



MINUTES COUNCIL

31st October 2025

ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION

**COUNCIL
MINUTES
31st October 2025**

MINUTES of the meeting of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association Council held at the Leonardo Hotel, East Midlands Airport, Ashby Road, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2SH, on Friday 31st October 2025, at 12:11pm.

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

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: C Sutton-CEO, S Woodman-Finance Manager, Ms Nicola Mills-Office Manager (minutes), Ms Emma Seare-Assistant Office Manager (minutes)

Observers: C Sterland-WM Region Secretary, Mrs Beryl Lewis, Mrs Carol Gardner

- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - R Shirley-SW
- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - none declared
- 4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 28.02.2025**

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

C.7852 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Page 1 – Colin Hill is still supervising the Bletchley Park display. Old rings are sent to him for school children to take. The basket which was on loan cannot be located. A full photographic and excel inventory has been completed and many items are listed showing who donated them.

Page 2 – The drug testing process is still to be shown by video.

Page 2 - Linell Instruments - a group insurance claim was made. Linell Instruments have since been returning outstanding clocks and nothing further has been mentioned to Head Office.

Page 9 – The FCI World Championship Race was supported by 29 GB birds including schools. The FCF had received 500,000 euros from the French Government to relocate, but the first year with the one loft was not as successful as they had hoped.

Page 14 - Articles regarding the Dickin medals have been published in the British Homing World.

Page 16 – A Bricon representative was invited to the October Council meeting but was unable to attend due to being in Doncaster.

6. COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE MEETING - HELD IN LONDON ON 04.09.2025 – VERBAL REPORT

Vice President L Blacklock attended a meeting at the Kennel Club in London. A wide range of organisations were present, including those representing horse racing and show jumping, ponies, greyhounds, and others. Each group delivered a presentation on their current activities and issues. L Blacklock presented on the Dicken Medal winning pigeon “Tommy” bred in the Cumbria region. The family had put Tommy’s medal up for sale, and it was purchased by the Barrow Dock Museum for £30,000. The major discussion of the meeting focused on greyhound racing, which has recently been banned in Wales. The Greyhound Association UK has initiated a judicial review in response, at a cost of £200,000. Attendees found the meeting valuable for networking, and a follow-up meeting will be held in January. L Blacklock has offered to prepare a detailed outline of the requirements for bringing pigeons into the UK for the Olympiad. This document will be discussed at the next meeting to gather support. It was also noted that horse racing continues to experience a decline. Additionally, the group agreed to consider developing a shared set of animal welfare principles that would apply across all animal-related activities represented. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 14th January 2026.

A proposal was made to invite the Countryside Alliance to host a stand at the 2026 Blackpool Show.

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

C.7853 Invite the Countryside Alliance to host a stand at the 2026 Blackpool Show (costs to be met by the Countryside Alliance)

7. FCI DIRECTOR COMMITTEE HYBRID MEETING MINUTES – HELD IN MIRA, PORTUGAL ON 19.09.2025

Vice President, L Blacklock was unable to attend. He emphasised the importance of the RPRA being a member of the FCI, as it is the international body. From this membership we gain the opportunity to run the Olympiad, which is the pinnacle in the international world. All ETS systems must be approved by the FCI, so all testing is done by them. International racing can only take place using FCI rings. The FCI have also helped with the movement of pigeons in/out of the country and the FCI Vet has also been extremely useful. The FCI currently hold 1 million in funds. The money held by the FCI is due to the number of countries (currently 73) wanting to be part of the FCI. Every ring sold with the FCI logo

generates 1 cent. Their funds are steered towards advancing the aims of the pigeon sport. It is the aim of the current FCI president to gain world heritage recognition for pigeon racing. The FCI is raising the platform of pigeon racing worldwide, promoting the sport and the money they hold is a consequence of its success. A world heritage status would help protect pigeon fanciers worldwide. Donations from various countries to the Ukraine pigeon association has been held by the FCI which has been used to pay for fees and rings to help fanciers in Ukraine. It was also noted that the FCI face a legal battle due to the International Olympic Committee objection to the use of the Olympic symbols being used at the Romanian Olympiad.

8. INVITATIONS RECEIVED

- a. Remembrance Gathering, Animals in War Memorial held in London on 7th November 2025

The Vice President, L Blacklock, confirmed his attendance and considered it a great honour to do so on behalf of the RPRA, to recognise the role pigeons played in the wars throughout the centuries, particularly in the second world war where they saved many, many lives.

