

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been asked to give you what is, in essence, an end of term report for my first six or so months as Chief Executive.

I think my first comment and observation is that in many respects it is a miracle that the NRA is still here with some of the woeful commercial practices that we found when we started. That said, the fact that the NRA is still here, is still active, is something down to a number of resources that the NRA have to hand.

We have fabulous world-class ranges here; we have, curiously enough, a rapidly growing membership; as at today our membership is growing at a rate of about 100 people per month, which I think is one of the largest increases that we've had for some time. The NRA is also able to call on a veritable army of enthusiastic and skilled volunteers that turn out very willingly many times through the year to deliver terrific services for shooting and the many activities here at Bisley.

And we also have a very rich and weighty history that at times bears down on our shoulders, but also I think gives us great guidance when we start planning the ways for development for the future.

In terms of looking ahead, I have been charged by the Trustees to develop a three year development and strategic plan for what we are to do, both the NRA as an association, and Bisley and that plan is very much in my mind at the moment. I am trying to understand the many complexities and contradictions that is Bisley and the NRA. An early draft of that will be going to the Trustees in September this year, for further and lengthier consultation and an ultimate delivery in 2014/2015/2016.

I am very keen that there is a plan that we all understand that as many people as possible sign up to. Within that plan there will be very substantial demands for capital investment and targets very much on my 'to do' list include new shooting initiatives, the improvement of what is a very tired and, in many cases a shabby infrastructure here at Bisley, electronic targetry, a very pet subject of mine. We will very shortly be trialling some electronic targets at Butt 19 on Century Range to help give us some guidance as to the wisdom of a further more intensive roll out.

And also, in terms of the support that I think we are going to give to the provision of ranges in the region. I think it is very easy for us to forget that we are the *National* Rifle Association and having a vibrant and successful Bisley, which I am very confident we can deliver, is only part of the story. We need to have a vibrant and successful shooting network actually across the rest of the country.

I think looking ahead, we need to also invest further resources in keeping a very big and firm line on legislation. I think for too long we've been very much playing catch-up, reacting to legislative announcements rather than being part of the discussions that form legislation and procedures and we need to engage much more earlier, much more convincingly with the Police and Home Office and other statutory bodies.

We also need to get a grip and take a much more dynamic and active role in our relationships with the PR and the national, local and regional media. I think, to be frank, keeping our heads below the parapet and hoping all the awkward questions go away, is far too dangerous a position to take, and we need to get active and we need to get involved.

We also need to play a much greater role in protecting and securing access for civilian shooting at MoD ranges. This, I think, is a very substantial threat, a very real threat today and I think that threat will only grow in its seriousness. And again, I think we need to play a more active role and make sure that role and those input are properly and effectively resourced.

When I started there were great concerns about the appetite for full-bore shooting in the country. I don't see it. I think there is a huge demand for people to become involved in shooting. The real challenge I think is accessibility and affordability, and I think we need to develop plans that address both of those.

I was particularly delighted to see 1,053 people hove into view with virtually no advertising for the Open Day and the atmosphere and enthusiasm of those new people to shooting left a real lasting impression on me.

I think it is important that we don't forget we are a charity. The National Rifle Association is NOT a gentleman's shooting club. It is a registered charity and I think it's important that we engage with the wider membership. The membership is a key asset for the charity, it is a key asset in the delivery of the many and important charitable objectives that we are charged to deliver.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank those of you who have given me, what has been a delightful amount of encouragement, a not so delightful amount of criticism, and a veritable avalanche of advice. It has been a real interesting experience actually engaging with members and dealing with the many opinions and often contrary contradictory advice that I get.

But I think that people's passion and enthusiasm to the cause has been really rewarding and very encouraging. Finally, just as an aside, I am having an absolute whale of a time and my first six months have been a real delight, and I am very much looking forward to working with you with the many challenges we face ahead.

Andrew Mercer
Chief Executive