



**MINUTES
BRITISH HOMING WORLD
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

31st October 2025

ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION

British Homing World Management Committee

Minutes

31st October 2025

MINUTES of the British Homing World Management Committee held on 31st October 2025 at the Leonardo Hotel, East Midlands Airport, Ashby Road, Castle Donnington, Derby DE74 2SH at 9:03am.

- 1. ROLL CALL** – C O'Hare-IR (President), L Blacklock-CA (Chair), D Headon-DC, S Reed-DY, J Dodd-EM, A Williams-LN, G Cockshott-NE, P Murray-NW, R Harris-SO, S Beardmore-WE, W Lewis-WM, T Gardner-WS, C Sutton-CEO, R Chambers-Head Officer, BHW

N.B. Due to extraordinary circumstances (Aer Lingus cabin crew strike), the President was permitted to attend the meeting via Zoom. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-President, L Blacklock.

In attendance: S Woodman-RPRA Finance Manager, Ms Nicola Mills-Office Manager (minutes), Ms Emma Seare-Assistant Office Manager (minutes)

Observers: S Collishaw-EM, H Jackson-NE, P Whale-WM, C Sterland-WM Region Secretary, Mrs Beryl Lewis, Mrs Carol Gardner

- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – R Shirley-SW

Before commencing with the business of the meeting the Chair referred to the late Chris Gordon, who had been an RPRA Councillor for over 20 years, a past RPRA Vice-President, a fantastic pigeon flyer and a gentleman. G Cockshott gave a tribute from the North-East Region. All stood for a minute's silence in respect of Chris Gordon.

DC also acknowledged Dudley Holmes, a previous EM Region Secretary who had passed away this year.

- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – None declared

- 4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 28.02.2025**

Proposed by WS, seconded by NE, and all in favour, that:

BHW25/4 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2025 are accepted as a true record.

- 5. MATTERS ARISING**

The CEO took Council's proposal to move the show opening times to Friday evening/Saturday and to move the Show to the Conference Centre, to the Show of the Year

Committee. The Committee decided that due to covid and then bird flu the show needed 2 or 3 years to get back on its feet before changing the format. The CEO advised that a revised format may be the way it will go, contracting into the Conference Centre, but a lot of logistics needed sorting out before a decision is made.

6. HEAD OFFICER, BHW REPORT

The Head Officer, BHW gave an extensive report, noting that the BHW has returned to profitability. The key focuses regarding modernisation and getting the product to customers continue. However, there remains a long-term downward trend in sales. To address this, a strategic push toward digital subscriptions over printed editions aims to expand access to the global market. Staff roles, systems, and procedures are being continually reviewed, resulting in a 26% reduction in overheads over the past twelve months. A cover price increase to £2.35 is recommended, accompanied by an incentive for twelve-month subscriptions. Aged debtors are constantly being monitored, and postage continues to be a major concern, both in terms of delivery times and rising costs. Response to request for content from members has been low and the management of long term stock requires further consideration. The development of an online shop is being explored as a potential way forward.

Thanks was given to the Head Officer, BHW for his report.

7. CEO UPDATE

The CEO outlined the main areas being reviewed to further reduce overheads. The possibility of BHW staff working from home is being considered, with both BHW and RPRA now operating from the same server. A replacement for Heidi Owen has been recruited from Gloucestershire, working from home. Existing staff could transition to working from home, and a natural reduction in staff numbers is expected over the next twelve months.

The Welshpool building has become a financial liability due to rent, rates, gas, and electricity costs. The building is currently on the market for £20,000 rent per annum; however, there has been no interest after six weeks, possibly reflecting the current economic climate. An estate agent has suggested reducing the asking rent to £15,000, but this may not be worthwhile, as a smaller office would still be needed to accommodate remaining staff. Discussions have been held with Powys Council about potentially using the building for social groups.

Sales continue to decline, influenced by changing demographics within the pigeon sport and the general reduction in print media readership. The fall in new stand numbers and ongoing challenges in getting the product to customers have further contributed to this downward trend. The organisation is exploring global digital opportunities as a potential growth area. The BHW model may need to evolve from a traditional newspaper to a digital, news-based product. The use of AI technology is being explored to translate content into different languages, identify region-specific topics, and tailor both frequency and content for various countries. The digital strategy is still in its early stages.

While significant progress has been made in reducing overheads, there is limited scope for further cuts. The focus now must shift toward innovation and market adaptation.

8. ACCOUNTS, FINANCE & DEBTORS (circulated at the meeting)

The Finance Manager presented the working accounts up to the end of September 2025. Gross profit is calculated by sales minus the cost of those sales. Each sales category was listed with a prior year comparison. Newspaper sales are down 13% compared to last year. Digital subscriptions are down 1.5% against last year, though more people are prepared to try digital versions due to postage delays, and they allow access to historical content.

Miscellaneous sales income continues to perform well, as stock value has been written off, meaning any sales generate pure profit. Some stock sold is more than 20 years old. Staff costs remain minimal, with Mel and Stuart having taken on subscriptions work from the BHW, which has been absorbed into their existing roles. Overheads have been reduced by 23%.