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

C.7854 The Vice President, L Blacklock, attends the Remembrance Gathering, Animals in War Memorial held on 7th November 2025.

- b. German Racing Pigeon Exhibition 2025 (Verband Deutscher Brieftaubenzüchter) held in Kassel, Germany on 29th-30th November 2025

It was proposed that J Wheatcroft attend as Olympiad Team Manager.

Proposed by EM, seconded by WS, with 14 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/NE1/NE2/NW/SO/WE/WM1/WM2/WS; 0 votes against and 1 abstention: LN, that:

C.7855 J Wheatcroft, Olympiad Team Manager, to attend the German Racing Pigeon Exhibition 2025 held in Kassel, Germany on 29th-30th November 2025.

- c. KBDB National Days held in Blankenberge, Belgium on 14th-15th November 2025

T Gardner confirmed he would attend.

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

C.7856 T Gardner to attend the KBDB National Days held in Blankenberge, Belgium on 14th-15th November 2025.

9. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

a) Finance & General-Purpose and Clocks, Rings & Weather Committee

1) Minutes of the meeting held on 26.03.2025 (via Zoom)

Proposed by LN, seconded by EM, with 9 votes for: CA/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/LN/NW/SO/WE; 0 votes against and 6 abstentions due to non-attendance: DC/NE1/NE2/WM1/WM2/WS, that:

C.7857 The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2025 (via Zoom) are accepted as a true and accurate record.

2) Matters Arising from the meeting held on 26.03.2025 (via Zoom)

Once an NWHU ring is registered with the RPRA the owners' details can be retrieved via the database, but the online service will not be available.

3) Accounts – circulated at the meeting

The Finance Manager presented the profit and loss report for the year-to-date period ending September 2025. Ring sales income for 2025, excluding advance sales, showed a 40% increase in gross profit compared with 2024. Although fewer rings were sold, improved pricing strategies strengthened margins, and ring sales continue to be an important source of income. Twenty radio clocks were purchased for stock in September and will be sold in due course.

Continental racing income had previously been charged per basket, but the FCF has now moved to a per lorry charging model. This change has not resulted in any loss of income. In future, charges will be based on the type of lorry used, as basket numbers alone may no longer cover overall costs.

(Break: 13:03-14:00)

(R Chambers left the meeting - 13:03)

An update was provided on the Alwyn Hill estate, which included both property and pigeons. The property has been divided equally between the RPRA and Mr Hill's daughter. The cost of the pigeons had not been reflected in previous accounts, so adjustments were made this year to bring the accounts up to date.

Although the One Loft did not operate this year, associated costs, primarily depreciation, were still incurred.

Membership income was reviewed based on cash received from each region. Analysis shows a reduction of 1,896 members compared to the previous year, representing a 14% decline. The outstanding 2024 levies have steadily decreased, which the meeting acknowledged as an excellent achievement and credited the hard work of Regional Secretaries. A short discussion followed, noting that some levy payments were still being received. The Finance

Manager also confirmed that a refund had been issued to the Southern Region due to an overpayment in the previous year. Membership subscriptions remain the essential income stream required to support the RPRA's operations.

Concerns were raised about verifying genuine junior membership applications. The CEO noted the difficulty in filtering false applications, and it was agreed that Club Secretaries could help monitor this going forward.

Cash reserves remain positive, although 2026 ring sales are currently slightly lower than at the same point last year. Overheads were reviewed, with staff costs marginally reduced despite increases in employer national insurance contributions.

The issue of ring sales to unpaid members was raised. The Finance Manager confirmed that safeguards have been implemented, and the new online system will automatically prevent unpaid members from transferring rings.

A question was raised regarding the CEO's lease car and whether car insurance was included within the existing lease hire agreement; it is not. A new car lease will be required in January, and options are under review to determine the most suitable arrangement. The CEO is considering leasing a Kia Niro next year, which is expected to be more cost-effective and tax efficient.

The debtors' list was examined, and it was noted that some organisations are slow in making payments. The Finance Manager will write to the relevant Region Secretaries to address these concerns and will include a detailed audit trail with the correspondence.

The Finance Manager was thanked for the updates presented.

