



# **MINUTES**

## **COUNCIL**

**27<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

## ROYAL PIGEON RACING ASSOCIATION

COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
27<sup>th</sup> February 2026

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 27<sup>th</sup> February 2026, at 2:00pm.

1. **ROLL CALL** - C O'Hare-IR, L Blacklock-CA (Chair), D Headon-DC, S Reed-DY, J Dodd-EM, S Finan-LN, G Cockshott-NE, P Murray-NW, R Harris-SO, P Whale-WM, T Gardner-WS

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

Observers: R Chambers-Head Officer, BHW, J Wheatcroft-Olympiad Team Manager, S Collishaw-EM, C Sterland-WM, Mrs Carol Gardner

The Vice-President, L Blacklock, advised that he would be acting Chair for the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – A Williams-LN, S Beardmore-WE, R Shirley-SW

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – none declared

4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31.10.25**

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

**C.7886 The minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record.**

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

Page 22 – It was raised and confirmed that the old rings sent to Bletchley Park are put in a 'holding club' on the RPRA database. Should one of these rings be reported as a stray, it would be flagged up as an unallocated ring.

The production of the drug testing video by the Olympiad Team Manager is pending the start of the season.

Page 23 – The CEO has had a zoom meeting with the Bricon representative, so an invitation to a Council meeting is now not necessary. The Bricon representative also met with the late C Gordon in 2025.

Page 24 – Item 8a, Proposition **C.7854**. The Animals in War Memorial held in London on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2025 was attended by CA, as per the proposition C.7854. Due to the sad passing

of Jilly Cooper, one of the key drivers behind the memorial, a letter has been received from the Petplan charitable trust who organise the service and are looking to continue funding the memorial. They are considering a dedicated body to oversee the Remembrance Day. The trust suggests those attending the memorial in order to lay a wreath would be asked to contribute £100. An alternative suggestion would be to request a one-off donation of £1,000 (from our organisation) towards the set-up of an animal charitable trust. They are seeking to raise £25,000 so that they can look forward with confidence, similar large organisations have already given positive responses. The RPRA are at the forefront of the memorial service and are very well respected and we have attended the service for several years.

CA will negotiate with Petplan trust over the next few months to see what the implications are. IR confirmed that they will donate on behalf of the RPRA and were thanked for their kind offer. It was also suggested that the RPRA could apply through the BHW Show of the Year for a donation on behalf of the members.

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

**C.7887 CA to negotiate with the Petplan charitable trust and acquire further information.**

The Olympiad Team Manager attended the German Racing Pigeon Exhibition 2025 held in Kassel, Germany, on 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> November 2025. He confirmed that it was a good show and he was well looked after and made welcome.

WS attended the KBDB National Days held in Blankenberg, Belgium on 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> November 2025 with his wife and had an enjoyable weekend. All arrangements went smoothly; he thanked the Chair.

Page 25 – It was confirmed by the Finance Manager that the Alwyn Hill estate is shown in the published accounts within the Balance Sheet as reserved income, under Current liabilities – Cash received in advance (item 11), £113,274.25. It was asked if it was possible to separate out the Alwyn Hill estate so that it is more visible. The Finance Manager will look into this, as it is due to the inherited structure of the previous accounts.

Page 30 – Re Llewellyn-Jones solicitors – Estate of the late Mr J Brown – it was affirmed that this is still in probate.

Page 32 – It had been advised that the entrance to the potential site at Worthing Rugby Club, Littlehampton, West Sussex is tight with overhanging trees, as visible on google earth. Racing Support will speak to the owner to find out what size deliveries he has.

Page 33 – Aldridge Disused Airfield, Walsall – WM visited the site and reported that it is a large, flat site, with toilets – ideal for liberations if we can obtain permission. It is owned by Walsall Council. NW has been trying to get in touch with Walsall Council but has not received a response. Racing Support have been advised that the owner is liaising with other interested parties. Head Officer, BHW confirmed that he would be happy to liaise with the Council, as he is there often. WM also offered to speak with the Council in person.

The two sites suggested by a Cumbrian fancier – Oak Tree Farm, Carlise and the Devils Porridge Museum, Eastriggs are both small. The Devils Porridge car park is slightly bigger, but Oak Tree Farm is an animal rescue place, suitable only for very small transporters or trailers, and there were concerns as to who would use both sites.

