



# CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

## ***HALF-YEARLY MEETING***

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth  
DATE: 30 June 2017  
PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

### Local Authorities

Councillor Lynford Thomas (Ceredigion)  
Councillor John T. Davies (Pembrokeshire)  
Councillor Julian Simmonds (Caerphilly)  
Councillor Ernie C. Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil)

### The Welsh Government

Dr Hywel Owen – observer only

### Welsh Chief Librarians

Mr Richard Bellinger (Bridgend)

### National Library of Wales

Mrs Linda Tomos

### Friends of the Books Council

Ms Bethan Gwanas

### The Council's Panels

Mrs Lorna Herbert Egan (Chair of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel)

### Vice-Chair

Mrs Rona Aldrich

### Honorary Secretary

Professor Jane Aaron

### Honorary Treasurer

Mr Chris Hywel Macey

### Honorary Counsellor

Gwydion Hughes

### Co-opted Members

Dr Cathryn Charnell-White

### Staff

Ms Helgard Krause (Chief Executive)  
Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Centre)  
Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publishing Grants Department)  
Ms Helena O'Sullivan (Head of the Sales and Marketing Department)  
Dr Huw Meirion Edwards (Head of the Editorial Department)

Mr Sion Ilar (Head of the Design Department)  
 Mrs Helen Jones (Head of the Children's Books and  
 Reading Promotion Department)  
 Mr R. Arwel Jones  
 Miss Lowri E. Davies  
 Miss Clare Davies  
 Ms Anwen Pierce

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ian B. Roberts; Hugh Jones; Sonia Reynolds; Alan Jones; Clive Meredith; Lis Burnett; Huw Thomas; Messrs. Alun P. Thomas; Gareth Griffiths; Dyfrig Ellis; Dafydd John Pritchard; Robat Arwyn; Professor Daniel G. Williams; Mrs Kathryn Parry; Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis; Ms Marian Delyth; Mrs Emma Davies (Head of the Finance Department).

## 1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to those who were attending for the first time: Helgard Krause, the Council's Chief Executive, who had been in post since February; Councillor Lynford Thomas (Ceredigion); Councillor John T. Davies (Pembrokeshire); Councillor Julian Simmonds (Caerphilly), Bethan Gwanas (on behalf of the Friends); Helen Jones (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department); Clare Davies (Grants Officer – English-language – to cover maternity leave); Lowri Davies (Information Officer). Councillor Ernie Galsworthy (Merthyr Tydfil) was welcomed back following the recent elections.
- 1.2 Condolences were expressed with the following on their recent losses: Mr R. Arwel Jones (Grants Officer – Welsh-language) on losing two aunts early in the year; Miss Megan Jones (Administrative Assistant in the Finance Department) on losing an aunt in February; Mr Arwyn Roderick (former Head of the Finance Department) on losing his mother at the beginning of June; Mrs Ann Davies (Receptionist) on losing her mother-in-law in mid-June.
- 1.3 The following were congratulated:
  - Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publication Grants Department) who will be going on maternity leave at the beginning of September.
  - Professor Daniel G. Williams on the publication of *Wales Bird: Aderyn Rhiannon* – a book examining the influence of Dylan Thomas as an international icon.
  - Councillor Lynford Thomas on being elected Chair of Ceredigion County Council for the current year.
  - Councillor Huw Thomas on being selected as the new leader of Cardiff City Council following the recent elections.
  - Professor M. Wynn Thomas on the recent publication of a collection of his essays in the book *All that is Wales*.
- 1.4 Best wishes were conveyed to Emma Davies (Head of the Finance Department) who is currently absent on sick leave.
- 1.5 Members wished Mr T. Hywel James (Chief Librarian of Gwynedd) all the best on his retirement after serving for 36 years as a Librarian in Gwynedd, and he was thanked for his contribution and interest in the Council's work over the years. Two members of the Council's staff will be retiring over the summer, namely Wendy Roberts (Schools Officer) after almost 20 years' service, and Ann Davies (Receptionist) after 11 years' service. Both were thanked for their contribution and sterling work for the Books Council over the years.

