Summary Minutes of the Ryeland Flock Book Society Council Meeting held at Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ on Saturday 12th April 2025 at 10.30am.

Present: Steve Bradbury (**SB**), Gillian Dixon (**GD**), John Donovan (**JD**), Jill Gray (**JG**), Stephen Hipps (**SH**), Philip Holmes (**PH**), Andy McVicar (**AMcV**), Sue McVicar (**SMcV**), David Mitchell (**DM**), Jane Pinches (JP), Sue Quigley (**SQ**), John Reed (**JR**), Alison Robinson (**AR**), Chris Smyth (**CS**), Zoe Unwin (**ZU**), Michele Varmen (**MV**), Jonathan Webb (**JW**), Jack Williams (**JkW**), Paula Wills (**PW**).

In Attendance: Stephen Ramsden (**SR**), Dot Tyne (**DT**).

JR in the Chair

JR opened the meeting by expressing his shock and sadness at the recent passing of RFBS Chair.
All observed a two-minute silence.

1) Apologies & Welcome: JR welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies had been received from the President

2) Appointment of Officers

2.1) Chair: Nominations were invited for the position of Chair. Only one nomination was received.
Motion: to appoint **JG** as Chair.
Proposed: **AMcV** Seconded: **JD**

JG was appointed to the role.

JG chaired the remainder of the meeting.

2.2) Vice Chair: Nominations were invited for the position of Vice Chair. Only one nomination was received.
Motion: to appoint **MV** as Vice Chair.
Proposed: **SH** Seconded: **AR**

MV appointed to the role.

2.3) Deputy Vice Chair: Nominations were invited for the position of Deputy Vice Chair. Only one nomination was received.
Motion: to appoint Stephen Hipps as Deputy Vice Chair.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **SQ**.

SH appointed to the role.

2.4) Treasurer: nominations were invited for the post of Treasurer. Only one nomination was received.
Motion: to appoint **DT** as RFBS Treasurer.
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **SH**

DT appointed to the role.

3) Approval of Minutes of the Council meeting of 09.01.25

3.1) Full Minutes: Copies of the minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting.
Motion: to approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 09.01.25.
Proposed: **AMcV** Seconded: **GD**

All in Favour **Carried**

3.2) Summary Minutes: Copies of the summary minutes were circulated in advance of the meeting.
Motion: to approve the summary minutes of the Council meeting held on 09.01.25.
Proposed: **SMcV** Seconded: **CS**

All in Favour **Carried**

4) Matters Arising from minutes: AR noted that she had lost some access to members' posts in the RFBS Facebook group after being blocked by other individuals. Being blocked meant that she was unable to see posts within the group made by those individuals. This only applied to blocked individuals, not that that were "unfriended." It was agreed that the RFBS group should be an open forum for members discussion and that everyone should be able to see what was posted by everyone else. **DT** to post from the Society account, that members should not be blocking others so that all members can fully participate in the group.

5) Financial

5.1) Financial Report: 01.01.25 – 31.03.25: The financial report for the first quarter was circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no specific comments.

5.2) Audit year ending 31.12.24: The draft audited accounts had only been received from the accountant late the previous day. **DT** asked those present to be aware that the documents were unreviewed and should not be considered the final version. She also noted that the profit/loss figure was much better than budgeted for primarily because Committees and Regions had significant unspent budgets.
JkW noted that the costs associated with the 2024 judging day had not been deducted from the Belle Ross Fund. **DT** would draw this to the attention of the accountant.
It was agreed that the accounts would be presented to the AGM as unapproved by Council. The finalised documents could be approved at the next meeting.