The site at Coventry has always had 2 overhead wires, and this is noted in the site information report. Some organisations use it, although it is not ideal. A review is still pending.

Stafford, Stoney Flats – it was asked what time the gates would be opened?

Page 38 – The CEO advised that it had been difficult to remove the Gerald trailer from the site, but it has now been removed and stored in a secure place. However, the handles to crank the sides had been misplaced. Gerald has since posted some replacement handles. It is currently being cleaned and will be advertised for £10,000 in the BHW and on the RPRA website. There has been one expression of interest.

There has been interest in the Hermes self-cleaning perches and there was a discussion on how to price these. It was agreed that this would be set at around £1,000 per set.

The loft will cost around £40,000 to dismantle and remove. The ground rent is due June/July. A discussion was held on how to price the loft. It was agreed that it should be advertised for offers of around £5,000, buyer to dismantle and remove.

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

**C.7888 The One Loft is advertised for offers of around £5,000, buyer to dismantle and remove.**

The Benzing system is stored at RPRA Head office and has been reprogrammed for loft use.

The Finance Manager reported that the One Loft (including the trailer) has a value of £19,643 in the accounts. It had almost been written off, but then an investment in the laying of the concrete slabs and erecting the loft meant the value to that asset was reinstated in the books.

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

**C.7889 The CEO is authorised by Council to negotiate the sale of the Gerald trailer, the perches and the One Loft with the reasonable prices suggested.**

Page 38 – EM and the Olympiad Team Manager will set up/attend a meeting with a sculptor regarding the National Memorial pigeon statue. The Olympiad Team Manager advised that the President of the FCI, David Madeira, has offered to auction 20 best birds to raise funds for the memorial, if it goes ahead. This was agreed to be an excellent gesture.

Page 39 – There is a question over whether the Dicken medal held at the Air Museum in Cornwall is a replica or an original. The Head Officer, BHW advised that the replica medals are lighter in weight. The CEO will contact the former RPRA General Manager, Peter Bryant,

to ascertain if he knows any further information. Mr Neville Walbridge (Site Agent for the former Portland liberation site) also knows a great deal about the Dicken medals.

The CEO has received a reply from Pigeon Pathways, in response to his letter asking for clarity about how the money will be used. The response received does not answer the specific questions raised – more transparency is required.

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

**C.7890 Any decision regarding Pigeon Pathways' request for funds is held in abeyance until the relevant information is received.**

## **6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE AGM**

Regarding new rule 110, it was raised that notifying the owner by second class post and giving the owner 48 hours to contact the finder of a stray bird does not work, given the current postal delays. The CEO advised that if the bird is wing-stamped in accordance with RPRA rules and there is a telephone number/email address for the owner on our system then they would be contacted by telephone/email rather than by letter. If a stray bird is reported by a non-fancier, the flying member is contacted by telephone rather than by post to save the delay. Sending a letter is always the last resort. The Club Secretary is also contacted if necessary.

## **7. MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS – TO BE CIRCULATED AT THE MEETING**

The Finance Manager presented the membership numbers below. The numbers have not changed since the Finance & General Purpose meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025. There are no regions with more than 1500 members. As per the balance sheet of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 11,742 paid memberships have been received at Head Office (excluding Young Fanciers). There may be some further 2025 subscriptions received with 2026 subscriptions.

CA – 510, DY – 809, DC – 312, EM – 1,269, IR – 1,373, LN – 1,205, NE – 1,452, NW – 723, SO – 811, SW – 676, WE – 1,161, WM – 1,314, WS – 127

This represents a reduction in membership numbers of 1873 on the previous year.

## **8. COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE**

CA attended a Countryside Alliance meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in London. He reported that attendance numbers were higher than normal and the Pest Control society was also represented. The CEO had previously provided an Update on the SPS Agreement Negotiations and EU Racing Pigeon Requirements, which CA read out to the meeting, and this was taken on board. CA spoke for about 7 minutes, seeking support for the Olympiad 2028, they said they would do everything they could do to help. It was a worthwhile meeting and important to attend; they are a body of people we need to be involved with in the future.

## 9. COUNCIL BUSINESS

### a. Finance & General Purpose, Clocks, Rings & Weather

- 1) Minutes of the meetings held on 11.12.25 and 15.12.25

Proposed by WM, seconded by DC, with 10 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM/IR/NE/NW/SO/WM/WS, 0 votes against and 1 abstention: SO, that:

**C.7891 The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record.**

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

**C.7892 The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025 are accepted as a true and accurate record.**

- 2) Matters arising from the Minutes of the meetings held on 11.12.25 and 15.12.25

Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 11.12.25

Page 43 – Whoever holds the Olympiad 2028 will have the obligation to host the FCI one loft race, but there is currently no one loft in this country that is FCI registered.

Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 15.12.25

The Chair stated that he was conscious of letters received from the NE and WM regions regarding the meeting held on 15.12.25 and considering that these letters would now be discussed (see 9 b., Correspondence).

- a. Email from the West Midlands Region dated 23.12.25 – Special meeting 15 December 2025

After discussion it was found that a vote had not been held at the region regarding the submission of the letter, and the letter was ruled out of order by the Chair.

- b. Letter from the North East Region received on 07.01.26 – Special meeting

Referring to the following proposition **C.7871**, page 34 of the Minutes of the meeting held on 31.10.25:

**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.**

In the opinion of the NE region there was no mention of the recognition of the NWHU nor of the removal of the ring levy in the above proposition. The region queried on which authority this was carried out and why the decision was not brought back to Council.

The CEO explained that Council had previously received a letter from the NWHU (20-2-24) giving a full account of their stray reporting system which they have in place. The NWHU letter requested that the ring levy be removed. The reason for the introduction of the ring

levy was due to their insufficient stray reporting system, and this letter was included in the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025 council agenda; however, the derecognition of the NWHU occurred before it could be discussed. Under the agreement concerning the boundaries of the NWHU, discussions regarding the ring levy would have been reopened. Therefore, the matter was brought forward for consideration under resolutions.

A meeting was held via zoom on 15<sup>th</sup> December, where 12 councilors attended, with 10 votes for and 2 against for each of the 3 propositions. DY mentioned that in the October meeting Council gave a mandate to the 3 officials to resolve the issues with the NWHU as best they could. The NE region maintained that, in their opinion, the 3 officials did not have the authority to remove the ring levy.

Proposed by DY, seconded by LN, with 9 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM/IR/LN/NW/SO/WM, 1 vote against: WS and 1 abstention: NE, that:

**C.7893 The letter was discussed at long length and noted.**

a. RPRa Website

Due to its age, the RPRa website will no longer take some updates. A request was made to the software developer to provide the cost of a full redesign of the existing website to make it as future proof as possible. This is estimated to cost around £20,000. Suggested improvements were also received from RPRa/BHW staff to aid best practices.

It was proposed that at the outset we would require the initial new updated website plus one or two extras as soon as possible.

The CEO summarised that the update to the existing website should have the ability to incorporate any add-ons. The RPRa and BHW websites and individual shops would retain their own identities in terms of user experience but would be hosted together on the RPRa website. The digital copy of the BHW also hosted on our website would eliminate the need for the third party software Page Suite and we would pay a one off fee for developers to create a similar experience. The new website will allow for future development and future growth. We will also explore the option of a subscription to pay for a foreign translation of the BHW.

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

**C.7894 Continue to investigate the new RPRa website**

3) Accounts – to be circulated at the meeting

Presented and discussed in the Annual General Meeting, Consideration of the 2024-2025 Balance Sheet.

4) Key Measures of Activity report/verbal – to be provided at the meeting

The Key Measures of Activity report was circulated at the meeting. Ms Emma Seare provided her verbal report as follows:

## **Racing Support**

### **Distances:**

Overall, distance requests have decreased slightly compared with last year, although monthly figures do vary. We saw a noticeable increase in December, mainly due to Mysoft setting up a number of clubs and federations. More members now have access to the TPRS programme, allowing them to obtain distances themselves. New liberation sites, particularly for Irish organisations where multiple clubs apply at once, can also cause monthly spikes.

There are 150 clubs that we can see actively using TPRS at present, but this may increase during the racing season.

### **Loft Locations:**

Loft location requests have reduced, with no full club re-mapping during 2024/25, likely reflecting the continued decline in overall membership.

## **Membership Support**

### **Transfers:**

Transfer forms are down on previous years, which we believe is largely due to the increase from six to ten birds per sheet. Automated transfers continue at a steady level, in line with previous years.

### **Ring Registrations:**

NWHU ring registrations have now ended following the recent council motion. However, foreign ring registrations continue to rise year on year, with the majority being Belgian registrations.

### **Ring Lists:**

As of this week, we have received 838 club ring orders and will receive a ring list for each of these.

