

**Minutes of the Cross Party Assembly Group for the Horse
Held in Conference Room 24 Ty Hywel
On Tuesday 30 June 2015 at 6pm**

Present:

Angela Burns AM (Chairman)
Stuart Burns (Support Staff Angela Burns)
Janet Finch-Saunders AM (Vice Chairman)
Lee Hackett (BHS Director of Equine Policy)
Jenny MacGregor (SWHP)
Rachel Evans (Director Wales CA)
Tony Evans (WHW)
Rick Lewis (South Wales Police)
Alan Pearce (Equine Transport)
Phillip York (SWHP)
Elaine Griffiths (BHS Welfare Wales)
Jan Roche (Secretariat)
Colin Thomas (Hill Pony Imp Society)
Helen Manns (British Driving Society)
ED Gummery (WPCS)

Apologies:

Nic De Brauwere (Redwings)
Mark Weston (BHS Director of Access)
Graham Capper (Equine Consultant)
Maureen Lloyd (STAGBI)
Huw Rhys Thomas (NFU)
Lee Jones (BCBC)
Inspector Rowan Moore (SWP)
J Staley (Commons)
William Jenkins (NFU Cymru)

1. Angela Burns welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received and noted.
3. **New Equine Identification Legislation:** Lee Hackett gave an update on the current situation regarding the new Equine ID Legislation coming in from 2016 under European law – the process of which was very much still on-going. There will be changes to the way passports are issued along with a new equine database. Scotland

may potentially have their own database but there were no current plans to date for similar in Wales. There was also discussion regarding retrospective micro chipping as some other European states had adopted this action already. Further clarification would be available in 3 to 4 weeks. Rachel Evans said she would write to DEFRA on behalf of CA to ask for information on developments and Lee Hackett will keep a watching brief on behalf of the Group.

4. **Commons Strategy and Updates:** Angela Burns thanked Phillip York and Stuart Burns for the preparation and research they had put in. As there was only 10 months left for the term of this Welsh Government there would not now be any time to effect change before April 2016. The Indigenous Pony Inquiry would not now go ahead either despite the best efforts of the Group. The equine welfare situation on the commons was deteriorating further – there were more large cobs interbreeding and graphic photographic evidence had been recorded.

There were hundreds of equines on one common alone with little or no grazing and an abundance of stallions breeding indiscriminately creating more abandoned horses each year. Foals were being attacked by these entires and mares were being injured as being pursued by so many. Disease and starvation were rife. Equine charities were all at saturation level. This situation was unique in Wales as it was on such a large scale.

The true semi feral Welsh Mountain Pony was disappearing as a result. A clear focus was needed and the group needed to put a proposal for a call for action by the Government firstly as a short term and immediate action to contain further overbreeding and suffering. Colin Thomas said that many Hill Improvement Society members had not turned stallions out this year – he also suggested a possible cull as one solution. Phillip York said that any possibility of such action could not involve healthy equines. On the other side landowners and commoners have to be responsible as well to act on the problem. Phillip York had researched other areas of the UK – Dartmoor, New Forest etc – they all hold an autumn gather with vet assessments.

Agreement by all was needed to form a management plan for the semi ferals. It was generally agreed that the derogation plan was not working as too many were flouting the agreement – a shame for the genuine breeders.

Helen Manns felt that stallion restriction/licensing needed to be re visited.

Rachel Evans said that local pockets on the hills do gather and have management plans that work well albeit on a small scale.

Ellie Griffiths suggested a manager needed on each common. Stuart Burns said this was a possible solution as was a commoners association on each common to manage effectively. There were also potential hurdles to overcome.

Rick Lewis said from a police perspective if an animal was in distress then a vet was called immediately but ID could always be a problem.

Phillip York said commons should be cleared once a year as all legitimate graziers will remove their animals and the ones left would be abandoned as a rule.

This would have to be implemented working with the commoners and police support which Rick Lewis said could be arranged via local officers.

In the interim there was scope to extend the contraception programme implemented here by SWHP and which had been piloted in other areas of Wales and was proving very positive. SWHP had worked together with some commons associations in Wales and to date had vaccinated a number of ponies at their own cost. Phillip York explained that each animal was photographed and a full description logged prior to the contraceptive being given. This was a 2 to 5 year project and did not mean the animal would necessarily become infertile. Again management of commons was a key issue. Colin Thomas also raised the point of SSSI's on some commons – this would have a bearing on management too.

Angela Burns in summing up requested that every group member consider their most important action points around these issues and submit by email to the secretariat Jan Roche within the next 4 to 6 weeks so that a final document can be put together from the Cross Party Group for the Horse via Angela Burns the Chair and with the agreement of the Group to the Welsh Government as a matter of urgency to carry out the work needed.

5. AOB – Lee Hackett extended thanks to the Group – following the work involved in the Welsh legislation for the Control of Horses (Wales) Bill England had now followed suit and the Bill had been passed there.