5.3) Confirmation of bank signatories:
Motion: to approve the new officers (see agenda item 2) as signatories on all RFBS bank accounts. **JD** to remain as a signatory in the interim.
Proposed: **DM** Seconded: **SQ**

All in Favour **Carried**

5.4) Cambridge & Counties Bond Account: DT informed the meeting that the C&C bond would mature this summer. A decision was needed regarding the future of the investment. The closing balance was expected to be iro £72,400. Various options were considered, and the following motion was proposed.
Motion: to reinvest the matured funds in another two-year bond with C&C bank.
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **MV**

Carried

6) Appointments:

6.1) Auditors 2024-25: JD suggested that we arrange a review meeting with accountants once the accounts are finalised. **MV** asked if we should look at other options to make sure we are getting a good service at a fair price. **JD** felt that John F Harvey did a very thorough job and that the fee charged was not excessive.
Motion: to confirm John F Harvey as accountants subject to review.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **MV**

Carried

6.2) Auctioneers 2024: McCartneys was the auctioneers usually used for the main sale at Ludlow. **JW** asked if **DT** had sent a letter to McCartneys as agreed at the last meeting re comments made at the beginning of the Ryeland Rubies sale. She confirmed that this was the only outstanding item from the last meeting. Contact would be made with McCartneys.
Motion: to confirm McCartneys as auctioneers for our main sale.
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **AMcV**

In Favour: 18 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1 **Carried**

Motion: to appoint H&H as auctioneers for the RFBS Northern Sale.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **PH**

Carried

6.3) Disciplinary Committee: JkW asked if the committee was still required. **JD** confirmed that it was – just because it hadn't been used for many years was not a reason for not having it. **MV** asked about its purpose. **JD** stated it was for situations where Council couldn't, wouldn't or didn't want to investigate.
Motion: to re-appoint the committee subject to their approval.
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **JR**

Carried

6.4) Genetics Sub-Committee: JD confirmed that all the current members were willing to continue.
Motion: to re-appoint the committee for the next 12 months.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **GD**

Carried

6.5) Office/Working Sub-Committee:
Motion: to appoint **JD**, **DT**, **SR**, **JG**, **SQ** and **MV** to the Office/Admin Sub-Committee.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **DM**

Carried

6.6) Fleece and Yarn Sub-Committee:
Motion: to appoint **SMcV** and the remainder of the existing members to the Fleece & Yarn Sub-Committee.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **JP**

Carried

6.7) Merchandise Sub-Committee:
Motion: to re-appoint the Merchandise Sub-Committee
Proposed: **SMcV** Seconded: **GD**

Carried

6.8) Literature Sub-Committee:
Motion: to appoint **SR** and **GD** to the Literature Sub-Committee.
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **SQ**

Carried

6.9) Youth Development Sub-Committee:
Motion: to appoint **JG**, **ZU**, **SB** and **AMcV** and the other current members to the Youth Development Sub Committee.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **SMcV**

Carried

7) Membership: DT informed the meeting of current paid up membership numbers. They were at approximately 50% of last year's total. The figure only referred to those that had paid in full. There were quite a lot of memberships that were partially paid.

Membership Types	**2024**	**2025 to date**
Total inc. second flocks	1264	673
Total Members	1087	587
Flock Owning	802	428
Family	168	80
Junior	69	48
Partnership	30	18
Non-Flock	8	4
Life	10	10
Flocks	**2024**	
Ryelands	541	306
Coloured Ryelands	698	350

DT also asked the meeting about activating an online membership application form. It was all set up and ready to go and had been tested. It had been designed so the initial fees for each registration type included the prefix fees. Obviously, this makes the headline fee look a bit more expensive but should improve clarity.