So far we have received 482 ring lists and completed 472, meaning we are only a day behind incoming lists, compared with around four to six weeks at the same point in previous years. During 2024/25, we processed 989 club ring lists, plus the four larger lists from National organisations.

### **Dissolutions and Formations:**

Since the beginning of November 2025, we have completed 85 dissolutions removing 122 members, a significant reduction compared with 263 dissolutions during the same period last year.

Formations total stands at 28 since the beginning of November 2025 adding 45 members, which is in line with previous yearly figures.

### **Strays:**

Stray reports continue to follow a consistent trend across telephone, SMS, and the website. Overall, there has been a reduction of approximately 2,000 reports compared with the previous year.

### **Sales – Rings, Seals & Rubbers:**

Ring sales show a steady decline year on year in line with the decline of membership numbers but are still a main source of income.

Race rubber usage continues to decline by around 25 to 30 thousand per year, reflecting the increased use of ETS.

**Inbound Calls:**

Inbound calls have increased compared with the previous two years, reflecting the successful integration of BHW calls into the RPRA telephone system which receives all calls before redirecting them.

**Post and Communication:**

Postal volumes, particularly outgoing post, continue to reduce due to increased use of email. Where possible, all club ring lists are now scanned and returned electronically, resulting in substantial postage savings.

Thanks were given to Ms Emma Seare for her concise report.

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

**C.7895 The verbal report is accepted with thanks.**

5) Next Council meeting – 30th October 2026 – venue

In the interests of due diligence a quote was obtained from the Kegworth Hotel and Conference Centre, Packington Hill, Derby DE74 2DF to compare prices against the current hotel, the Leonardo Hotel, East Midlands Airport, Ashby Road, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2SH. Estimated costs for both hotels for the next Council meeting (30<sup>th</sup> October 2026) were presented, with costs for the Kegworth Hotel coming out slightly lower. Following a short discussion, it was agreed that due the favorable location of the hotel and its conference facilities that the next Council meeting is held at the Leonardo hotel.

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

**C.7896 The next Council meeting - 30<sup>th</sup> October 2026 is held at the Leonardo Hotel, East Midlands Airport, Ashby Road, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2SH.**

6) Correspondence

a. Letter from the Derbyshire & South Yorkshire Region dated 27.01.26 – CEO & Head Officer BHW

The Derbyshire & South Yorkshire Region wish to see a copy of the job descriptions for the role of RPRA CEO and the RPRA Head Officer for the British Homing World. The reasoning behind this request is based against the ongoing financial pressures facing the RPRA and the year-on-year reduction in the income to the RPRA. This is with a view to assist in evaluating possible future running cost reductions for the RPRA for the future.

CA advised that he was involved with the job description of the CEO, RPRA, which is a standard job description for the CEO. Vice-Presidents J Dodd and C O'Hare sat on the panel who selected and engaged C Sutton. CA added that he had no problem with the job descriptions being viewed but not generally released.

Proposed by WS, seconded by IR, with 8 votes for: CA/DC/EM/IR/NW/SO/WM/WS, 0 votes against and 3 abstentions: DY/LN/NE, that:

**C.7897 The letter from the Derbyshire & South Yorkshire Region was discussed and noted.**

7) AOB

At the Finance & General Purpose, Clocks, Rings & Weather meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, item 8, the FCI approved Unikon Race ETS system was approved for use, with an RPRA official to be trained in its use. The CEO and the President had a meeting with Unikon in Dortmund to discuss how the system would work within RPRA Rules. As within the RPRA rules home evaluation is not permitted, Unikon have produced a personal electronic user fob to take to marking as physical evidence, similar to taking a pocket clock back to the club with the base staying at the loft. The unique number of the fob would be shown on all pdfs. A strike report secure pdf would be presented to the Club Secretary and signed off by the fancier. RPRA rules will not permit times retrieved from the cloud, a strike report is mandatory.

**b. Emergency & Rules and Liberation Sites**

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

New Site Suggestions:

- Ackworth - EM region received a letter for a new site location currently being used by the Up North Combine and Durham Amalgamation. John Brook site agent has confirmed use of the site with a fee of £50 per vehicle. The site is 2 miles from Pontefract and currently a non-affiliated site.