4) Key Measures of Activity Report

A comprehensive analytical document, prepared by Emma Seare, was circulated at the meeting, providing the Council with valuable insight into the work undertaken by Head Office. Each section of these were discussed and additional key points highlighted which include:

Overall quantities of distance requests have shown a slight decrease compared with 2023/24, with noticeable month-to-month variation. Racing Support advised that this may be due to an increased number of members using the TPRS programme, which allows clubs to obtain their own distances directly. The number of loft locations has decreased; this may be due to no full club re-mapping being carried out in 2024/25. It may also reflect a continuing reduction in overall participation within the sport.

The number of ring verifications has decreased following the introduction of the free online verification tool available to RPRA members. This improvement has reduced the volume of fake stray reports, previously caused by misuse of the system. Additionally, the number of transfers has decreased due to the new format allowing 10 birds per form instead of 6.

Between April and August, Head Office coordinated 250 collections of birds from non-fanciers with the help of local fanciers collecting on behalf of owners. Additionally, Regional Secretaries reported a substantial number of successful repatriations, resulting in significant savings for members on courier fees. Overall, stray reporting costs (including franking, automated mail, and SMS) totalled £5,105, representing a £700 reduction compared with the previous year.

Between November 2024 and September 2025 partnership dissolutions resulted in the removal of 468 members from the database. During the same period 71 new members were added through new partnership formations. Staff are also aware that no club rings lists will be completed unless all the members of the club have paid subscriptions.

Incoming calls to the BHW are now routed through the RPRA switchboard, leading to a marked increase in the number of answered calls. This has improved member service levels and enhanced public relations.

While the TPRS currently provides access to relevant data, a simplified system is to be explored to assist Regional Secretaries in locating local clubs for new starters. This system could utilise data extracted from the RPRA database and will function similarly to the existing Stray Collection Google Maps tool.

A large number of basket seals have been ordered by an Irish organisation, Tower Pigeons, which they do each year. It was asked if all the clubs have access to the TPRS software, the CEO to enquire how many are using it.

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

C.7858 A vote of thanks to Emma Seare for producing a very comprehensive report.

5) Next Council Meeting – 27th February 2026

Room charges for 2026 have increased by £5 and all other facilities remain the same costs.

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

C.7859 The next Council meeting is held at the Leonardo Hotel, East Midlands Airport.

6) Funding of Council Meetings

A proposal was raised to discontinue the payment of councillors' expenses, which under Rule 59 currently amount to £100 per person for full attendance at all meetings. They also suggested that individual regions could cover the travel expenses of their own Councillors. It was noted that, going forward, the Council will consist of a maximum of 15 Councillors. Accommodation and meal costs would, however, continue to be funded by the RPRA.

Members were advised that implementing this proposal would require a formal rule change, which the Region may submit as a proposition at the AGM if they wish to pursue it. It was also noted that each Council meeting costs the RPRA approximately £7,000.

7) RPRA Xmas Meal

Quotes for two menus were presented to the meeting, a two-course meal at £30 per head and a three-course meal at £37 per head.

Proposed by CA, seconded by EM, and all in favour, that:

C.7860 The staff Christmas meal will be the three course option at £37pp

8) Staff Wage Increase

All RPRA staff were asked to leave the room prior to the discussion. Following a discussion with 3 propositions, Council voted to adopt the NALGO agreement, awarding a 3.2% increase effective from 1st December 2025.

Proposed by WE, seconded by WM, with 2 votes:

C.7861 5.5% Increase in staff wages

Proposed by DY, seconded by WM, with 2 votes:

C.7862 4% Increase in staff wages

Proposed by CA, seconded by EM, with 11 votes:

CA/DC/EM1/EM2/IR/LN/NE1/NE2/NW/SO/WS:

C.7863 Adopt the use of NALGO agreement to increase staff wages by 3.2%

C.7863 was carried, setting the annual staff wage increase to 3.2%

9) Correspondence

- a) Letter from the London Region dated 04.04.2025 regarding Mr A Hill's Estate

The CEO reported that all funds received from the estate have been ring-fenced in a separate account, with a current balance of £112,000 accruing interest.

- b) Letter from the Southern Region dated 09.09.2025 and Derbyshire & South Yorkshire Region dated 06.10.2025 on the same subject – Re: Increase of the RPRA subscription fee

Considering the current financial climate, two regions have requested that the regional retention be increased from £4 to £5 per member. A discussion followed regarding the challenges posed by increasing costs alongside falling membership numbers, and the resulting difficulties some regions face in funding their meetings and secretarial functions.