Motion: to approve the activation of an online application form.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **AMcV**
Carried

8) **Late Registration Applications:** Details of late registration applications were circulated in advance of the meeting.
Motion: to approve the late registrations applications received.
Proposed: **SMcV** Seconded: **DM**
Carried

9) Correspondence:

9.1) Email from the SRG (see 10.1.1): A letter had been received on behalf of Scottish members who were concerned over potential impacts of Bluetongue restrictions on access to the sale at Carlisle at the end of August. There was a concern that cross-border movement of animals might be prohibited. **CS** confirmed that this was purely speculation at this time. **JkW** suggested that RFBS should consider a contingency, to be proactive rather than reactive. **SB** said that the farming press was currently suggesting that the Bluetongue zone would cover the whole of mainland UK by the end of the summer in which case there would be no movement restrictions.
Motion: to reply to stating that RFBS would monitor the situation but if the Scottish members wished to put a contingency in place, RFBS would be supportive if it were required.
Proposed: **AMcV** Seconded: **SQ**

Carried

9.2) Email from UKTag: Copies of the correspondence were circulated in advance of the meeting. There was a brief discussion on the request to supply information publicity materials for livestock event in the USA.
Motion: to make breeders aware of the offer so they could take it up if they wished, but RFBS itself would not take up the offer.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **SM**
Carried

9.3) Prefix transfer request:
Motion: to approve the request to transfer the ColdCroft Flock to a new owne.
Proposed**: JD** Seconded**: AMcV**
Carried

10) Sales

10.1) Bluetongue: See 9.1

10.2) Ludlow: DT asked if the meeting could confirm the entry fees for the 2025 sale. Last year, they had been £5 for females and £10 for males. All were happy for the fees to remain unchanged.
Other items considered were as follows:

- Confirmation that no members **should** assist in the veterinary inspections. **DT** to confirm arrangements with Jonathan Steele.
- Blocks on the lorry wash – **JW** agreed to move these.
- Photographer – **MV** asked if a photographer could be appointed this year. **ZU** suggested asking Tom Redmayne or Douglas Stainton. Ruth Rees was also suggested. **DT** to arrange. CRC and RC agreed to split and pay for photography costs for the two sales from their budgets.

10.3) Carlisle: Arrangements discussed included the following:

- Contacting H&H to arrange a larger area for the show classes ahead of the sale. Last year's space had been unsatisfactory.
- It was agreed that the same vet as last year be approached as the mileage costs associated with the Ludlow vet travelling to Carlisle were prohibitive.
- To arrange a photographer for the Carlisle sale.

10.4) Third Sale: A summary document was circulated in advance of the meeting. **ZU** outlined two primary options, an in-lamb sale with some lambs included or a spring sale (ewes with lambs at foot) but was concerned with the latter option as ewes often look poor when rearing, but also that all the lambs offered would be ram lambs. The primary date being considered was the first Saturday in December which would clash with the "Ruby" sale. **DT** read out an email from the breeders involved with the Ruby sale. It was clear that their sale would go ahead again in 2025 and although they were willing to consider including some additional breeders, it would not be open to all and subject to the stock being of suitable quality. **SQ** was uncomfortable that this was not inclusive enough and that RFBS needed to make sure all members had sale options. **AR** noted that breeder production sales were common in other breeds. **SR** felt it might be preferable to opt for a venue further away from Worcester – it would open the sale to a different audience and be less confrontational. **Chair** stated that in the first instance it was simply necessary to agree whether another RFBS sale should be held or not.

Motion: to hold an official RFBS in-lamb ewe sale.
Proposed**: JkW** Seconded**: SQ**

In Favour: 6 **Against:** 0 **Abstentions:** 12 **Carried**

ZU was not sure that the vote really constituted support. **DT** confirmed that the motion was carried.

Motion: to hold the in-lamb sale at Shrewsbury livestock market.
Proposed: **SQ** Seconded: **JP**

In Favour: 13 **Against**: 0 **Abstentions**: 5 **Carried**

Potential dates were considered. **DT** to contact the auctioneers at Shrewsbury to establish dates option, primarily considering 13.12.25, 29.11.25, 22.11.25. Council to be kept informed of progress with dates to be formally approved at the next Council meeting.

11) AGM

11.1) AGM 2025: DT reported that the arrangements were in hand and the only issue related to the accounts as discussed earlier in the meeting.