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

**C.7898 The site at Ackworth is accepted and added to the list of official RPRA liberation sites.**

- Aldridge Airport Open Space – Discussed in Council, Matters Arising
- Worthing Rugby Club, Littlehampton, West Sussex – Discussed in Council, Matters Arising
- Oak Tree Animal Charity, Oak Tree Farm, Carlisle, CA4 8JA, 6 mins from M6 J42 – Discussed in Council, Matters Arising
- The Devils Porridge Museum, Easttriggs, DG12 6TF, 7 mins from Gretna Green A74(M)/M6 – Discussed in Council, Matters Arising
- Elms Farm Equestrian Centre, Frieston Heath Lane, Caythorpe, Lincs, NG32 3HD – It was confirmed that the site cost would be £35 per vehicle.

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

**C.7899 The site at Elms Farm is accepted and added to the list of official RPRA liberation sites.**

A.O.B.

- Forestry England sites - Holmsley (4237) and Stoney Cross (4239) - It was discussed and agreed to increase the liberation site fee to cover the cost of the insurance for these sites.

Proposed by EM, seconded by NE, with 9 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM/LN/NE/SO/WM/WS, 1 vote against: NW and 1 abstention: IR, that:

**C.7900 The site fee for Holmsley (4237) and Stoney Cross (4239) is amended to £30 plus admin fee per liberation.**

- Worcester (4214) – It was agreed that the liberation site fee would increase to £30 plus admin fee, the number of vehicles allowed would increase from 2 to 4.

2) Report from Convoyers and Race Controllers Meeting, Blackpool, 17.01.26 – prepared by Louise Powell

The CEO confirmed it was a positive meeting from all that attended with the biggest concern raised being when transport companies take federations and there is a dispute between who should be paying the liberation site fees. This was solved in Appendix M however we still receive issues with implementing this.

CA commented on Ray White from Scottish National Flying Club and his comments with regards to instances of wagons turning up on site which were not published on the RPRA/BHW. The CEO confirmed this is where federations decide to move race points during the weekend. NE commented that they have ample amount of time to phone up to make changes, even up to 4pm on Friday and in his experience the office staff has always sorted out any late minute changes swiftly and can't fault the service.

3) Correspondence

- a. Email from the West Midlands Region dated 23.12.25 – Special meeting 15 December 2025

Discussed in 9 a. – Matters Arising from the meeting held on 15.12.2025

- b. Letter from the North East Region received on 07.01.26 – Special meeting

Discussed in 9 a. – Matters Arising from the meeting held on 15.12.2025

- c. Email from the Derbyshire and South Yorkshire Region dated 10.01.26 – Driver Convoyer Proposition DY184

A discussion was held to amend Appendix C rule 18 and it was agreed that providing the sites provide permission for minors to be allowed and all insurances are in place that Appendix C be changed.

Proposed by CA, seconded by NE, with 9 votes for: CA/DC/DY/EM/IR/LN/NE/NW/WS, 0 votes against and 2 abstentions: SO/WM, that:

**C.7901 Amend appendix C to state Juniors under the age of 18 will not be permitted to hold a Convoyers licence. Or to travel on transporters or to accompany the convoyer/liberator and/or driver to the race point by any other means unless they are accompanied by their guardian, and are covered by the vehicle insurance and have their own public liability insurance to cover all activities whilst on the liberation site, subject to site specifications.**

d. Email from the North East Region dated 12.01.26 – Lib sites

It was discussed that the Plumpton racecourse has already been investigated and a quote of £700 received per event. It was agreed that the price quoted was too expensive to be used as a liberation site.

EM suggested a racecourse in Sussex called Fontwell Park which is privately owned and could cover the requested requirements. EM confirmed they will make further enquiries.

e. Email exchange between Racing Support and Plumpton Racecourse dated 13.01.26 – 30.01.26 – Possible Pigeon Liberations at Plumpton

Noted by Council and will communicate back to the racecourse.

4) AOB - None.

**c. Confederation of Long-Distance Racing Pigeon Unions of Great Britain & Ireland**

1) Minutes of the AGM and General Meeting held at Blackpool on 17.01.26

2) Matters arising

The CEO reported that quite a few people attended the meeting, Vice-President, L Blacklock confirmed that it was the best turnout in a number of years. The CEO added that this was the kind of forum where all Unions are talking together. The main topic was the letter from the NWHU and their application to join the Confederation.

During the AGM the balance sheet was considered and passed, the election of officers was held, the presentation of trophies was deferred until January 2027 as these are presented every 2 years. Mr David Higgins had repaired the box for the Len Lewis trophy and had done a wonderful job, and a letter of thanks had been sent to him.

During the General meeting, the new Unikon ETS system was discussed including the charge of a £60 activation fee. The CEO had advised the Confederation meeting that this was the business of a private company.

The CEO continued that a letter had been received by the Confederation from the NWHU applying for membership to the Confederation. The CEO has forwarded all the information regarding the NWHU rule change and their stray reporting system to all unions and a zoom meeting will be held at the end of March to discuss and vote. The CEO asked for Council's

feedback regarding the NWHU application for membership to the Confederation, to take to the meeting in March. It was raised that support for the application was part of the RPRA/NWHU deal.

WS expressed his concerns regarding the sale of NWHU rings in his area. CA stated that the RPRA are an FCI affiliated organisation (since 1947), under FCI rules the only rings we can accept are FCI rings, however dispensation is given to local unions.

### 3) Balance Sheet 2025

Noted by Council.

### 4) Correspondence

- a) Email from the WHPU dated 06.01.26 - Statement from Pigeon Electronic (Unikon) to Unikon Users – Update for all Associations 2026

Discussed above.

- b) NWHU Application received 16.01.26

Discussed above.

- c) Email from the CEO, RPRA to the Confederation of Long-Distance Racing Pigeon Unions of Great Britain & Ireland dated 20.01.26 – NWHU Application

Discussed above.

- d) Letter from the Confederation of Long-Distance Racing Pigeon Unions of Great Britain & Ireland to D. Higgins dated 03.02.26

Discussed above.

- e) Letter from the WHPU dated 04.02.26 – NWHU Application Confederation Rules

The letter from the WHPU asked if the RPRA are abiding by Confederation rules 11b and 11c, with regard to the Defaulted and Suspended Members of each Member Union. The CEO read out these rules, as follows:

(b) In cases of an individual fancier leaving one Union to join another, the fancier must produce, at the time of his joining the new Union, confirmation that he has paid all outstanding fees/dues to every organisation of which he was a member at the date of his leaving his old Union. In the event of an individual fancier not complying with this part of the rule, his proposed membership shall be suspended until such time as all outstanding fees have been paid. In addition, should a dispute involving a member wishing to change Unions, be on-going at the time of his wanting to leave his old Union, he shall not be entitled to membership of the New Union until such time as the dispute has been resolved with the Union he wishes to leave.

(c) All Unions will co-operate in the matter of defaulters at Shows or other such events, in particular defaulting stall-holders. Where a stall holder defaults in payment of site rental, his conduct will be referred to the Confederation secretary who, in turn, will notify all other Unions of this form of conduct.

The CEO added that these rules were written many years ago, it now requires all unions to sit around a table to accept the rules. The CEO will reply to the letter saying that the only way forward is for all unions to accept these rules.

f. Letter from the WHPU dated 04.02.26 – Confederation ETS Systems

The letter requests the RPRA confirm what current ETS Systems have been approved for use by the Confederation. This was previously taken on by the RPRA, to test new systems and approve for the Confederation. It was confirmed that new systems are approved for use by the RPRA as long as the FCI have passed them and they have been tested by SMITS technology, and providing they are operated within RPRA rules. After this it is up to each individual union.

d. AOB

Discussions during Matters Arising above appertains to correspondence received from the LN region – ‘Email from the London Region dated 05.02.26 – Unikon Council 2 26’ (Council General Correspondence and Verbal reports, item b).

LN outlined that the query from the London region was that although no one was happy with the £60 charge, on page 63 of the letter from Pigeon Electronics it states that ‘these changes help us keep things running smoothly’ and will ‘continue offering dependable support, updates and value for associations’. The London region would disagree that things are running smoothly and that they are being given value for money and quality service. Numerous clubs have paid their money and have not received the activation codes they have been promised. Continued complaints are being received. The London region would also like to know if Deister has pulled out of servicing clocks for all FCI members. If they have, are they being charged for a service? DY said that it was his understanding that Pigeon Electronics would do basic battery changes only, otherwise dispatch to Deister.

The London region believes that Deister should receive a letter from the RPRA outlining our concerns with the service from Pigeon Electronics. NE also confirmed communication issues with Pigeon Electronics and SO had received similar comments at his Region. The President said that he had spoken with Pigeon Electronic, who advised that they wait on the activation code from Deister.