It was acknowledged that allowing regions to charge their members directly for specific requirements would necessitate a rule change. Given the pressing financial situation in

certain regions, a proposition was put forward that the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £37.50 per member, with £32.50 to the Association and £5.00 retained by the Local Region. The proposition was seconded and two further amendments received.

The Chairman requested an initial vote in the following order, with the proposition receiving the lesser number of votes to be removed unless any proposition achieved more than 50% of the vote:

Second amendment:

Proposed by CA, seconded by DC, with 6 votes for: CA/DC/IR/NE1/NE2/NW, 9 votes against: DY/EM1/EM2/LN/SO/WE/WM1/WM2/WS and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7864 That the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £37.00 per member, with £32.50 to the Association and £4.50 retained by the Local Region.

First amendment:

Proposed by WE, seconded by WM, with 5 votes for: LN/WE/WM1/WM2/WS, 10 votes against: CA/DC/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/NE1/NE2/NW/SO and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7865 That the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £38.00 per member, with £33.00 to the Association and £5.00 retained by the Local Region.

Proposition:

Proposed by DY, seconded by SO, with 4 votes for: DY/EM1/EM2/SO; 11 votes against: CA/DC/IR/LN/NE1/NE2/NW/WE/WM1/WM2/WS and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7866 That the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £37.50 per member, with £32.50 to the Association and £5.00 retained by the Local Region.

The vote was therefore between **C.7864** and **C.7865**.

Proposed by CA, seconded by DC, with 7 votes for: CA/DC/IR/NE1/NE2/NW/SO, 8 votes against: DY/EM1/EM2/LN/WE/WM1/WM2/WS and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7864 That the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £37.00 per member, with £32.50 to the Association and £4.50 retained by the Local Region.

Proposed by WE, seconded by WM, with 8 votes for: DY/EM1/EM2/LN/WE/WM1/WM2/WS, 7 votes against: CA/DC/IR/NE1/NE2/NW/SO and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7865 That the annual subscription for 2026 be set at £38.00 per member, with £33.00 to the Association and £5.00 retained by the Local Region.

C.7865 was carried, setting the 2026 annual subscription at £38 per member, with £33 to the Association and £5 retained by the Local Region.

c) Letter from Llewellyn-Jones Solicitors dated 12.09.2025 – Estate of the late Mr J Brown

The CEO reported that a letter from Llewellyn-Jones Solicitors, dated 12th September 2025, was received unexpectedly, informing the RPRA that it had inherited the estate of the late Mr Brown. The solicitors initially requested permission to pay the local council £1,800 to clear the property. Before granting permission, extensive enquiries were conducted to ensure there were sufficient funds in the estate and that no challenges would arise from next of kin. The solicitors confirmed that, to date, they had managed to secure adequate assets and assured that they did not expect any challenge to the will. Based on this information, the CEO instructed that the payment to the local council be made to clear the property. Once the estate is finalised the RPRA council will decide where to allocate any remaining funds.

b) Emergency & Rules and Liberation Sites Committee

Matters arising

Page 7 - CA raised a query regarding Rule 125(b) which was not discussed in the previous meeting. Due to a reduction in club membership, the question was raised as to whether Rule 125(b) should be amended so that only one member of the Association would be required to accompany the birds on the transporter. Several regions expressed concerns, noting that such a change could introduce unnecessary risks and potential problems by having only one person responsible for the birds during transportation. It was suggested that the club could submit a proposition to the AGM for consideration.

(C Sterland left the meeting – 16:00 until 16:02)

(J Dodd left the meeting – 16:02 until 16:03)

(S Woodman left the meeting – 16:03)

1) Discuss the implications of the de-recognition of the NWHU

See item 4 below.

2) Suggested rule changes to be proposed from Council

Ring Sales – Rule 99

The CEO raised that the RPRA sometimes gets asked to back date ring lists that have been received late by organisations. Therefore, the suggestion was made to change the wording of Rule 99 to state that ring lists would be date stamped on the day they are received and processed accordingly from that date. It was also referenced that the RPRA aims to send all ring lists back electronically where possible and via post as a last resort.

(S Bearmore left the meeting 16:51 until 16:55)

(T Gardner left the meeting 16:51 until 16:52)

Proposed by DY, seconded by CA, with 14 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/LN/WM1/WM2/WS, 0 votes against and 1 abstention: WE, that:

C.7867 Amend Rule 99 wording to state ring lists sent to the Association will be date stamped and returned to the Secretary of the organisation.

