

ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

MINUTES of a meeting of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association held at the Novotel Hotel, Bostocks Lane, Long Eaton, Sandiacre, Nottingham NG10 4EP on Friday 29th October 2021 at 11:15am. Present: L Blacklock (Chair), D Bridges, S Briggs, G Cockshott (for C Gordon), N Darby, J Dodd, T Gardner, P Hammond, R Harris, D Headon, D Higgins, S Mellor, C O'Hare, J Waters, S Finan (for J Gladwin), S Collishaw (for Alistair Ewart), A Williams

Apologies: A Ewart, J Gladwin, C Gordon, R Shirley, J Heague, S Richards (Editor BHW)

In Attendance: Ian Evans-CEO, Lyna Zhang-Finance Manager, Julia Field-Office Manager (minutes), John Wheatcroft-Olympiad Team Manager (joined later), R Chambers- Development Officer (joined later)

Observers: K Blount, S Reed (Reserve D&SY), Mrs C Gardner

The President Mr L Blacklock took the chair and welcomed all present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
None declared

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
The minutes of the meeting held on 14th November 2020, omitted that Mr B Holland was standing in for Mr C Gordon as delegate for the NE region. With the above amendment, it was proposed by S Briggs, seconded by T Gardner, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:
C.7614. The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING
RPRA 125th Anniversary
Discussion and proposal that celebration plans be put aside.
Proposed by R Harris, seconded by A Williams, with 3 For, 13 Against, 1 Abstention

Further proposal by L Blacklock, seconded by P Hammond, with 13 votes for and 4 Abstentions, that:
C. 7615 13 medals be struck, for each region to award as they deem appropriate.

BHW Calendars, D Higgins asked if all the unsold calendars had been distributed. In the absence of the BHW Editor, this matter is to be raised at the next meeting.

Recharge - Finance manager confirmed that the recharge between the RPRA and the BHW has been written off in both sets of accounts.

EMERGENCY & RULES and LIBERATION SITES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2021 were read and was Proposed by T Gardner, seconded by C O'Hare, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:
C.7616 The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Parallel Port Printers - I Evans reported there was a general lack of motivation by ETS providers to move from parallel ports to other formats. It was still a problem to register German and Romanian rings in the Unikon system.
Proposed by J Dodd, Seconded by D Higgins, 16 For, 1 Abstention, that:
C.7617 The CEO asks the German Organisation how they deal with the registration of their rings.

Proposed by D Higgins, seconded by J Dodd, with 13 For and 4 Abstentions, that:
C. 7618 As noted in ER&LS 20/34 and C.7632 the same provision is kept in place in the event of a delay in the AGM meeting due to Covid/pandemic restrictions, the 'top table' remains in place until the AGM is held.

LIBERATION SITES

Sites have been lost this year due to damage on site and complaints of some conveyers behaviour. These reports have been referred to the regions.
P Hammond said more consideration should be given to how vehicles are parked to allow liberations to go ahead more efficiently.
On the weekend of 19+20 June, the terrible losses of birds were thought to be related to a combination of atmospheric conditions.
P Hammond commended Mr Richard Beech at the Bath racecourse and the Bath- Walcott RFC sites for his great assistance to conveyers throughout the year.
Site Fees - to be reviewed where vehicles park up, do not liberate, then leave the site.
Consideration should be given to larger (joint) liberations. Trialled in the NW region this year and thought to be successful.

Appendix M will be rigorously enforced. Channel Racing 2021 – Special circumstances now exist and are about to change again soon to allow channel racing in 2022. To enable the RPRA to respond quickly to changing circumstances as directed by DEFRA, the FCI and other interested parties it was Proposed by C O'Hare, seconded by D Higgins, with 14 votes for and 3 abstentions that:
C.7619 The appointed President and Vice Presidents be given authority to comply with any requirements to assist with achieving channel racing.

CONVOYERS LICENCES

CEO commented that one organisation, upset a site landowner and lost us a popular site. The Executive Committee has been looking at ways to improve the application process to ensure conveyers are fully qualified and abide by their code of conduct (Rule 126, Appendix C). This could include a questionnaire on the RPRA website or on an App. with confirmation of completion emailed to region secretaries.

