

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 21 June 2007

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman); Messrs Gareth Davies Jones; D. Geraint Lewis; Tegwyn Jones; Brynley F. Roberts; David Barker; Lawrence Rawsthorne; W. Gwyn Williams; Mrs Ann Keane; Mrs Siân E. Jones; Councillor R. Arwel Pierce; Councillor Christopher Bithell.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Mri Elwyn Jones; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Richard Owen; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams; Mrs Eleri Huws.

APOLOGIES: Messrs. W. Gwyn Jones; P. Mark Williams; Rhys Bebb Jones; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; Alun P. Thomas; Milwyn Jarman, QC; Ioan Kidd; R. Arwel Jones; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Councillor Mrs Dorothy M. J. James; Councillor Canon Steve Morgan; Councillor Nigel J. Gibbs; Councillor Robert H. Poole; Councillor Margaret E. Davies; Ms Helgard Krause.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and extended a special welcome to David Barker, who was attending for the first time, in his role as Chairman of the Children's Books Panel.
- 1.2 The Chairman paid tribute to Catrin Puw Davies who had died suddenly on 14 April. Catrin had been a member of the Executive Committee and the Council, and a dedicated member of the Publishing Grants Panel. She had made a substantial contribution to the Books Council over many years. The Chairman referred to a letter from Catrin's husband which spoke of her commitment to the Council and the profound respect she had for its work.
- 1.3 The Committee wished Mr D. Geraint Lewis well as he approached retirement from his post as Assistant Director of Cultural Services for Ceredigion County Council. He was congratulated on the publication of his two recent titles: *Y Llyfr Enwau – Enwau'r Wlad* and *Geiriau Gorfoledd a Galar*.
- 1.4 The Committee also conveyed its best wishes to Mr Iolo Walters, the WJEC representative on the Executive Committee and the Council, on the occasion of his retirement.
- 1.5 Dr Kirsti Bohata was congratulated on her appointment as a lecturer in the English Department at the University of Wales Swansea; the Committee wished Eleri Huws a happy retirement; best wishes were conveyed to Sion Ilar and his wife, who had recently adopted two young boys; Jane Hopkins was welcomed back to work

following surgery; and Heather Bastow, too, was welcomed back after a long period of illness.

- 1.6 Vice-Chairman Mr Gareth Davies Jones offered sincere congratulations to Professor Wynn Thomas on receiving an OBE in the Queen's honours list.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 29 November 2006, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Grants 2007/08

A paper had been tabled summarising the position regarding grants for 2007/08.

3.2 Correspondence concerning the late Alun Creunant Davies

The Chairman reported that the Chief Officers' Panel recommended using the bequest of £5,000 to commission a book on the history of the Books Council, for publication in 2011, its half-centenary year. The family had given its assent to the proposal. Dr Brynley Roberts suggested that the proposed volume should also present something of the history of the Castell Brychan building. The Committee agreed that this would be appropriate.

3.3 Welsh Language Board: Welsh Language Scheme

Elwyn Jones reported that the Council had, as required, undertaken a public consultation and that the Language Scheme had been formally approved on 20 February 2007. He added that the Assembly Government had consulted the Council regarding its intention to implement an order under the 1993 Welsh Language Act naming the Council a public body with respect to the Act. Following a positive response from the Council, this matter was still in progress.

3.4 The Government of Wales Act 2006

A paper had been circulated, explaining the implications of the Wales Government Act 2006. The following points were noted:

The Chairman stated that the new Minister, Mr Carwyn Jones, was responsible for Education and Culture: a portfolio much wider than had previously been the case. Changes were expected, too, with regard to civil servants, and Mark Williams had been appointed to a new post in the Assembly Government. The Director thanked Mark for his help and advice on all occasions and wished him well in his new post.

4 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2007/08

The Director presented the Plan to members and expanded on its most important aspects. Confirmation had been received within the previous few days that the new Minister had approved the document without amendment.

5 SALES AND MARKETING

5.1 Kewley and Richardson Report

It was noted that this report still consumed much of the officers' time and that the Sales and Marketing Department was going through a period of considerable change, aimed at improving and developing its services.

It was reported that the task of negotiating sales contracts with the main publishers had now been completed and that 20 contracts had been signed.

The Director noted that some work remained to be done with smaller publishers: it was hoped that this would be finished during the next few months.

Dr Brynley Roberts congratulated the officers on successfully negotiating these contracts. His remarks were endorsed by a number of the members, who were aware of the background to the discussions.

5.2 Distribution Centre

The Centre Manager presented a full report on the latest sales figures. Sales for the last year, to 31 March 2007, had been especially encouraging at £4,890,000 gross (£3,260,000 net): an increase of 10.56% over the previous year.

He added that figures for the first two months of the current year showed a further increase of 2.38%.

6 INFORMATION SERVICES

Mr Phil Davies reported that the creation of a separate Information Services unit had provided the opportunity to establish a small team that could concentrate on collecting and recording information about books from Wales, and supplying it to both the book trade and the general public. The Information department is also responsible for the Council's various websites.

He thanked the publishers for their cooperation in supplying information electronically about their books, including contents pages, author biographies, blurbs and cover designs. There are now details of 27,000 titles in the database, which offers booksellers, librarians and the public a reliable and invaluable resource.

It was reported that one of the most significant developments during the year had been the setting up of an electronic ordering system for the team of sales representatives who visit shops and for the schools officers. This had lightened their burden considerably. It was noted that *gwales/libraries* had now been established and that librarians were receiving training that would allow them to make full use of the website. The support of the Assembly Government, through CyMAL, had been indispensable in this regard.

It was reported that the *gwales.com* website, established for use by individuals, was proving a great success with the public. The site had had more than 15 million hits during the previous year and book orders had been received from all parts of the world.

The Chairman thanked Mr Phil Davies and his team for their work and stressed the importance of providing accurate and up-to-date information about books from Wales.

7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 22 March 2007
- 7.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 15–16 March 2007
- 7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 15–16 February 2007
- 7.4 Children's Books Panel, 4 December 2006

8 STAFFING MATTERS

- 8.1 It was reported that the following appointments had been made since the previous meeting.

Marian Beech Hughes – Senior Editorial Officer
Delyth Ceridwen Jenkins – South Wales sales representative (maternity cover)

- 8.2 The Committee confirmed that Matthew C. Howard's salary be set at grade 26–28, together with a general bonus.

9 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

Mr Elwyn Jones noted that lunch would be provided for members in Reception and that the Half-yearly Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm