



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

HALF YEARLY MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 25 June 2009

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Morfudd M. Jones (Denbighshire)
Councillor Jim Criddle (Caerphilly)
Councillor David Rees (Pembrokeshire)
Councillor Alwyn Gruffudd (Gwynedd)
Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones (Conwy)
Councillor Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)
Councillor A. D. Hampton (Vale of Glamorgan)

Chief Librarians

Mr Alan Watkin
Mr Steve Hardman

Welsh Assembly Government

Mr Leighton James

ESTYN

Mrs Ann Keane

National Library of Wales

Mr R. Arwel Jones

The Welsh Academi

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones
Dr Brynley F. Roberts

Council's Panels

Mr David Barker

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams
Mr Ioan Kidd
Dr Rhidian Griffiths

Staff

Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones (Director)
 Mr Elwyn Jones (Head of Administration and Public Relations)
 Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Manager of the Distribution Centre)
 Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department)
 Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance, Business and IT)
 Mr Phil Davies (Head of Information Services)
 Mr Richard Owen (Senior Grants Officer)
 Mr Dyfed Evans
 Mrs Delyth Humphreys
 Ms Lila Piette
 Mrs Karina Wyn Dafis
 Miss Delyth G. Morgans

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eurfryn Davies; Keith Morgan; Nigel Steele-Mortimer; Paul Williams, Ron Page; Messrs. Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; Alun Treharne; Rhys Bebb Jones; Neil Bennett; William Howells; Ms Gillian Evans; Ms Ann Jones.

Staff: Ms Helgard Krause (Head of Sales and Marketing); Mr Sion Ilar (Senior Design Officer); Mrs Marian B. Hughes (Senior Editorial Officer).

1 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He explained that this would be Gwerfyl Pierce Jones's last meeting as Director, and that the Executive Committee had, that morning, confirmed Elwyn Jones as her successor. Warm wishes were conveyed to Elwyn as he prepares to take up his new responsibilities in the autumn.

Elwyn Jones thanked the members for their support, stating that it was a great honour to accept the post and to follow in the footsteps of Gwerfyl Pierce Jones and the late Alun Creunant Davies.

- 1.2 A number of new members were welcomed: Mr Leighton James (Welsh Assembly Government); Mr Steve Hardman (Chief Librarian of Swansea) and Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones (Conwy), all of whom were attending their first meeting of the Council. [After the meeting had ended, it was noted that Mr Dafydd John Pritchard was also attending his first meeting, representing the Academi.]
- 1.3 Mr Arwel Jones was congratulated on his engagement.
- 1.4 Mr Ioan Kidd was congratulated on the publication of his latest novel.
- 1.5 Mr Andrew Green was congratulated on being made an honorary member of the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod.
- 1.6 Best wishes were conveyed to two members of staff on their recent marriages – Tanwen Haf (Design Department) and Emma Lloyd Davies (Grants Department).
- 1.7 Thanks were expressed to Dr Dewi Davies for his further donation of £1,000 to the Books Council, noting that his donations up to the end of March totalled £22,410 and that the interest on the capital paid for prizes awarded at the annual book competitions for children.

- 1.8 The Vice-Chair (Mr Gareth Davies Jones) extended the Council's congratulations to Professor M. Wynn Thomas on his appointment to the Emyr Humphreys Chair at Swansea University.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 27 November 2008, were confirmed. One correction was noted, namely the fact that Councillor A. D. Hampton was present at the meeting.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Tegwyn Jones, Chair of the Friends, noted that the current membership is c. 400 and that a membership drive would be launched in the near future. A new membership form had been prepared and copies would be distributed to all current members in the hope that they would be able to persuade friends and colleagues to join.

He also said that the Friends had presented a gift to Emyr Humphreys – one of the Friends' honorary presidents – on the occasion of his 90th birthday in April. To note the occasion, Professor M. Wynn Thomas and Gwerfyl Pierce Jones had visited Emyr Humphreys at his home to present him with a framed quotation by Saunders Lewis, beautifully crafted in calligraphy. A meeting had also been held at the National Library to celebrate Emyr Humphreys's contribution to the literature of Wales.