Furthermore, IR reported that some clubs share the same name in both the RPRA and the IHU. They also noted concerns that certain individuals have been allocated RPRA rings despite not being RPRA members, possibly by using old loft numbers. It was suggested that when a member resigns or leaves the RPRA their loft number should be deleted to prevent misuse. The CEO confirmed he would investigate the matter further.

The CEO explained that ring lists are often received before March and are therefore accepted under the previous year's membership, as subscriptions officially roll over on 1st March. IR stated they are currently aware of only one club affected but will provide further details for the CEO to review.

Verifications - Rule 108

The CEO reported that the RPRA frequently receives requests from clubs to verify race results, with some submissions requiring the checking of 10–20 ring verifications at a time. The current fee does not adequately cover the time required to complete this work. He reminded the meeting that RPRA members and affiliated organisations can use the online verification tool free of charge, allowing them to complete their own verifications without sending them to the RPRA. It was discussed that non-RPRA members or organisations should be charged appropriately for this service to cover the costs involved. A suggestion was made to increase the verification fee from 20p to 50p.

An amendment was proposed by EM, seconded by NE, with 11 votes for: DY/EM1/EM2/LN/NE1/NE2/NW/WE/WM1/WM2/WS, 4 votes against: CA/DC/IR/SO and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7868 Rule 108 be amended to £1 for non-affiliated organisations.

Proposed by CA, seconded by IR, with 4 votes for: CA/DC/IR/SO, 11 votes against: DY/EM1/EM2/LN/NE1/NE2/NW/WE/WM1/WM2/WS and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7869 Rule 108 be amended to 50p for non-affiliated organisations.

Stray Birds - Rule 110

The current rule states that the owner of a stray bird will be notified by first class post. In the first instance stray reports are sent to the member via email or SMS to ensure the report is received in a timely manner. As a last resort stray reports are sent via post, and second class post is used.

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

C.7870 Rule 110 be amended to state that the owner of a stray bird will be notified by second class post.

Partnerships / loft names

The CEO raised that the RPRA are receiving dissolution of partnerships whereby the partnership wants to remove a member but keep the same loft name. The staff at Head Office would like guidance on how this should be handled. The CEO advised his understanding was that the loft name can be anything, but only the paid-up member can be present at club gatherings.

It was confirmed by several regions that if the partnership is being dissolved the loft name should revert to the individual name who has paid their subscription. It was also confirmed if the member requested to be removed is deceased and exemption applied then the loft name can remain as a partnership name and there is no requirement for dissolution of the partnership.

It was noted by IR that you can race under any name as previous lofts have had combined names but the members under those lofts were not those that the loft name stated.

It was also noted by CA that previous discussions had been had regarding this subject and that registered names are required as part of the loft name with the RPRA.

Specialist clubs Ring Orders

The CEO reported that the NRCC has requested early delivery of their 2026 rings, in line with other large specialist organisations. He asked for guidance on establishing a threshold that would allow specialist groups with substantial orders to receive their rings early so they can prepare them for members expecting delivery from 1st December. Council agreed that specialist clubs placing large orders may receive their 2026 rings in mid-November.

It was further agreed that a disclaimer agreement will be issued to all specialist clubs, to be signed by a club official, before any early release. This agreement will mitigate risks and confirm the mutual understanding that no rings are to be issued by these clubs before the official FCI release date of 1st December.

(G Cockshott left the meeting 17:06 until 17:08)

3) Liberation Sites Report – prepared by Louise Powell and Millie Lander

New Site Suggestions:

- Bilsthorpe Miners Welfare Social Club, Bilsthorpe, Nottinghamshire - was suggested by a member of the social club committee. EM will delegate somebody to review the site and report back.
- Worthing Rugby Club, Littlehampton, West Sussex. Racing Support contacted the rugby club owner in February 2025 who expressed an interest in allowing pigeon liberations. SO will delegate somebody to review the site and report back. The CEO

added that they had already sent someone to take a look who advised the site looked okay, however the entrance looked tight.

- Oak Tree Farm, Carlisle - suggested by a Cumbrian Fancier. CA advised it is likely to only be accessible by a very small transporter, and he was unsure what use it would get as there is very little flying up the west coast. He added that it is a lovely place, with the Animals in War memorial, but had very narrow lane access. CA will delegate somebody to review the site and report back.
- The Devils Porridge Museum, Eastriggs - suggested by a Cumbrian Fancier. CA advised that this site has a bigger car park, the museum is quite big, but wouldn't be suitable for large transporters, and again raised concerns whether the site would be used. CA will delegate somebody to review the site and report back.
- Disused Airfield, Walsall - suggested by the North West Region. WM advised he will be in that area over the weekend and will review and report back.