IMPLICATIONS OF RULES PASS AT THE AGM

Proposed by S Briggs, seconded by D Higgins, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:
C.7620 21/1 - Rule 26 amendment goes forward as printed.

Proposed by C O'Hare, seconded by R Harris, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:
C.7621 21/4 - Rule 30 amendment goes forward as printed

Proposed by S Brigg, seconded by D Higgins, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:
C.7622 21/9 - Rule 152a amendment goes forward as printed

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter from North-West region dated 30/07/21 – see discussion above on conveyers licences and the enforcement of Appendix M.

OLYMPIAD

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2020 incorrectly stated that D Higgins attended the meeting. With the above amendment it was:
Proposed by R Harris, Seconded by P Hammond, with 16 For and 1 Abstention,

agreed that:

C.7623 The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Western European Show – Attended by L Blacklock and J Wheatcroft had been a great show.

Liverpool Show 2020 – poorly attended. CEO requested a reduction in venue cost for future event, but this was declined. Therefore, we have no contract with the Liverpool Exhibition Centre going forward.

OLYMPIAD UPDATE

Romania show has been cancelled. Next show to be held in Holland.

Olympiad team Manager's report – J Wheatcroft

Standard Class – February 2022 - performance only class. Could be held online.

Sporting Class – August 2022 – Could be held online.

L Blacklock and J Wheatcroft (Team Manager) to attend the next FCI meeting on 07/12/21

J Wheatcroft requested permission to kick start the selection process.

Standard Class selection to be made at the Blackpool show.

Proposed by D Headon, seconded by P Hammond with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7624 J Wheatcroft selects a UK team and publishes the final selection in the BHW and on the RPRA website

Thanks were given to John Wheatcroft for his work as Team Manager.

PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2020 were read and it was Proposed by S Mellor, seconded by S Briggs, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7625 The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Kite Mark - CEO reported there is one company that is very keen to work with us.

Test Summary 2021

Budget and Spends report was reviewed. It was then:

Proposed by P Hammond, seconded by R Harris, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7626 the budget is topped up to £12,000 for 2022

Report from RPRA Strategic Sample Collector

J Wheatcroft reported that more tests were carried out in the North this year as the South was covered more last year.

Proposed by D Higgins, seconded by S Mellor, 16 For, 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7627 A vote of thanks goes to J Wheatcroft

The results of drug tests carried out this year were circulated and reviewed. If results are to be published, then permission must be given by the bird owner or published by region only.

Organisations can request testing at any time. Most test are random.

Mr. Richard Chambers joined the meeting

BUILDINGS COMMITTEE (Formerly Reddings House)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2020 were read and it was Proposed by C O'Hare, seconded by G Cockshott, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7628 The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

None

Sale of The Reddings

R Harris asked what the legal costs were for the sale. These were £8,088.

Overview of failed property purchases

CEO reported that the Ley Court property failed due to the vendor imposing extra conditions on the buyer that were unacceptable to the RPRA. The property in Brimscombe, Stroud failed following a structural survey that highlighted the poor state of a retaining wall in the carpark. Our offer to the vendor was reduced to reflect the cost of repair required, which the vendor declined.

Update on purchase – Upper Mills Trading Estate, Stonehouse, Stroud

Offer accepted by the vendor. Currently in the hands of the solicitors for clarity on the number of parking spaces included in the deeds. Hopefully, we'll complete by the end of the year and move the office after the Blackpool show.

Mr. J Davies (One Loft Manager) joined the meeting

FUTURE OF THE SPORT

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020 were read and it was

Proposed by S Mellor, seconded by G Cockshott, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7629 The minutes are a true and accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

Young Fanciers Fund

Draft rules circulated by CEO to councilors last week for review, provides that financial assistance is available to Young Fanciers when starting up.

Development Officer has £5,000 put aside in his budget for this project.

Proposed by J Dodd, seconded by D Higgins, agreed 14 for, and 3

Abstentions, that:

C.7630 The Young Fanciers Fund goes ahead in principle as outlined in the draft document.

Work with universities on Bird losses Universities were approached. However due to the pandemic and restrictions (many were closed) we did not get positive replies. This will be revisited next year, exploring the ideas and costs involved. Work in progress.

