

I have been asked by the Council to reflect on what is my second year with the Association and I really wanted just to give you some thoughts and observations for this, my second AGM.

**Firstly, the good news.**

The NRA is now a successful and cash generative organisation. Membership is growing, new applications are being received regularly and routinely at the rate of 100 or so per month. Demand for our ranges here at Bisley is growing dramatically this year with some 25% higher than we were last year, and that growth is continuing. And indeed that demand for the ranges is now starting to outstrip supply, certainly at weekends.

We are starting to develop significant commercial revenue sources that use the range infrastructure and that is good news, in my humble opinion, because it deflects costs away from the shooting membership.

There appears to be no lack of demand for shooting although access and affordability are obvious limiting factors. In terms of where we go with our membership, I think the prospects are very good and I think we are going to need to start thinking strategically as to how quickly we grow our membership. When you take a step back and see that there are some 140,000 FACs held nationally, those are many good potential targets for NRA membership, but I think the consequences of a rapid expansion of our membership need thinking very carefully about.

Also under the good news section is the dynamic nature of target shooting. I continue to be both amazed and delighted with the sheer energy and enthusiasm that our members take up their shooting in the many various forms that they enjoy.

Finally, under that good news section, is the fact that the improving financial position has left us in the situation where we can invest hard cash in the facilities around Bisley camp; ranges, roads, service infrastructure, electronic targets are our priorities at the moment.

**That's a flavour of the good news, well against good news there is always bad news.**

Bad news actually comes in a variety of different guises. I think one that continues to surprise and concern me is the fact that shooting sports appear to lack confidence in who we are and what we do. At times there is almost an imperceptible feeling of being ashamed of the fact that we're shooters, which I just think is bonkers!

We also need to recognise there is a risk, almost inevitability, to the next worldwide shooting calamity. In my short time as Chief Executive there has been two major incidents, more will certainly follow and we need to be mindful and prepared if and when they arrive.

I think when I sit down with our staff and we start talking about range plots and safety arcs and all the technicalities, one thing that really does strike me is how vulnerable we are to the actions of one idiot! When you look at the map of Bisley and where it sits with the vast acreages that we have at our disposal, all of that will come to nothing if someone does something very silly and the implications and the consequences could be potentially calamitous.

The Chairman has already alluded to the issues in terms of access to military ranges. We are starting to invest more time and energy in rebuilding our relationships with the MoD, but they remain concerned about the actions of civilian shooting on the ranges.

There's also, and I'm not sure whether it's good news or bad news, but I've parked it somewhat in the bad news section, the noticeable swing from formal competitive shooting to more leisure shooting. I think that presents us with both opportunities and challenges.

One of the other issues that we do need to address is the fierce resistance to change and healthy cynicism, verging on negativity, amongst a small but vociferous group of our membership.

Finally there are the political issues that we need to be very mindful of. There is a General Election next year. The last two or three years have offered a relatively benign environment for legislative change, that may well not be available to us next year.

**So to hopefully enhance the good news, and to address some of the issues in the bad news, we presented a strategic and development plan for three years to the Trustees.**

This was approved by the Trustees and the General Council in the Autumn of last year and the key objectives are to concentrate as many resources as we can muster here at Bisley upon the sport of target shooting. We are very keen that all resources at Bisley are focused on driving up range utilisation, and not be disrupted by other activities that may generate some convenient income but have not got shooting in their hearts.

We are determined to improve the shooter and visitor experience here at Bisley. Some of the facilities are still poor, verging on shocking in places, and I think we need to make Bisley much more welcoming to new and prospective shooters.

I think we also need to celebrate shooting sports prowess. At times I think we lose sight of the fact that target shooting is a proper sport. It demands discipline and rigour and I think promoting it as a proper sport is something that will help ease our way when dealing with the Government, Home Office, the media and others.

We also need to recognise that there is no primacy of any one discipline – today not one discipline accounts for more than half of our membership. I think there have been some fascinating debates amongst the participants of the individual disciplines and at times I do get concerned about the negative way that some disciplines view others. At the end of the day, we've got plenty of detractors outside the world of shooting and we don't want to be bickering amongst ourselves.

A lot of our efforts over this and the next few years will be focused on Bisley and it is fair and just to raise some criticisms to that. This is a deliberate policy because we are determined to cement Bisley as the golden goose of the NRA and to use the cash and the influence that that generates to reverse the decline of range availability and encourage target shooting across the rest of the UK.

Finally our three year plan encompasses the firm determination to promote and protect all sensible forms of target shooting sports. We have to be very mindful of our public façade and how we present ourselves to the wider world. Our formal disciplines, and I think we need to be proud of all of them, need to be on the front foot and we need to be very persuasive on how we promote them. But we also need to be mindful of how they are perceived. Anything, for example, that smacks or looks and feels like the simulated combat should be stayed well clear of.

So in summary ladies and gentlemen, I have considerable optimism in the prospects for the NRA here at Bisley, but much less optimism in terms of what is happening with shooting away from Bisley. We need to quickly get Bisley right and get the structures of the NRA in good order so that we can re-channel our resources to support shooting across the wider country.

Thank you.