A.O.B.:

- The Red Lion Truck Stop, Northampton has been reviewed and decided that because the site sees a large number of vehicles and parking is at a premium that the site will rarely be suitable for liberations.
- Oxton, Nottinghamshire is under review due to the landowner advising they are unable to currently take bookings due to a family bereavement.
- Carlisle Racecourse – a request was received to re-instate Carlisle. CA confirmed they are happy for the site to be re-instated but raised concern that it may not get much usage.
- Due to ongoing access issues at Perth only 5 liberations are possible. Council agreed this needs to be managed by Head Office, on a first come first served basis.
- Coventry, Mobbs Wood Farm, Warwickshire has overhead wires. This needs reviewing.
- Forestry England sites – Holmsley and Stoney Cross - the CEO reported that these sites are free to use for liberations, however Forestry England requires liability insurance of £10 million for access, which cost the RPRA £420. The CEO proposed that, from 2026 onwards, the RPRA introduce a charge of £10 per liberation at these sites to recover the insurance costs and ensure continued use.
- Stafford, Stoney Flats - the RPRA have been notified that no one will be there to open gates and provide early morning access moving forward. This needs to be reviewed and request the times the site can be used.

- Reading - Council agreed £50 would be the maximum fee per liberation as the site is popular and is a good site to use.
- The CEO advised we request the help of all members to locate suitable liberation sites.

4) Correspondence

a) Letter from the London Region dated 04.04.2025 – Convoyer's and Lib Site Information

The CEO had previously replied to the letter from the London Region on 30th May 2025. Convoyers have previously been asked at Convoyers' meetings and advertisements have been placed in the BHW requesting What 3 Words locations when they are on site, but no response has been received. The CEO advised we would need feedback from the Convoyers onsite to know the exact location of the sites they are using.

- b) Letter from the Southern Region dated 09.09.2025 – Re: Reconsideration of the de-recognition of the NWHU.
- c) Letter from the North East Region dated 04.10.2025 – Derecognition of the NWHU in relation to the rules.
- d) Letter from the Cumbria Region dated 06.10.2025 – NWHU Recognition, Minute **C. 7844** (Propositions and Minutes 1995 attached.)

In response to the proposed rule passed at the February 2025 council meeting to de-recognise the NWHU organisation from 1st January 2026.

IR proposed that the decision be put on hold until the RPRA could meet with the NWHU to discuss the situation further.

Proposed by IR, seconded by SO, with 10 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/LN/NW/SO/WE, 5 votes against: NE1/NE2/WM1/WM2/WS and 0 abstentions, that:

C.7871 3 officials (President, Vice-President & CEO) from the RPRA to meet with NWHU officials as early as possible to attempt to resolve the situation.

e) Email from the North West Region dated 08.10.2025 – Rule 17 Application for Affiliation

NW advised that the original £50 allocated for advertising affiliations was split between two newspapers. However, due to the increased cost of advertising and now only one publication being used, there is a question as to whether the cost within Rule 17 be increased. It was also noted that some regional secretaries have been asking for £25 instead of the full £50, to cover the cost of advertising affiliations. It was discussed that now there is only 1 national paper the wording should be amended to reflect this.

(A Williams left the meeting 16:48 until 16:49)

(T Gardner left the meeting 16:49 until 16:51)

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

C.7872 Amend Rule 17 wording from 'in two of the UK national papers' to 'the UK national paper'

c) Olympiad and FCI Reports Committee

1) Update on Olympiad

a) Dortmund, Germany 2026

A report from J Wheatcroft stated that the Olympiad categories have been advertised in the BHW, and that he plans to hold Standard Class selection shows at Epsom, Doncaster, and the NEHU shows, with the final selection taking place at Blackpool. Sixteen birds are required for a full team and, in his opinion, due to the scoring process, if we cannot enter a complete team, it would be preferable not to enter at all.

