareth Griffiths
- Bridgend – Richard Bellinger

## 11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

## 12 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

Members were thanked for attending the meeting of the Executive Committee, and it was noted that the Half-Yearly Meeting would follow at 2 pm.