- 1.6 Warm thanks were paid to Angharad and Mererid, daughters of the late Roger and Catrin Pw Davies, for their contribution in memory of their parents given as sponsorship towards the Book Day lecture, delivered this year by Peter Florence.
- 1.7 Thanks were paid to the councillors who had been members of the Executive Committee and the Council over the years, and who have now retired from their duties.
- 1.8 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to absent themselves from the meeting as necessary.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Annual Meeting, held on 2 December 2016, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Operational Plan for 2017/18

Helgard Krause, the Chief Executive, reported that a copy of the Operational Plan had been distributed to members with the papers; she was pleased to report that the Plan had been approved by Ken Skates, the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure.

### 3.2 The Welsh Government: Financial Award Letter

In the wake of completing the Executive Plan, the Council had received the Financial Award Letter for the financial year 2017/18. The relevant letter regarding the reading promotion schemes had also been received.

### 3.3 Friends of the Books Council

Bethan Gwanas, Vice-chair of the Friends, reported that the latest pack was currently being prepared and would be distributed to members over the coming weeks; it contained information about the publishing industry, and a copy of the latest issue of the newsletter *The Friend/Y Cyfaill*.

Bethan referred to a reception for the Friends to be held on the Books Council stand at the Anglesey National Eisteddfod at 6.00 pm on Wednesday, 9 August; a warm welcome was extended to all. It is intended to try to gain new members, in addition to providing an opportunity for existing members to meet up.

A meeting of the Friends' steering committee will be held in the near future. It was reported that the Friends have a Twitter account and a Facebook account which members can follow and respond to.

### 3.4 The Welsh Government

The Chief Executive reported that she and the Chair had held a constructive meeting in June with Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, as part of the Review. It was also noted that Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education, had been invited to visit the Books Council, and that the visit will go ahead at the end of August.

The Chief Executive also noted her intention to contact members of the Culture Committee in order to meet them and introduce herself to them, thus continuing the connection established by her predecessor, Elwyn Jones.

A positive six-monthly meeting had been held with Ken Skates, and it was noted that he had been willing to listen to ideas.

### 3.5 Independent Review of Support for Publishing and Literature in Wales

The Chair referred to the above long-awaited Review and the recommendations it would produce. It was noted that a copy of the Panel's recommendations had been distributed with the papers.

The Chair reported that a short paper had been prepared and presented to the Executive Committee at the morning meeting; they had approved it unanimously and recommended it for the Council's approval. The paper was distributed to the members present, and comments were invited.

Linda Tomos noted that the National Library warmly welcomed the idea as it would provide more opportunities for co-operation.

Members of the Council gave the Council their full consent to present the document to Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure.

## 4 **CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Chair reported that the Executive Committee had, earlier in the day, approved the following changes to the Constitution. They were formally presented to the Council, and approved.

### Addition to the current clause

IV(d) MEMBERSHIP: Representatives

Add 'observer status only on the Council'

Estyn

Amended clause to read:

Estyn – observer status only on the Council

## 5 **ELECTION OF THE COUNCIL'S CHIEF OFFICERS 2017–2020**

- 5.1 Chair  
Professor M. Wynn Thomas was re-elected.
- 5.2 Vice-Chair  
Mrs Rona Aldrich was re-elected.
- 5.3 Honorary Secretary  
Professor Jane Aaron was re-elected.
- 5.4 Honorary Treasurer  
Mr Chris H. Macey was re-elected.
- 5.5 Honorary Counsellor  
Mr Gwydion Hughes was re-elected.
- 5.6 Honorary Solicitor  
Mr Alun P. Thomas was re-elected.

## 6 ELECTION OF CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES 2017–2020

The following four persons were elected to serve as Custodian Trustees for the period 2017–2020:

Professor M. Wynn Thomas  
Mrs Rona Aldrich  
Mr Chris H. Macey  
Professor Jane Aaron

## 7 MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### 7.1 Chief Librarians

With the agreement of the Society of Chief Librarians, it was agreed to re-elect Mr Richard Bellinger (Bridgend) and Mr Gareth Griffiths (Ceredigion) to serve on the Executive Committee.

