



**Minutes of Part One of the Election Board Meeting of
The British Horse Society
held on Tuesday, 19 July 2011 at 10.30 a.m.
in the Lecture Theatre, BHS Offices, Abbey Park, Kenilworth**

Present:	Dr P Wadey - Chairman Mrs C Blackford FCMA - Treasurer Mrs C Broad FBHS - Vice Chairman
Board Members in Attendance:	Mrs C Aldridge, Mrs S Bucks, Mr J Buxton, Mr D Kerry, Mr R Milton, Mrs M Norrie, Mrs L Petersen, Miss V Whiteman
Staff in Attendance:	Mr GM Cory - Chief Executive Miss GS Evans - Director of Finance & Deputy CE Mrs A Field - Director of Human Resources Mrs A Westwood - Senior Executive
Voting Members:	Mrs J Eedle-Wells Mrs H Evans Mr R Sullivan-Tailyour Mrs S Sullivan-Tailyour
Apologies:	Mr D Kear BHSI

1 INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed members and explained how the meeting would be conducted.

This was the second Election Board Meeting held since members decided in 2009 to discontinue automatic Annual General Meetings. However, the Board believed it essential that voting members be invited to hear the results of the election and ask questions of the Board. The first part of the Election Board Meeting was, therefore, open to all voting members of the BHS.

2 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The Chief Executive announced that Mrs Carole Broad FBHS, Mrs Sarah Bucks, Mr Donald Kear BHSI and Mr David Kerry had been elected Trustees of the Society. Miss Margot Tiffany BHSI had not been re-elected.

Mr Kear had sent his apologies for the meeting, but looked forward to future meetings of the Board.

The Chief Executive said that, although a very low number of people had voted, this was 11% more than previous years. This was the first time that members had had the opportunity to vote electronically and two thirds of those who had voted had done so online. This saved the BHS money but also appeared to have encouraged more people to vote and there were fewer spoiled papers. With even more advertising for the 2012 election, it was hoped there would be a greater turnout.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF 2010

The Chairman then gave members a summary of the Society's progress over the first year of his term. Membership was up at a time when other organisations were losing members. Income was also up and Trustees would be considering shortly whether to increase the capitation allowance to counties and regions. More income meant there was more to spend on the Society's objectives. The BHS was now in its new building for which several awards had been won. The Society had also recently been re-accredited as an Investor in People, and sickness absence amongst staff was at its lowest level of sickness for many years. He was pleased the Society was in good shape.

The Chairman then invited questions from members.

4 QUESTIONS

Mrs Sylvia Sullivan-Tailyour expressed surprise at the letter which had been sent by the Chairman to County Chairmen and Treasurers. Whilst not disagreeing with the contents, she was shocked at the tone which she felt was patronising and insulting. She and her husband agreed that volunteers should have a limited time in office. However, by enforcing the Byelaws in a short timescale, the Society risked losing a great number of experienced Chairmen and Treasurers who were doing excellent work in the counties.

Mrs Sullivan-Tailyour believed that the Byelaws did not put a limit on the number of years a Treasurer could serve, and that Byelaws 14.1 and 17 made the position relating to Chairmen unclear.

Volunteers worked hard and gave up their time and money and really believed in the Society. Whilst in the South West they had some young people on committees, these people did not have the time to take on the responsibility of Chairman or Treasurer. The South West had just recruited their 10,000th member and this had been achieved by volunteers as well as the Development Officer in the region. She did not feel volunteers had been treated well.

The Chairman said the Society did value volunteers and he believed passionately that they were important to the BHS which could not achieve all it did without their help and knowledge. Trustees were volunteers and many were members also of county or regional committees. However, there were no time limits on how long people could serve as volunteers or on committees. The only limits were on the length of time people could serve in the office of Chairman or Treasurer. He said long service awards were made each year and those volunteers who had served more than 20 years were invited to Saddlers Hall in London to collect their awards. Later in the day Trustees would be looking at the nominations for the 2011 awards across the range of the Society's work, including the Award of Merit which was given for service over a period of many years.