11.2) AGM Survey: DT circulated a document detailing the results of the member survey about attendance at the AGM. **JD** confirmed there was no legal obligation to hold an AGM, but it does give members an opportunity to ask questions. It was suggested that combining the AGM with a President's dinner, award presentation etc might be a way forward. It was agreed to add this to the AGM for July.

12) Publicity & Promotions: A proposal for the post of publicity officer, prepared by **JkW** was circulated in advance of the meeting. JR felt there was a lot of content in the "job description" and was sceptical as to whether anyone would do that amount of work for an "honorarium." **JD** noted that using the term "honorarium" was tricky from a tax point of view and with regard to employment status. He also noted that it ran contrary to the principle of volunteered contribution on which the Society was based. **Chair** noted that attendance at events was included on the duties but questioned how stand fees, travel and accommodation would be funded. **SH** felt it was fine in theory but noted that the members already did a pretty good job of promoting the Society already and that if you were going to pay someone, you wouldn't get much for £1500. **MV** felt that the regions did a decent job with publicity already.

Motion: to reject the proposal to appoint a publicity office for the RFBS
Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **MV**

Carried

13) Office Software/IT: DT asked to raise a number of questions. They were issues that she had been discussing with the former Chair, but now felt it was appropriate to ask Council as a whole.

- Software: Microsoft Office was discontinuing Publisher, which was used for newsletters, flock books, adverts, etc. Permission sought to purchase a suitable alternative with an estimated cost of iro £150.
  Motion: to approve the purchase of suitable software with an approximate budge of £150.
  Proposed: **JD** Seconded: **JR**
  Carried

- An invitation had been received to attend an event for Breed Society Secretaries, hosted by the National Sheep Association. The programme from the day included information on disease issues, bluetongue included. **DT** felt it would be useful to attend and asked Council to consider covering travel costs.
  Motion: to authorise the cost of travel to the Breed Society event on 7th May.
  Proposed: **AMcV** Seconded: **ZU** **Carried**

  DT to report back on the day at the next meeting.

- Online Document storage: Currently all documents are stored on an external hard drive with a back up drive that is updated quarterly at Council meetings, which **DT** currently didn't have access to. **DT** suggested it would be timely to move to online document storage. RFBS has access to 1TB online space in OneDrive as part of Office 365 subscription and additional storage can be purchased if needed in the future. Council was happy for **DT** to proceed.

- Replacement laptop: Current laptop is 5 years old and is beginning to show its age, with some functions running slowly with crashes and freezes are becoming more frequent. There was up to £900 included in the budget (approved in January) for this under office supplies. **DT** asked if Council would authorise her to organise a replacement. **JkW** expressed the view that **DT** should be providing her own equipment.
  Motion: to approve **DT** to purchase a replacement laptop for RFBS use.
  Proposed: **AMcV** Seconded: **MV**
  Carried

14) Scottish Review: CS believed after 10 years of regional committees; it would be positive if the Scottish members could be encouraged to bring their breeder's group under the wing of RFBS. He had hoped that there would have been some progress over time, but it was disappointing that no nominations had been received in the most recent round of regional elections. **JkW** asked if RFBS should write to the Scottish Ryeland Group to ask if they would join the RFBS as a region – there was no harm in asking.
Motion: to write to the Scottish Ryeland Group to invite them to join RFBS as an official Regional Committee.
Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **SH**
Carried

15) Coloured Ryeland Committee Report: A copy of the CRC report was circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no questions.

16) Ryeland Committee Report: A copy of the RC report was circulated in advance of the meeting. There were no questions.

17) Sub-Committee Reports:

17.1) Genetics Sub Committee Report: A report had been circulated.

17.2) Fleece, Yarn Sub-Committee Report: DT read the report which had only been sent the previous evening. A copy would be circulated with the minutes.

17.2.1) Craft Competition 2025: CS noted that the 2024 results were late being circulated and that it would be preferable if they could be sent out more quickly for 2026.

