VN Council election:
vote online, by text or by post

- Three candidates standing for two places – see inside for biographies and manifestos
- Voting closes at 5pm on Friday, 27 April 2012
Mrs Elizabeth Figg
REVN
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Proposers: Jane Cottrell, Alexandra Hunt

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
I have worked for O’Gorman Slater Main & Partners in Newbury, Berkshire since 2003. I joined the practice after gaining a Higher National Diploma in equine science at the University of the West of England and some time travelling in Africa, New Zealand and Australia. In 2006 I qualified as an EVN and took over as head equine nurse in the September. During my time at the practice I have completed my A1 Assessors Certificate and am now an “ILM” clinical coach.

We are a large mixed referral practice and whilst I enjoy all aspects of my job my main interest lies in equine surgery and competition injuries. I also enjoy the training of new nurses and watching them grow into competent and valued members of the team.

Outside of work I ride & compete my two horses, love walking the dogs and making cakes!

I am a member of British Eventing, the British Horse Society and the British Equine Veterinary Association.

I am married to Nathan, a climber. We share our house with our two dogs Mouse and Baxter and their muddy paw prints!

CANDIDATE MANIFESTO
In a time of change I believe it is important for veterinary nurses and their professional status to be recognised. Nurses are the backbone of veterinary practice and relied upon to deliver the highest standard of care. Both small animal and equine nursing registration must continue to enable a high standard of knowledge and care to be maintained.

Nurses must stand their ground and believe in their ability. Schedule III procedures mean greater responsibility and the chance for nurses to be legally answerable for their actions.

The new diploma VN qualification has started and initial teething problems resolved. I feel current students are gaining a greater depth in knowledge through continued assessment and examination. I would like to see a greater ability for nurses post qualification to further their studies and so become a greater asset to practices.

Although I have an equine bias, I work in a mixed practice. I am aware of the day to day politics in both small animal and equine practice. The small animal side of practices has been well represented on the VN council. I believe now is a valuable time for equine nurses to be represented on the VN council. To work together with the small animal nurses, raising standards across the board and raising awareness within the public sector, to the benefit of the veterinary nursing profession.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
I qualified as a RANA in 1983 after spending my training years in a small animal practice in Cheshire and then progressed to a Head Nurse position in Lancashire.

I took part time teaching positions anywhere that I could get experience and throughout my teaching career I have kept up to date in practice, although my passion has always been seeing students achieve to their full potential.

My position at Myerscough College has been varied and I finally progressed through the ranks to become a Head of Department and to see Veterinary Nursing and Farriery stand alone as a department.

I am responsible for 28 members of staff and in excess of 500 VN students ranging from ANA to Dip AVN, HE and Equine VN and Farriers ranging from Pre farriers to BSc – an interesting mix of students!

I hold a Masters degree in Education; my thesis identified how traditionally trained veterinary nurses embrace online courses, and I have recently completed my Managers as Coach award.

I have been encouraged to stand again for VN Council by colleagues and RVNs who believe that education is vital to improve standards.

CANDIDATE MANIFESTO
My manifesto is quite simply one of increasing the empowerment of veterinary nurses, protecting their title and encouraging their personal and professional development. I have witnessed monumental changes in veterinary nursing, especially with regard to the public perception of what a veterinary nurse is.

We are at an exciting, challenging time as we are emerging as a profession in our own right. It is essential that VNAs are made aware of the significance of autonomy and self regulation to enhance professional status.

When I qualified the opportunities for personal and professional development were nonexistent and I have relentlessly strived to promote opportunities for all veterinary nurses and students to have the opportunity to enhance their status and nursing expertise.

I have been at the forefront of the development of HE opportunities for both new students and qualified veterinary nurses. I have been involved in providing the opportunity for qualified veterinary nurses to attain the RCVS Advanced Diploma in Veterinary Nursing; I have supported the ANA and conventional small animal and equine veterinary nursing students to achieve their goals with the Level 3 Diploma.

I have a passionate commitment to veterinary nursing and the provision of educational opportunities for all including those returning to the profession following a career break.

As a VN Council member I have represented the nursing profession on Legislation, CPD, Level 3 Diploma training award working parties, and at present hold the role of Vice Chair and finance officer.

We must maintain high standards of nursing at all levels and the way to inspire students and qualified nurses is to lead by example in the educational establishments and to set achievable standards that our students aspire to meet.

I sincerely hope that you will provide me with the opportunity to continue to serve you, the veterinary nursing profession on the Veterinary Nursing Council.

Mrs Katherine Kissick
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Proposers: Rachael Rolfe, Catherine Rose

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
In June 2000, I qualified from the Institut Bonaparte in Paris as “Assistant Spécialisé Vétérinaire, the French Veterinary Nurse. “Seeing practice” at the Kelperland Veterinary Centre in Maidenhead, I grasped the opportunity of a VN vacancy in this practice in July 2000.

In October 2000, I secured a position at the RSPCA Putney Animal Hospital in London. In 2003, following my admission onto the List of Veterinary Nurses, I decided to continue my career in England.


Currently working for Vets-Now Bournemouth, I alternate emergency work and OU studies in Business, finding the time for regular tennis sessions and long walks on the beaches with our dogs.

Keen skier, I favour winter ski-holidays, enjoying the South Coast of England in the warmer months.