One Loft Managers' report

Jeremy Davies reported it had been a challenging year, particularly with YB sickness.

There seems to be a different strain each year. There was also a problem with Fat Eye.

Nevertheless, there was a good final Young Bird race.

CEO reported that work continues with DEFRA and APHA on YB Sickness, but it has been difficult getting vets on board to provide a triage service to bird owners.

Proposed by G Cockshott, seconded by D Headon, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7631 Thanks be given to the loft manager and his report is accepted.

Loft Manager's contract 2022

Loft assistant is more experienced and taking on more responsibility.

Proposed by D Bridges, seconded by G Cockshott, with 15 votes and 2 abstention, agreed that:

C.7632 the entry fee for the YB be increased from £31.00 per bird to £32.50. FOS Accounts

The accounts were circulated and reviewed.

Proposed by S Briggs, Seconded by S Mellor, with 16 For and 1 Abstention, agreed that:

C.7633 the accounts be accepted

Proposed by G Cockshott, seconded by D Bridges, and agreed 14 For, 1 Against, 2 Abstentions, agreed that:

C.7634 The One Loft entry fee 2022 is increased to £115 per bird.

Development Officer's Report

Mr. Richard Chambers gave an excellent presentation of the work he carried out over the last year with, media coverage, including the pigeon liberations following the death of Prince Phillip, presentations, and work with schools & historical societies.

S Finan reported that a representative of the London region had visited Theydon Bois Primary School loft in the region and acknowledged it was excellent and probably one of the best in the country. Young Bird Rules

Loft manger J Davies reported the 2022 race programme will again be North Road in 2022, ending with a final race from Alnwick.

Proposed by P Hammond, seconded by S Collishaw, 16 For and 1 Abstention that:

C.7635 the maximum number of birds allowed per entry remains at 5.

Yearling Rules

Already agreed and published by the Executive Committee

Donation from Mr. & Mrs. Harris of Newport, South Wales

Donated £300 from funds raised to fight a legal case against a neighbour. The RPRA previously agreed to support Mr. & Mrs. Harris, but the case did not go to court. This money has gone into the Future of the Sport Fund.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES

Due to a prior engagement the London region delegates had to leave the meeting and therefore the President agreed to bring forward item 11(d) Financial Report, to enable the delegates to be present during discussions.

Financial Report

The financial report was circulated to delegates present. It was brought to the attention of the council that two regions (namely London and South West) had not paid the full subscriptions and that the Southern region had not paid any subscriptions. There was a lengthy discussion regarding this position with strong views expressed.

The South West region delegate was not present to explain their actions. The Southern region delegate stated that payment had not been made because they were in the process of changing their bank account. The London region claimed that they had paid the required amount, but the President pointed out that this was not the case as the amount due had been amended in November 2020 by Council, under the provisions of rule 142. Various members of council expressed their annoyance and objections towards the actions of the London, South West and Southern regions.

The London region requested permission to take the financial report with them for discussion at their next region meeting. This was agreed.

The two London region delegates then left the meeting.

The Finance Manager presented the report that highlighted a forecasted loss for the current and next financial year.

Proposed by J Dodd, Seconded by P Hammond, 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7636 the financial report is accepted

Proposed by J Dodd, Seconded by S Mellor, 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7637 a letter is sent to all three regions regarding the outstanding subscriptions

Minutes of Finance & General Purposes Meeting held 11th November 2020

Proposed by J Dodd, Seconded by N Darby, 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7638 the minutes are a true and

accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

The CEO confirmed the safeguarding policy was being reviewed and a meeting set with the solicitor next week.

The RSPCA document for keeping pigeons on allotments - This document provided guidance for Local Authorities in approving the use of allotments for keeping pigeons. It was agreed that the CEO and President would meet with the RSPB to discuss further.

The CEO and President (David Bridges) had met with representatives of the MNFC, BICC and NFC to discuss the possibility of joint liberations. The meeting was very positive. Now that those representatives had discussed the proposal with their committees, a follow up meeting would be scheduled in the near future.

Club/Members Insurance

A summary of claims was provided and discussed. The premium for 2022 was not yet confirmed.