17.2.2) Wool Project update: SH & SR updated the meeting on a lack of progress with the duvet project. However, another opportunity had presented itself with an order for 1000kg of Ryeland fleece from "World of Wool. BWMB were prepared to facilitate by collecting and collating and grading the fleece. **SH** asked if RFBS would be prepared to underwrite the "premium" if for some reason the additional funds were not forthcoming. **SR**

noted that the timing was difficult as breeders would be clipping very soon and breeders would need to be made aware of the requirements for the fleeces to be good enough to receive the premium price.

Motion: to underwrite the project to a sum of £800 if the fleece received did not meet the required specification.

Proposed: **CS** Seconded: **JW**

Carried

17.3) Office & Admin Sub-Committee: There was nothing to report.

17.4) Merchandising Sub-Committee Report: A report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

17.5) Literature Subcommittee Report: A report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

17.6) Youth Development: A report had been circulated for consideration. The committee asked Council to consider if the new Young Person's award could be named the Carol Bateman Young Person of the Year Award. Carol was such an advocate for Youth Development and that was in evidence in her last meeting in March. It was her idea to set up the Young Handler competition that has run for several years. She loved judging the Young handler classes but more importantly she made an impression on every young member of the Society she met. The Committee felt it would be an honour to have this award dedicated to her.

Motion: to confirm that the new Young Person's Award be known as the Carol Bateman Young Person of the Year award and to approve a budget of £600 for the purchase of a suitable trophy.

Proposed: **ZU** Seconded: **DM**

Carried

17.7) Judging Selection Review: A paper from **SH** had been circulated. He pointed out that the sheep committees were aiming to nominate judges a year in advance of the shows concerned. **JkW** asked if a judging sub-committee was required. It was felt that that should not be necessary if **ZU** and **AMcV** can work together to get a consistent list.

18) Regional Committee Reports

18.1) Northern England: AR reported that the new committee had met, and a Chair had been appointed, with **PH** as Secretary and herself as Council Rep. Two events were being planned – attendance at NSA North Sheep and a farm walk/demo day on 22nd June.

18.2) Yorkshire: A report had been submitted and **Chair** confirmed that everything was proceeding nicely.

18.3) North Wales & Mercia: A report had been received.

18.3.1) Late nominations: two nominations for the NW & M committee had been received shortly after the closing date. The committee asked permission to accept these nominations as their committee was very short of members.

Motion: to approve the co-option of two pate applicants to the NW & M Regional Committee.

Proposed: **MV** Seconded: **SQ**

Carried

18.4) Hereford & the Marches: A report had been submitted. **Chair** asked for the specific information about the member comments about registrations and other office processes. It was suggested that the Office/Admin SC could look at registration processes and turnaround times. **MV** noted that H & TM was able to get good response from their members while she really struggled in her region. There were also updates regarding the National Shaw at Tenbury.

18.5) Mid, South and West Wales: SB updated the meeting on the recent changes to the set up of the regional committee. H & TM region had decided not to support the lamb show at Kington this year so MWS Wales region would take it forward as one of their regional events.

18.6) South-West England: PW updated the meeting to confirm that there were nine members on their committee and not ten as per the report. It was agreed that the tenth individual could be co-opted if the correct paperwork was submitted to the office.

17) Date of meetings for the next 12 months.

Motion: to approve 5th July, 18th October, 10th Jan 2026 and 18th April as the dates of meetings for the next 12 months and to continue in the same venue.
Proposed: **SH** Seconded: **GD**

Carried

19) Any Other Business - Note that no voting is to take place and that if members have important AOB then they must submit it for inclusion on the agenda.

19.1) **CS** asked why the number of genotyping tests carried out had fallen so low. **JD** responded that it was simply a lack of demand.

19.2) **JW** asked when the flock books were likely to be completed. **DT** replied that it was likely to be at least a month.

19.3) **JkW** asked if Council could be kept more informed about new members joining Council.

Chair thanked all for attending. Meeting closed at 3pm.