

Ladies & Gentlemen.

I would first like to draw members' attention to some areas of the NRA's work that is often unnoticed. Although a considerable amount of our efforts are focused on the Bisley range complex we also invest significant resources in promoting shooting away from Bisley.

A good example of this work is challenging recent Home Office proposals for excessive increases in fees for Approved Clubs; this resulted in some 5,000 responses to the Home Office's public consultation and has prompted a re-think of the fee structure.

We are also developing a programme to promote full bore shooting and inform police firearms licensing staff and Home Office personnel about the peculiarities of our sport. Typically these involve a day or three at Bisley, invariably with the opportunity to shoot. The early results of this programme are encouraging – we are finding greater knowledge amongst FEOs yields a more efficient service to FAC holders. Furthermore a closer relationship with the police offers improved lines of communications and better opportunities to resolve disputes and queries. There are times when we have to agree to disagree with the police, but I am convinced our relationship should be that of a "critical friend".

Another essential relationship we invest time and energy to is that with the MoD; we invest considerable efforts improving dialogue and understanding to maximise civilian access to the military ranges. This has yielded some potentially exciting opportunities to invest in range complexes away from Bisley.

We are also now able to fund investments in other ranges; last year as has been alluded to, we saw the opening of the new range in Shepton Mallett by the Frome & District Pistol Club; the NRA part funded the developments and the new range is flourishing. In September last year NRA Trustees approved a six figure bid for a barracks site in the Rhondda valley; sadly we were beaten at auction but we are investigating other opportunities in Wales with the Welsh Target Shooting Federation.

We are also improving our Social media output and investing greater resources in promotional material for the hungry beast that is Facebook. As at today the number of "likes" on our Facebook pages total 26,200 and last year our weekly reach maxed out at just over 300,000. I have no doubt that the steady stream of positive images celebrating the many forms of target shooting posted to social media are contributing to the growth in NRA membership.

Returning to Bisley we continue to invest heavily in improvements to the range and estates. When wrestling with budgets I always test any proposed improvement with the question "will it make the ranges busier?" As our membership continues to grow we need to concentrate upon maximising range capacity and utilisation. It is fair to say that the ranges have their quiet moments weekdays and in the depths of winter. However come summer weekends we welcome hundreds of shooters every day and the range office is refusing an increasing number of bookings.

Our efforts to minimise the impact of echelon shooting on Century and Stickledown by more prescriptive allocation of targets is helping; however the challenge of recruiting enough quality markers remains. As the Chairman has reported the number of markers provided for the year to May this year is 20% higher than last; alas this has not satisfied every booking and it is common for the range office to be short of markers.

Electronic targets are the obvious solution and I am pleased how the six targets on Butt 19 Century range have performed. Our staff are becoming increasingly skilled at improving the reliability of these targets and the targets are becoming increasingly popular with the shooting community.

We have also successfully installed ten electronic targets for the Olympic pistol squad on Cheylesmore range; these are being extensively used by British Shooting and Army pistol teams.

The next installation will be on Stickledown. Earlier this year we trialled three systems and were pleased with the number of members who took up the opportunity for a test shoot. The Intarso targets were the clear winner of the trials and we have placed an order for 11 targets to be installed in August this year. The system includes electric winches that will raise the target on command from the firing points or even range office. The investment is not insignificant and we will see little change from £100,000 when the infrastructure costs have been fully accounted for. 11 electronic targets means 11 fewer markers to employ and we are excited about the opportunities to bring "stats" to the firing point by linking the targets to electronic scoreboards. This is not new technology although a revolution in the world of Bisley camp.

Other range improvements include an extensive programme of re-turfing firing points on Century and Stickledown. Despite a scare with frosty weather the turf has taken well and is growing away rather nicely.

We've also invested heavily in new target frames and turning, advancing and retrievable targets. In each case improving the reliability of delivery of targets is our key aim; our shooters often travel great distances to shoot at Bisley and are understandably annoyed if the target they have booked suffers mechanical failure.

As the ranges get busier car parking can become chaotic so we built last year two new car parks at 300 yards on Century and between 1 and 200 yards on Short Siberia. We also continue to improve ablution blocks and have just opened two new facilities at Jenny's and Caravan Site 1. These are not sexy improvements but are essential as we continue to invest in enhancing the shooting experience. I have at times been lambasted by long standing NRA members for concentrating on such improvements; however I remain convinced that modern facilities are essential for attracting and retaining new generations of shooters.

Another new major project started last year has been the development and improvement of the Zero range and Winans. The major works have been concluded and it is fair to say they have taken longer than I expected but having started the project we decided to make a really big mess and sort out the entire range in one go. Thankfully the works were completed in time for the Phoenix meeting and it was a relief to see shooters busy on the new Winans range. We will return to this project later this year.

We have been on something of a roller coaster ride with the Pavilion over the past year. Much as we love the old building she has not been kindly treated and needs significant TLC to address such matters as leaking roofs, questionable plumbing and incomprehensible wiring. The good news is that our Training team are now fully ensconced in the new facilities and we have moved commercial, accommodation and range staff to the new offices. The bad news is that asbestos has resulted in delays but I hope next week the final stage of addressing this problem will be resolved when specialist contractors start to clear the old ballroom void.

I hope you have noticed the improvements our work has yielded; in the new lounge area we have a small display of visuals for the new café, range office and retail armoury.

Finally a couple of points of clarification. First I can confirm that we have decided to commission a limited refurbishment of Exhibition Hut and are awaiting a response from the Conservation Officer. As an aside the Hut has been extensively used as a film set this year and has really been earning her keep. Secondly, and really finally, members will be pleased to learn that our tarmac contractors will be on site on 27th and 28th of this month – just in time to hide the potholes for the Imperial.