Key Measures of Activity

The data demonstrates certain activities such as number of stray reports, transfers processed was provided and discussed.

Staff Christmas Dinner

Proposed T Gardner, Seconded S Briggs, 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7639 Staff are awarded £40 each towards the cost of a Christmas dinner celebration.

Staff Cost of Living Increase

All staff left the meeting room

Proposed G Cockshott, seconded T Gardner, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7640 Staff are awarded a 2% pay increase effective from 1st November 2021.

Duty of Care to Staff

All staff left the room.

The Association's duty of care towards staff and the avenues available to them to raise a formal grievance was discussed.

Proposed T Gardner, seconded P Hammond, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7641 under the provisions of rule 142 the following rule comes into force with immediate effect

RULE 7b

In the event of a complaint by an employee of the Association, who has suffered abuse of a violent, verbal, or sexual nature, or any discrimination during the course of their normal duties as an employee of the Association, then the officers of the Association should instigate an immediate investigation.

If the complaint is upheld by the officers, then the said officers have the power to invoke all necessary legal procedures to protect the individuals so affected by the abuse and invoke statutory agencies as required.

If the complaint is against a member of the Association that member can be suspended with immediate effect while an investigation is conducted.

Furthermore, if the abuser is a member of the RPRA then the officers can suspend the privileges of the Association from that member until any legal procedure has been completed or if their investigations conclude suspension or expulsion is an appropriate course of action.

Proposed D Bridges, Seconded by T Gardener, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7642 The President investigates the reported incident at the Western region meeting involving a member of staff.

Grievance

The CEO left the room while this item was discussed.

The CEO had brought a grievance against a member of the London region under the provisions of rule 71. The London region had not held a grievance meeting and referred it to the President.

Following a lengthy discussion as to how this should be dealt with it was:

Proposed S Mellor, seconded by T Gardner, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7643 the appeal should proceed under the provisions of rule 83

Online Services

The option to pay subscriptions online would be launched this year.

Rings Contract

The existing contract had ended in 2021. The Executive committee had invited FCI approved suppliers to tender for a two-year contract to include 2022 and 2023. This included the provision of a sample from each supplier. Based on quality and cost the Executive had taken the decision to contract with Geshifeng for a two-year period.

The issue of the difficulty to read the letters and numbers on red coloured was discussed, then:

Proposed R Harris, Seconded D Headon, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7644 A letter is sent to the FCI requesting that consideration is given to this issue and future colours are amended

RPRA Awards

A verbal update in relation to the national awards process was provided by the CEO.

The CEO provided an overview of his proposals for the awards evening that were subject to approval by the venue. This included:

1. Presenting the awards up on stage (confirmed by venue)
2. A video of each awards winner would be played in advance of the winner being invited onto the stage
3. A photograph of the winning pigeon would be shown on a screen at the back of the stage

EU Regulations

An update had been included in the CEO/Executive Committees annual report

Avian Influenza

An update had been included in the CEO/Executive Committees annual report

Lobbying Campaign

The DEFRA minister has written to the RSPB and other organisations responsible for the erection of man-made nesting sites to discuss the possibility of this process being licensed. No further update.

Court Case – Raptor Nest site

Stalled during lock down. A meeting with the solicitor will be scheduled in the near future.

Lords V Commons Race

Due to the pandemic the race had not taken place during 2021. It would hopefully take place in 2022.

Stray Repatriation

The cost of stray repatriation and possible avenues to reduce the cost to members was discussed. A proposal will be coming from a region prior to the 2022 AGM.

Financial Investments

The Finance Manager provided an update in relation to the Association's investments. It was agreed that more detailed information would be supplied to the President to review and report at the next Finance meeting in December.

Correspondence

Letters from the Southern region requesting financial information. The President ruled that this would not be considered until the Southern region had paid their full subscriptions for 2021.

BRITISH HOMING WORLD MANAGEMENT

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2020 were read and it was Proposed by T Gardner, Seconded P Hammond, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:
C.7645 the minutes are a true and accurate record

Matters Arising

None

Re-design Update

The CEO reported that the re-design by the printers of the current BHW format had been delayed. Training, new software and design templates are required. This training could not go ahead earlier in the year due to lockdown restrictions. Then an instrumental member of staff was away from the office for a period that further delayed training. All relevant software and hardware are in place and training will take place at a date yet to be confirmed.