He further reported that the Sporting Class is much better supported and that he has received numerous enquiries. Entry forms will therefore be advertised in the BHW, and it is hoped, following a recent call with the FCI Vet, E. Peus, that the birds can be transported to Germany and returned without the need for lengthy quarantine.

b) Olympiad 2028

- (i) The FCI Organisation of FCI Olympiads: Minimum Standards and Organisation document was included for consideration in relation to the upcoming 2028 Olympiad. It was noted that a quarantine requirement is still in place, and a final decision on whether to proceed will be made at the February meeting.
- (ii) A meeting with Blackpool Council was held to review several hotels that may be suitable for hosting the FCI in 2028. The Holiday Inn was identified as the best option, and prices are currently being negotiated.

2) Team Manager's Report – John Wheatcroft

There will be two trainers from the FCI attending the Blackpool Show to train Standard Class judges. Anyone who qualifies through this process may be considered for selection as a RPRA representative judge at a future Olympiad.

3) Correspondence

- a) Letter from the CEO to the Rt Hon Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office dated 02.09.2025 – International Pigeon Racing and the 2028 FCI Olympiad
- b) Letter from Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Minister for Animal Welfare and Biosecurity, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 29.09.2025 – International Pigeon Racing and 2028 FCI Olympiad

- c) Letter from the CEO to Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Minister for Animal Welfare and Biosecurity, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 30.09.2025 – FCI Olympiad 2028

The CEO has written to the Minister for Europe requesting clarification on when the SPS agreement will be finalised. This agreement should allow the free movement of pigeons between our borders, and assistance was also requested in securing derogations should the SPS agreement not be in place in time for the 2028 Olympiad. The FCI has supported this request by providing all relevant scientific studies demonstrating that pigeons are “dead-end hosts for Avian Flu.”

4) Invitations received

- a) 2026 Pigeon-Vet Conference held in Dortmund, Germany on 6th February 2026
- b) 2026 FCI Olympiad held in Dortmund, Germany on 7th-8th February 2026

Invitations have been received for two delegates to attend the 2026 Olympiad in Germany. The CEO and President have accepted, to gain first-hand experience of the procedures.

Our vet, Mr Ian Taylor, will also attend the 2026 Pigeon-Vet Conference in Dortmund, Germany, on 6th February 2026.

- c) International Racing Pigeon Fair 2026 held in Dortmund, Germany

The 2026 FCI Congress held at the International Racing Pigeon Fair in Dortmund, Germany on 7th-8th February 2026 requires a delegate from the RPRA.

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

C.7873 J Wheatcroft, Olympiad Team Manager to attend the International Racing Pigeon Fair 2026

d) Performance Enhancing Drugs Committee

1) PED update

A list of drug tests carried out in 2025 was circulated at the meeting. It was noted that some samples taken in May were lost in the post and by the time this came to light, due to the normal waiting period required for results, they could not be traced. Surescreen Laboratories later confirmed that a PO Box label issue had been the cause.

2) PED Budget

The PED budget for 2025 had been set at £6,000, and the actual cost of all tests was £737 over budget. As there will be a £5 increase per test in 2026, it was agreed that, rather than increasing the budget, the number of tests should be reduced to be able to maintain the budget at £6,000 for 2026.

Post-race testing was discussed, and it was agreed that basket day pre-race testing will continue unless an organisation specifically requests otherwise. Drug testing is an FCI membership requirement and proof of such testing is necessary to compete in Olympiads.

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

C.7874 The PED budget for 2026 be set at £6,000

3) Correspondence

An email from the NEHU dated 16.09.2025 regarding NEHU Drug tests and the laboratory process was circulated at the meeting as was the reply from the CEO which answered their queries regarding the PO Box situation and the supposed use of vitamin B12 as a masking agent.

e) Buildings Committee

1) Unit 35-41 Upper Mills Trading Estate, Stonehouse Stroud GL10 2BJ

a. 2024/2025 requirements

- (i) Office Cleaner Contract Renewal
- (ii) Confidential Shredding Contract Renewal
- (iii) Waste Collection Contract Renewal
- (iv) Fire & Security Contract Renewal – 2024 prices held for 2025
- (v) Washroom Services Contract Renewal
- (vi) Replacement socket (Racing Support)
- (vii) Paxton Access Control software issue – remote assistance
- (viii) Paxton Access Control fault
- (ix) Intruder Alarm faulty door contact
- (x) Fire Alarm Zone Plan
- (xi) Paxton Access Control replacement batteries

b. Future requirements

- (i) Repair to guttering and missing roof tile
- (ii) Replacement Lighting (including security lighting)

At least three quotes were sought for each contract renewal/requirement, to keep costs as low as possible. The work was considered comprehensive, and it was agreed that the Office Manager proceed with appointing the best company for the future requirements listed, with the full backing of Council.