The Chairman was sorry that the letter had caused unintentional distress, but he said it was accurate. He would be putting a proposal to Trustees relating to terms of office for Treasurers. The Byelaws were there to ensure things ran smoothly. The BHS was looking at Regional and County Chairman, as the leaders in the community, to ensure the Society was following the right tracks and the Byelaws were there to protect the Society. However, recognising the value of volunteers, Trustees had agreed to allow committees an extra year to find new Chairmen where necessary, so there could be a smooth transition. When exceptional long-standing Chairmen stood down, their service could be acknowledged by appointing them Chairmen Emeritus, the first of which was Mr Robert Sullivan-Tailour.

The Chief Executive said Byelaws 14.1 and 17 needed to be read in tandem, and this year was the first time that any committees had come to the Board to seek approval for the Chairmen staying on. He agreed the Byelaws were confusing and these were currently being rewritten. Trustees were currently considering moving away from legalistic and prescriptive Byelaws to an Operational Framework which described the standards which should be met. Staff had been working on the new version of the Byelaws for some time and these would be sent out to volunteers in the regions for consultation before being finalised.

Miss Helen Evans said the Buckinghamshire Committee had not been happy with the latest lack of communication and consultation with people in the regions; there was a big feeling of "them and us". Many people on the ground had worked passionately for the BHS for many years and they didn't always feel there was communication from the people who ran the organisation. There were badly thought-out ideas, such as the rehoming scheme, which welfare volunteers would have counselled against from the outset; there was a Volunteers Group with no volunteers on it; the Diamond Jubilee ride at Windsor; and now the Byelaws. Committees were not against change, but it was not possible to automatically go out and pick a volunteer to be Chairman. Miss Evans said the Buckinghamshire Committee had no confidence in the Chief Executive.

The Chairman said that in his experience there were complaints about a lack of communication at all levels in all organisations regardless of what was done. In the British Horse Society, the structure of the county and regional committees enabled information to flow to and from headquarters. Meetings were held with the Regional Chairman twice a year and the minutes went to Trustees. Similarly with advisory committees on the specialist subjects. Some people also wrote directly to the Chairman and so had received responses.

Trustees were not asking Chairmen to stop volunteering, and they weren't bringing in new rules; the existing rules had been in place for years. However, they did need to ensure that the Byelaws were being applied uniformly. The issue had been raised with the Development Officers eighteen months ago, and Regional Chairman had been reminded in April. Nothing had changed except Trustees had become aware that the Byelaws were not being followed and this was causing a gap in the governance of the Society.

The Chairman disagreed with Miss Evans' view concerning the Chief Executive. The Chairman had every confidence in his actions and abilities, and cited examples of the progress the Society had made since he had been in post, for example, membership had increased dramatically, income had increased and more work on the charitable objects had been achieved. The Chief Executive was following the Board's policy.

The Chief Executive explained the channels of communication through British Horse, the monthly report and enews. Miss Evans explained her heavy involvement in the Jamie Gray Amersham case when, as the BHS Welfare Officer, she had asked for support from the Chief Executive. She had received no support from the BHS for the two years of the trial when she had been giving evidence. At the Volunteers Conference, Trustees had said they would provide more support for volunteers, and that Welfare Officers should not become stressed. She hoped that no Welfare Officer would ever be put in the same position.

The question of volunteer support had been strongly made by Mr Tony Roth-Brown, Southern Regional Chairman, who had suggested more than one instance where support of volunteers was needed, and the Chief Executive was working with the Director of HR to see how more support could be offered particularly in stressful situations. The Society was moving forward on this, he said.

Mrs Sullivan-Tailyour hoped the Society was listening to what volunteers were saying. They were not listened to over the rehoming scheme, and she hoped that Trustees would attend working committee meetings in the regions so they were more in touch with the grass roots of the BHS.

There were no further questions, so the Chairman thanked members for attending. The points they had raised would be discussed by the Board in due course.

The Chief Executive would arrange to visit Buckinghamshire and Somerset Committees at the first opportunity to have working meetings with committee members.

The meeting ended at 11.20 am.

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P. W. Sadey
20 Sep 11.