Professor M. Wynn Thomas added that the calligraphy presented to Emyr Humphreys was the work of Tegwyn Jones himself. He thanked him warmly for his contribution.

3.2 The National Year of Reading 2008

The Director referred to the successful Conference organised to bring the National Year of Reading to a close, and also to the two positive evaluation reports which testified to the success of the Year: one of them was an internal report commissioned by the Books Council, and the other an external report commissioned by the Assembly Government. The Assembly Government's Education Department had accepted the need to build on the excellent work achieved during the year and had earmarked the sum of £177,000 for that purpose in 2009/10.

The Director thanked everyone who had contributed to the success of the Year, and mentioned the library sector in particular. She also thanked Delyth Humphreys, the Coordinator of the National Year of Reading, and Elwyn Jones for their untiring work in the context of this project.

4 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

4.1 Additional grants

The Director reported on the grants position, referring particularly to the sum of £177,000 received from the Assembly Government's Education Department towards continuing the activities of World Book Day and the National Year of Reading.

5 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

5.1 Sales and Marketing

Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, reported that sales during the Christmas period has been very encouraging, but that the economic climate had adversely affected the book trade at the beginning of the current year.

He noted that the Council had co-operated with Portmeirion bookshop in Cardiff Bay to provide a book stall at the Cardiff Urdd Eisteddfod, and had cooperated once again with Pemberton's bookshop during the Hay Festival. It was pleasing to note that both Festivals had been very successful and that sales had increased.

The Council had once again this year co-operated with the Academi in the arrangements for the Book of the Year awards, ensuring that the titles on the long list were displayed in bookshops.

The Council had also arranged that a selection of books from Wales were for sale at the Smithsonian Festival in Washington, in co-operation with the Festival shop.

It was reported that arrangements were in hand for the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and the Eisteddfod, and that the Council had already produced *Llyfrau'r Haf*, a supplement of Welsh-language books, which would be distributed through the *papurau bro* network.

5.2 Information Services

Phil Davies, Head of the Council's Information Department, reported that about 60% of the orders reaching the Distribution Centre – to the value of some £3 million gross – were now sent by electronic means. It was emphasised that this was a great help to the work of the Centre, and that it was a significant development over the past few years.

He further noted that the Council was in the process of redesigning its corporate website and that the new version would include some additional elements developed during the National Year of Reading.

5.3 Children's Books

Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, presented a report on the work of the Department, referring to some specific projects.

- Services to Schools

Details were given of the success of the schools service during the previous financial year. The primary officers and the secondary officer had achieved their annual targets once again; the additional funds offered to schools by Basic Skills Wales had helped to ensure that the targets were reached.

- Book Competitions

It was noted that the book competitions had been held the previous week, with more teams than every before reaching the National Rounds this year in each of the competitions. The National Round of the English-language competition had been held at Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon.

During the general discussion which ensued, Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd voiced his concern regarding the future of Gwynedd County Council's mobile library service, and asked whether the Books Council could help in any way. The Director stated that she would be happy to write a letter to the County Council emphasising the importance of the service, and she offered to contact the Chief Librarian to ask for more information.

6 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director congratulated Elwyn Jones on his appointment and wished him all the very best in his new post as head of the organisation. She felt certain that the Books Council would go from strength to strength under his leadership.

During her speech, she took the opportunity to look back on some of the achievements during her period as Director. She referred specifically to three developments which she considered to be of the greatest significance:

- direct funding from the Assembly Government (since 2002)
- transferring the Arts Council's responsibility for publishing to the Books Council, thereby giving the Council responsibility for distributing grants for English-language publications in addition to those in Welsh (since 2003)
- the huge developments in technology, especially those pertaining to information systems and the processing of orders (to the trade and to individuals)

She ended by thanking all the members of the Council, particularly the Chair and the Chief Officers, for their support and trust. She also thanked the staff for their valued cooperation and unstinting support over the years.

The Chair thanked the Director for her fitting words and for her sterling service to the Council over the years. The members stood to applaud in the traditional manner.