Proposed by EM, seconded by WE, and all in favour, that:

C.7875 The Office Manager to proceed with appointing the best company for the future requirements listed.

f) Future of the Sport Committee

1) One Loft Report

The CEO advised that unfortunately the One Loft Manager had resigned from the role. The CEO expressed his disappointment as he had given him the opportunity and recommended him to Council. It was agreed that a line be drawn under the situation, and that no blame should be apportioned. There was a discussion about selling the boxes, the Gerald trailer, and the loft (possibly in sections).

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

C.7876 The Gerald trailer is advertised for sale, and the loft and related equipment are advertised for offers, buy to remove.

It was raised that the CEO check when the rental period for the hire of the land expires.

2) FOS Accounts – distributed at meeting

Discussed in the Finance Manager's report.

3) Correspondence

None

(Break: 19:00 – 19:54)

(S Beardmore left the meeting)

(Beryl Lewis left the meeting)

Vice President J Dodd advised that he had visited the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire twice to explore the loan of a Dicken medal and price up a National Memorial pigeon statue. The Arboretum confirmed that they do not have sufficient insurance to cover the display of the Dicken medal. If the RPRA wished to apply to display a statue, this would cost £1200 (which is put towards the costs of maintaining the site), and it should be approved. A granite base is recommended. We would have a time span of 3 years to build the statue, and the insurance would cost £5000. J Dodd advised that it would cost £68,000 for a bronze statue. He may be able to secure Clare Balding to ensure tv publicity. The Chair thanked J Dodd for his efforts, and it was agreed that more thought was required.

10. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE AND VERBAL REPORTS

a. Letter from the London Region dated 04.04.2025 – Dickens Medals

It was noted that the CEO had previously replied to the letter from the London Region on 30th May 2025, as follows: "There are 7 Dicken Medals held in a safe deposit box in Cardiff, I personally visited and photographed them. I know there is one other "Dutch Coast" on loan in Devils Porridge Museum in Easttriggs on the borders of Scotland with their website

showing this to be true, so we have eight medals. I have also been told there is one in a museum in Cornwall and that it was a replica, although this is historic information and I have never seen anything to corroborate it. The museum in Cornwall is the Air Museum; it was thought that the medal held there may be the original. The medals have not been valued recently, and it was suggested that perhaps a revaluation should take place.”

b. Letter from Mr J Raines (for Raines & Shaw) dated 27.08.2025 – Re our Appeal

The Chair read the letter from Mr Raines, appealing to lift his suspension. The period of his suspension is from 2nd December 2023 to 2nd December 2027.

Proposed by EM, seconded by WM, with 12 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM1/EM2/IR/LN/NW/SO/WM1/WM2/WS; 0 votes against and 2 abstentions: NE1/NE2, that:

C.7877 Mr Raines’ suspension is upheld for the full period.

- c. Letter from the CEO to Mr G Hickman, Head of Exotic Disease Control, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 04.09.2025 – Pigeon Racing and Avian Influenza Control Zones
- d. Letter from Ministerial Contact Unit, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 25.09.2025 – Pigeon Racing and avian flu
- e. Letter from the CEO to the Ministerial Contact Unit, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 15.10.2025 – Pigeon Racing and avian flu

Items c. to e. relate to correspondence between the CEO and DEFRA regarding pigeon racing and Avian Flu. Unusually this summer the virus continued with a few outbreaks, resulting in racing starting and then being suspended in some cases. The CEO wrote to DEFRA advising of a study which indicated that pigeons are a dead-end host for the virus. The CEO requested that an arrangement be made to allow racing to continue between April and September, regardless of the protection zones in place, while continuing to observe housing measures and protection zones outside of these months. DEFRA have replied that they will review the request.

The CEO advised that he had received a further item of general correspondence – a letter from a member of a suspended partnership appealing his release from the suspension. Council confirmed that as it was the address that was suspended the suspension was upheld.

The CEO reported that, for Council’s information at this stage, he had received a late letter from Pigeon Pathways, a Community Interest Company, addressed to the Future of the Sport committee, asking for funds. The CEO will write back asking for clarity on how the money will be used.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting, including the President’s attendance via Zoom.

Meeting closed at 20:18pm