CANDIDATE MANIFESTO
I first discovered the British veterinary field in 2000. As an “overseas” qualified VN, from the very start, I have been really impressed by the general set-up of the profession in the UK. When asked why I have chosen to stay in England and pursue my career as a VN, I often answer that “here, VNs have ample opportunities to fulfil their potentials, widen their horizons and develop. And they are expected to perform in accordance to the high level of their training and qualifications too”.

Undoubtedly, the RCVS as regulatory body has shaped the profession. But the VNs themselves are in the centre of all major achievements we can now reflect on. 2007 marked a milestone with the adoption of the Register. The status of RVNs and its requirements emphasise our commitments to higher standards, in the eyes of the profession and the general public.

After 50 years of nursing, we continue to face many challenges. In response to the many changes within our social, economic and political environment, constant evolution and adaptation are necessary.

Working toward the protection of the VN/RVN title appears crucial. It would re-enforce and raise our profile, projecting an even stronger image of what a VN or RVN stands for. Issues surrounding RVNs’ training are also important points to consider. Close collaboration with City and Guilds, newly appointed awarding body of the VN Diploma, would maintain continuity in the delivery of the qualification.

I stand for a seat at the VN Council because I believe we can contribute to the future of our profession. By taking part in debates that matter to us, we can positively influence outcomes. We can be, and must be the actors contributing to the safeguard of the standards which define the veterinary nursing profession.
Why use your vote?

The role of the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council

Each year, we ask you to vote in the VN Council elections, but what does VN Council do?

Its role is essentially the same as the role of RCVS Council for the veterinary profession, ie to safeguard the health and welfare of animals committed to veterinary nursing care through the regulation of the educational, ethical and clinical standards of veterinary nurses, thereby protecting the interests of those dependent on animals, and assuring public health.

VN Council comprises a mix of elected veterinary nurses, appointed veterinary surgeons (including three RCVS Council members), two lay people and a Lantra appointee. We meet three times a year, in February, May and October, and the meetings are open, so anyone can come and observe. Council members also sit on a number of RCVS committees, subcommittees and working groups.

The agenda, papers and minutes for the meetings (excluding confidential items) are available on the RCVS website – helpful, if you are following a particular issue (www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us/vn-council/).

The terms of reference of VN Council are shown in the box to the right.

VN Council celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, and has achieved a great deal in a relatively short space of time, such as the introduction of the non-statutory Register, the development of the vocational qualifications and the introduction of online examinations. With issues such as the future of the Level 3 Diploma, the push for statutory regulation and the development of new post-qualification awards on the agenda going forward, it’s important that you decide who serves on your Council.

The turnout for the VN Council elections was only 7.6% last year. This was disappointing. Not only down from 11.2% in the previous election, but also much lower than the figure for the equivalent veterinary elections. I know that many of you are passionate about the future of our profession, so, please, don’t waste your opportunity to decide who shapes our future.

Liz Branscombe
Chairman, VN Council

VN Council Terms of Reference

(1) To maintain the List of Veterinary Nurses referred to in Schedule 3 to the Act.
(2) To establish and keep under review standards of proficiency for safe and effective veterinary nursing practice, including requirements for admission to the list referred to in (1), and the training and examinations to be undertaken.
(3) To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities relating to vocational qualifications in veterinary nursing.
(4) To establish and keep under review standards of good character and conduct required for listed veterinary nurses and to develop a voluntary system of regulation.
(5) To establish and keep under review schemes for post-qualification training and continuing professional development for veterinary nurses, and the outcomes to be achieved, with a view to recording an additional entry in the list referred to in (1).
(6) To recommend to the Planning and Resources Committee a budget and levels of fees to be charged for awarding body functions, qualification, listing and post-qualification diplomas.
(7) To recommend to the Council amendments to the Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws and Advanced Veterinary Nursing Bye-Laws.
(8) To oversee the work of the Awarding Body Management Group, which will be responsible for the detailed administration of the Veterinary Nurse Training Scheme.

In exercising its functions, the Veterinary Nurses Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.
Background information

• VN Council is made up of 17 members, eight elected veterinary nurses, six veterinary surgeons (including three from RCVS Council), one Lantra representative and two lay members. Each elected VN member is appointed for a four-year term of office.

• Every year two elected council members retire at the Annual General Meeting, though they are eligible for re-election.

• In 2012, one existing VN member and two new candidates are up for election.

• All biographies and manifestos have been published as submitted to the Editor.

• You may vote online, by SMS (text) or by post. Full voting instructions are printed on the separate ballot paper enclosed with this booklet.

• If your ballot paper is not enclosed, please contact Annette Amato in the VN Department (020 7202 0713 or a.amato@rcvs.org.uk) who will arrange for an official duplicate to be sent to you.

• The result of the election will be formally announced at the Annual General Meeting of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons which will be held on Friday, 6 July 2012, at the Royal College of Physicians, London.

• The VN Council Election is run independently by Electoral Reform Services – the country’s leading provider of ballot advisory and management services to UK and worldwide organisations.

• The deadline for receipt of all votes is 5pm on Friday, 27 April 2012.

Vote online* at www.votebyinternet.com/vncouncil12
Vote by text* to 80212
Vote by post by returning your ballot paper in the pre-paid envelope provided

*You will need the two-part security code printed on your ballot paper