### 7.2 Co-opted Members for the Council and the Executive Committee (up to 4)

It was agreed to re-elect the Rev. Lyn Léwis Dafis and Dr Cathryn Charnell-White, and to ask the Chief Officers to consider other names for presentation to members at their next meeting.

### 7.3 Others

In accordance with the Constitution, the Chair stated that a comprehensive list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee, the Sub-committees and the Panels would be presented to the Annual Meeting.

## 8 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 8.1 Grants for 2017/18

The Chief Executive presented a paper outlining the grants for the 2017/18 financial year; she referred to the cut of £30,000 in the Capital Grant, and to the small increase in the Revenue Support Grant.

## 9 PRESENTATIONS

### 9.1 Developments at the Distribution Centre

Arwel Evans, Head of the Distribution Centre, took us on an illustrated journey through the latest developments at the Centre, and projects that are currently under way. He noted that these schemes had been made possible by means of the capital funding received from the Welsh Government.

He reported that the work on sealing the roof and walls of the Centre had been completed by June 2016, and a photograph showed the vast difference between the original roof and the new roof 35 years later.

He referred to the projects undertaken to reduce running costs at the Centre – distributing parcels, packaging materials, and the lack of space. Following discussions with the distribution company, the Centre had succeeded in negotiating a cost reduction of 12% per box, thus saving approximately £7,000 per annum.

With the cost of packaging material rising substantially, various options were considered; the method eventually chosen was a machine that blows air into a roll of plastic to form air bags. The saving made was substantial – approximately 50% – and as the Centre spent some £15,000 on bubble wrap per annum, the benefits are evident to all.

One of the biggest projects undertaken in the past six months was dealing with the lack of space at the Centre. Arwel noted that, since his early days in the post over three years ago, it was evident that the lack of space caused problems for everyone – from publishers to booksellers – and placed an additional burden on the staff at the Centre.

He referred to two specific problems: in 2014 there was too much stock in the Centre – a total of 657,019 books. These were a combination of slow-moving stock, and stock that was not moving at all. Following discussions with publishers and self-publishers, the stock had reduced by May of this year to 514,680 (a reduction of 150,000 books). But even then, more space was needed in order to manage without the storage unit that had been rented since 2008. The first steps were taken to design and produce costings for an extension to the mezzanine floor within the Centre – and it was pleasing to report that the Welsh Government had given financial support for this work.

The process of lifting the steel girders into place was explained, and as the stock was moved to clear the space not a single book was damaged during the work. The floor area now measures 140 square metres, and is slowly being filled.

Rona Aldrich, the Vice-Chair, said that she and Jane Aaron, the Honorary Secretary, had visited the Centre; she noted how efficiently the work there was conducted and how greatly indebted we are to the Welsh Government for providing the funding to enable the Council to move forward with confidence.

- 9.2 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department: The Latest Schemes  
Helen Jones, Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department, gave a lively presentation noting the variety of activities arranged by the Department; she emphasized that their success depended heavily on the support and co-operation of a large number of partners.

One of those partners was Arriva Trains Wales. Helen noted that the Welsh Government had earmarked 2017 as the Year of Legends. To correspond with this theme, a 'Tales on the Rails' journey was arranged early in April in partnership with Arriva. The author Meinir Wyn Edwards and pupils from Ysgol Bro Hyddgen and Ysgol Tan y Castell had gone on a train journey between Machynlleth and Harlech. Sessions were held with Meinir Wyn Edwards at the MOMA Centre in Machynlleth and at Harlech castle. Video clips were shown – these were made possible because Elin Fflur and a crew from the television programme *Heno* had joined them on the journey. Pupils also succeeded in completing the 'Mannequin Challenge' on the journey, as part of the feast at Harlech castle. These clips are now available to view on YouTube.

The Chair thanked the staff for their lively and interesting presentations that showed the enormous variety in the Council's work and the specialist services provided to support the industry.