LN read out a letter from the Secretary of the Weir club as an example of the issues being experienced.

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

**C.7902 Send a letter to Deister and to Pigeon Electronics from the RPRA Council to express Council’s concerns.**

#### **d. Olympiad & FCI Reports**

##### **1) 2026 Olympiad**

###### **a) Team Manager's Report – John Wheatcroft – verbal report**

Dortmund, Germany 2026 – The Olympiad Team Manager attended Dortmund, unfortunately he was unable to take any birds. He was pleased to be able to judge, and he attended the FCI meeting on Friday. Four new countries had joined, including Pakistan and America. 15 countries were represented although none from outside the European bloc. It was a well-organised show, busy on Saturday, quiet on Friday and Sunday.

###### **b) Delegate Report**

The minutes of the FCI Congress meeting held in Dortmund, Germany on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 are summarised as follows:

There is continued regulatory pressure across Europe regarding Avian Influenza. The €270,000 scientific study has been paused due to the cost and uncertain outcome. There is increasing recognition that pigeons are not primary spreaders of avian flu. EU-level political engagement is ongoing, as is exploration of vaccination pathways. Blackpool 2028 Olympiad is dependent on formal UK and EU veterinary guarantees regarding entry and re-entry of pigeons.

Regarding the Olympiad, there is ongoing legal proceedings with the International Olympic Committee regarding the use of the Olympic rings, a decision is pending. The Chinese Federation (CRPA) is inactive, the revenue loss contributing to the projected 2026 deficit. Liquidity is approximately 1.3 million euros; there is 1 million euros invested in low-risk funds. The 2026 deficit is predicted to be 50-60,000 euros (due to the loss of China income, legal and Olympiad costs). The 2024 accounts were approved. There is recommendation for a structured 3-5 year strategic financial plan.

There are reinforced Fair Play and transparency measures. Non-compliant one-loft races have been excluded, and a new Olympic one loft race category has been introduced. Anti-counterfeit ring systems are under development and governance amendments approved (address relocation, presidential eligibility reform, liquidation procedures). A proposal to allow multiple Brazilian federations was rejected.

Implications for the RPRA – written assurances from the UK government are essential for the Olympiad 2028, dual approval is required - UK import and EU re-entry. Contingency planning is likely if regulatory clarity is not secured by April. There is a continued emphasis on strict vaccination PMV, and separation from poultry and potential increased scrutiny on cross-border movements. A future FCI secondary ring coding system may affect national ring procedures, and possible administrative adjustments could be required.

Overall, the FCI remains stable and proactive but operates in a more complex, regulatory and financial environment. Veterinary legislation and cross-border movement remain the most critical issues for UK interests.

The donation by the RPRA to the Ukrainian fanciers still sits on the balance sheet whilst the territorial war continues but will help to reduce their membership liabilities at the FCI in the meantime. CA added that when the Ukraine war started, a donation was made via the RPRA of around £10,000. Pigeon racing has been continuing in the west of Ukraine and money is currently being spent on memberships and rings, etc. The FCI are holding donations in an account until the war is over and the money owed will be taken out and the remainder passed over.

The CEO had also received a letter from the Secretary of the FCI, asking for nominations for representatives for certain committees. CA suggested Mr Ian Taylor for representative of the Veterinary Committee.

The Olympiad Team Manager continued that there were only 4 sporting class entries for the Olympiad, but no standard birds. This could be due to concerns about birds being out of the country and quarantined. It was agreed that recognition for the 4 entries should be given, as the birds were unable to attend, such as an RPRA Certificate and medallion. The Olympiad Team Manager will send the names and ring numbers, and these will be presented at region meetings.

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

**C.7903 The 4 sporting class entries will be presented with an RPRA certificate and medallion in recognition of their qualification for the Olympiad 2026, to be presented by their Region.**

## 2) Olympiad 2028

CA advised that a meeting will be held at the FCI Directors Committee Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026 where a decision on the Olympiad 2028 will be made, or a backup decision be made.

## 3) Correspondence

- a. Letter from Minister for Animal Welfare and Biosecurity, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs dated 17.11.25 – 2028 FCI Olympiad

Noted by Council.

- b. Statement from CEO, RPRA dated 18.11.25 - Update on SPS Agreement Negotiations and EU Racing Pigeon Requirements

Noted by Council.

- c. Email from FCI Secretary dated 31.12.25 – FCI Congress 6/2/2026

Noted by Council.

- d. Email from the CEO, RPRA to the SPS Programme Office dated 03.02.26 – FCI Olympiad

Noted by Council.

4) Invitations

- a) Email from the Portugese Racing Pigeon Federation dated 03.03.26 – Invitation to send a national team to the FCI Grand Prix, Mira 2026

A team was not sent last year. A team of up to 30 pigeons is required, at 30 euros per pigeon. It was discussed whether a school/Young Fancier representing each region could be nominated to enter? Shipping is from a central point and costs around £35 per pigeon, if enough pigeons are entered (excluding the cost to travel to the central point). It was agreed due to cost and logistics to decline the invitation for this year.

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

**C.7904 The invitation to send a national team to the FCI Grand Prix, Mira 2026 is declined.**

5) AOB – None.

**e. Performance Enhancing Drugs**

- 1) PED update – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM – List of drug tests taken in 2025 – circulated 31.10.25
- 2) PED Budget – agreed 31.10.25
  - a) Number of tests to be taken in 2026

The Olympiad Team Manager, J Wheatcroft, reported that he had performed 30 tests in 2025. All had been cooperative, and all tests had been returned as negative. People are aware that the tests are being done and this is a deterrent.

3) Correspondence – None.

4) AOB

At the Olympiad J Wheatcroft spoke with Henk De Weerd (Chair, FCI Drug Testing and Vet Committee), who suggested that we should concentrate on certain products more widely used than others, and will send a report. He also suggested sending a dummy test to the laboratory that we use to ensure they are picking things up. He has information on products being used that he will provide to us and that we can dummy test at our laboratory. The

CEO asked J Wheatcroft if he could ask Mr De Weerd about a live vaccine which drops onto the pigeon's tongue, to improve performance.

There was a discussion over whether the laboratory is covering in depth enough, however J Wheatcroft advised that results from other countries are very similar to ours. We may need to test the product to evaluate whether it is performance enhancing, rather than testing the laboratory. We require a sample of the product. J Wheatcroft will contact Mr De Weerd for further information.

The Chair thanked J Wheatcroft for his verbal report.

#### **f. Buildings**

The Buildings budget was confirmed as for 2025 at £2,000.

- 1) Unit 35-41 Upper Mills Trading Estate, Stonehouse, Stroud GL10 2BJ
  - a. Requirements completed
    - i. Air Conditioning 6 monthly maintenance service
  - b. Current requirements
    - i. Toilet leak – It was discussed and agreed to decommission the one toilet this issue affects as there are 3 other working toilets.
    - ii. Repair to guttering/missing roof tile – It was discussed that this is an ongoing issue due to difficulties finding a roofer for the job required. EM advised a local fancier who may know of somebody who could be able to assist in the local area.
  - c. Future requirements
    - i. Emergency lighting completion
    - ii. First floor kitchen cupboard
- 2) AOB – None.

#### **g. Future of the Sport**

- 1) One Loft report

Discussed in Council – Matters Arising.

- 2) FOS Accounts – distributed at the meeting

Presented in the Annual General Meeting, Consideration of the 2024-2025 Balance Sheet.

- 3) Correspondence

a. Letter from the CEO, RPRA to J. Waters dated 03.11.25 – Pigeon Pathways Proposal  
Discussed in Council – Matters Arising

- b. Email from the North East Region dated 11.01.26 – RPRA One Loft

Discussed in Council – Matters Arising

- c. Email from J. Waters, on behalf of Pigeon Pathways dated 09.01.26 – Response for Future of Sport

Discussed in Council – Matters Arising

- 4) AOB – None.

## **10. COUNCIL GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE AND VERBAL REPORTS**

- a. Email from the South West Region dated 04.02.26 – SW Region

A discussion was held regarding how to move forward with assisting the South West region with their need of representation for their members. It was agreed to contact all clubs within the South West region and organise an open meeting to discuss directly with the members in that region the potential to elect new representatives.

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

**C.7905 The CEO to contact Sue Thompson, SW Region Secretary, to arrange an open meeting regarding the future of the South West region.**

- b. Email from the London Region dated 05.02.26 – Unikon Council 2 26

Discussed in 9 c. – Matters Arising.

## **11. INVITATIONS RECEIVED – None.**

## **12. AOB – None.**

The Chair thanked all for their attendance and wished a good racing season to all regions.

*Meeting closed: 7:00pm*