Editors Report

In the absence of the Editor the CEO delivered the following written report provided by the editor in advance of the meeting.

BHW circulation is down, postal copies

are slightly down, online copies up.

Advertising is down overall but encouraging signs that it is on the increase.

2022 BHW Diaries have been delivered. 2022 BHW Calendar and Year Planner is currently being finalised. Unfortunately, there has been no response or uptake of sponsorship from any advertisers, due to them not wishing to advertise this year because of the ongoing Covid problems etc. So, my plan is to advertise, as last year, all region secretaries' details.

2022 BHW Stud Books are currently at the printers, and hopefully these will be delivered to our offices shortly. The pagination is the same as last year, 448 pages, with a price of £6. The new typesetting machines, plus hardware and software has been delivered and awaiting installation.

BHW staff - all personnel now back at work.

Lease car update, the contract ran out in June, but due to Covid restrictions and lockdown this was extended until December. Current situation is that I am looking to decide on a new lease vehicle and am hoping to extend the lease further until a new car is found and ordered.

A question was raised in relation to the photographs for the calendar. The Development officer had several photographs that would be suitable for the calendar and therefore it was agreed the CEO ask the editor to use these photographs, if the calendar has not already been printed.

Accounts

The BHW accounts were circulated. The Finance Manager presented the report and answered all questions. It was noted that there was a predicted profit for the year and that salary costs to date were down by £30k. However, based on predictions 2022 would see a loss.

SOY Guest list

The guest list agreed by the Executive Committee was circulated. Proposed by D Headon, Seconded by D Higgins, with 14 for and 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7646 Each region is invited to nominate two addition guests to attend the show and provide the names by 30th November 2021.

Correspondence

Letter dated 01/10/21 has been received from the SOY Chairman requesting additional £1,000 contribution to the Gala Evening.

Proposed T Gardner, seconded D Bridges 12 for 3 abstentions that:
C.7647 The addition funds are awarded

Proposed by J Dodd, seconded by G Cockshott, with 14 for, 1 abstention, agreed that:

C.7648 A vase is purchased for Dorothy Hadley and presented to her at the Friday dinner. A budget of £50 was agreed

FCI Matters

L Blacklock stated that there was an online meeting scheduled for 6th

November. On the agenda was the delayed Olympiad. L Blacklock would attend along with the Olympiad team Manager J Wheatcroft

Standing Conference for Countryside Sports

Online meeting scheduled for 4th November. I Evans will attend

Region Balance Sheets

Several anomalies existed between subscriptions paid to HQ and those reported on several region balance sheets. The Finance Manager will speak to region secretaries to establish the reasons. It was noted this could be a timing issue, with some regions including next year's subscriptions that has been received in advance.

Council Meeting date February 2022

It was agreed that the AGM will take place on 25th February 2022 followed by a meeting of Council. Committee meeting will be scheduled for 24th. Venue: Novotel Hotel, Nottingham (to be confirmed)

Membership Numbers

The falling number of members continues. It was noted that this is the same over Europe

Invitation to Events

Verband Deutscher Briefftaubenzuechter e.V – 8-9th January 2022, in Dortmund, Germany
Proposed by P Hammond, seconded by T Gardner, 13 for, 2 abstentions, agreed that:
C.7649 Neil Darby goes to Germany

Federation Colombophile Francais - 7-9th January, 2022, in Gravelines, France

Proposed by G Cockshott, seconded by S Briggs, 13 for, 2 abstentions, agreed that:
C.7650 Terry Gardner goes to France

Councillors Long Service Award

This information was not available but would be provided in February

Buckingham Palace Garden Party

No invitation had been received to date. It was agreed that if the invitation was received then those allocated to attend the 2020 event that was cancelled would attend

Legal Matters

The CEO brought to the attention of Council the risks of recognising other unions suspensions without relevant rules in place.

Also, advice from solicitors stated that individuals should be able to take out a grievance against a region and it should be dealt with under the provisions of rule 83

The meeting closed at 9:15pm, with thanks to the Chair.