Subscriber numbers continue to decline by around 25% per year, equating to a loss of 20–30 people each week. Discussion noted that a plan is needed to determine how to move the publication forward. Despite these challenges, BHW is turning a profit, and the management of overheads has been described as excellent.

Debtors – although significant progress has been made to substantially reduce the list of debtors outstanding amounts remain. Discretion was granted to the CEO and Finance Manager to write off any debts they deem appropriate.

Cover Price of the BHW - The cover price is currently £2.25 per week. An increase to £2.35 per week is recommended, based on the ongoing reduction in units sold, projected future declines, and a predicted 5% increase in printing costs. Proposed subscription rates: 3 months: £40, 6 months: £75, 12 months: £140. Postal subscriptions are currently declining by approximately 20–30 per month. The digital price is to remain frozen at £1.40 per issue. Proposed incentives for digital subscriptions: 1 month: £6, 3 months: £18, 6 months: £36, 12 months: £72. There is a requirement to find the break-even point if all subscribers moved to digital.

Proposed by NE, seconded by WS, and all in favour, that:

BHW25/5 With regret the recommended price increases are accepted.

9. BHW SHOW OF THE YEAR 2026

a) Guest List for 2026

It was suggested that the guest list be reduced and the practice of offering free weekends to previous employees be reviewed and discussed. Support was expressed for continuing to invite foreign guests. Concern was raised regarding the costs associated with Blackpool, particularly in relation to subscription increases, with an emphasis on maintaining financial viability. It was agreed that previous arrangements for attending working councillors would

remain unchanged, with partners' expenses to be met by the councillor. The CEO confirmed that Bucktons will not be attending.

b) Saturday lunch buffet – attendee names/venue/menu

It was agreed that numbers be kept as low as possible, with invitations extended to continental guests only. Venue as last year.

c) FCI Judges Training

It was reported that only six people had expressed interest, but twelve are needed to make the training worthwhile. The CEO explained that hotel and travel costs are required for the two FCI trainers, a minimum of 12 trainees is required. The training will be to FCI standards. It is relevant for the Olympiad and brings prestige, as qualified judges may be invited to judge internationally and handle top pigeons. An advert should be placed in the BHW to make more people aware of the opportunity. The session lasts two hours and is very enlightening. A number of Councillors expressed their interest.

Proposed by NE, seconded by DC, and all in favour, that:

BHW25/6 An advert be placed in the BHW and on the RPRA website inviting interested individuals to contact their Region Secretary, and Region Secretaries will then put forward nominations to the CEO.

d) Ladies Charity Stand

Thanks were expressed to Mrs Carol Gardner and Mrs Meryl Blacklock for all their work over the last few years. Mrs Meryl Blacklock is unable to attend in 2026. Mrs Beryl Lewis kindly volunteered to accompany Mrs Carol Gardner. They received a round of applause and the Head Officer confirmed he will be placing an advert in the BHW.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

a) Letter from the London Region dated 04.04.2025 – The Blackpool Show of the Year.

It was noted that the CEO had previously replied to the letter from the London Region on 30th May 2025, as follows: There was £39,534 taken at the door in 2024 and in 2025 the income from the door was £43,233. A donation was made to Shine, the British Fanciers Research Fund and a sum retained for contingences due to the potential of the Olympiad in 2028 and to ensure the viability of the show. In 2024 the surplus was £5,550 and in 2025 it was £15,751. The CEO and David Trippett visited the Winter Gardens in April to try and establish a cheaper alternative to hiring the whole Winter Garden building. This would certainly be possible for 2027, although we would require the whole building for the Olympiad in 2028, so we felt the reduction would be best suited for the 2029 show. The CEO added that there had been three further donations made in 2025, £1000 to Prostate Cancer Research and £1000 to the Guide Dogs and £5000 to the Olympiad fund.

The Finance Manager pointed out that the Show of the Year is a separate entity with its own accounts. The interests of the RPRA via the Awards ceremony, Foreign guests, staff hotel costs, etc costs the RPRA around £10,000. The Show Committee decide entrance fees and it was accepted a greater transparency would be beneficial.

b) Letter from M Mahr dated 26.09.2025 – BHW Show of the Year 2026 Invitation response

M Mahr (Germany), a long-time supporter of the Show for over 40 years is unable to attend in 2026. He has sent a donation of 500 Euros towards encouraging young fanciers into the sport which will be used to buy a trophy for the best novice of the year. It was also decided to send M Mahr a framed diploma from the RPRA to thank him for his long term support and friendship.

Proposed by NE, seconded by WM, and all in favour, that:

BHW25/7 A framed diploma to be presented to Michael Mahr in appreciation of his many years of support and friendship.

Proposed by DY, seconded by NE, and all in favour, that:

BHW25/8 Purchase a perpetual trophy on behalf of M Mahr to present to the best Novice of the Year.

c) Email from Konrad Meierhofer dated 08.10.2025 – FCI training courses Blackpool

Discussed above.

Meeting closed 12:10pm