

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley

on Friday 14th June 2013 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Dr R Pizer

Vice Chairman: Mr J Warburton

Members: Mr G Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mrs ID Bennett
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr A Bullen
Dr A Cargill-Thompson
Mr JH Carmichael
Lt Col ARK Clayton
Mr PR Coley
Mr DGF Evans
Mr G Gilpin
Mr J Harris
Maj AD Higham
Mr K Hocking
Mr J Kynoch
Mr G Larcombe
Mr D Lowe
Mr J Miller
Mr K Nash
Mrs K Robertson
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr I Shirra Gibb
Mr P Upham
Mr DD Watt
Mr RHF Wills

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mr J Webster - Vice Chairman of Council
Mrs HL Webb - Membership Secretary
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager

Apologies for absence: Mr T Bobbet, Col W G C Bowles, Mr CM Brooks , Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr MG Farnan, Mr C Farr Mr NJ Francis, Maj SB Fraser, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr P Hobson, Mr JA Horton, Mr P Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr CN McEachran, Cmdr MJC Magan, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr CC Mallet, Mr MF Martel, Mr R Neighbour, Col WJ O'Leary, Brig J Smales, Mr D Spittles, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Mr S Wallis, Mr P Watkins, Mr WDC Wilcox, Mr MJ Wood, (arrived during the meeting so did not sign the attendance register).

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Mr Derek Lowe, the new Treasurer, Mr Barry Morgan, a new Trustee, and Mr John Webster, Vice-Chairman of Council.

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G323 – APOLOGIES

G324 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD FEBRUARY 2013

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 23rd February 2013 were received.

John Miller followed up on the request from Mr Chris Farr for a summary of financial information which has not yet been received.

The Chairman confirmed that this document is being circulated at today's meeting.

G325 – MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman believed it sensible to discuss the document provided by Andrew Mercer - General Council Update – as it should answer many of the questions GC members may have had.

Doug Watt raised the question regarding the work being completed on Butt 19 and would Short Siberia be available for regular members when not in use by the CNC.

Andrew Mercer confirmed that Butt 19 is available for use by the general membership, and had been since May this year. This is in addition to Short Siberia when the CNC are not using it.

Guy Larcombe questioned whether there was any movement on the military clearance on Butt 19 following the work completed. Andrew Mercer confirmed that following a meeting with the MoD last week, there was still some survey work to be completed, prior to sign off. We expect sign off to be completed by 8th July.

Karen Robertson asked who Synergy were as mentioned under the litigation heading. Andrew Mercer confirmed that they were the company who provided quantity surveying services back in 2010 regarding a strategic development plan for Bisley.

The Chairman added that he believed it was slightly earlier than 2010, more like 2008/9 as part of the Olympic development.

Karen Robertson asked how much it cost. The Chairman did not know the figures off hand and is happy to look back at the costs and report accordingly.

The Chairman confirmed that the point of issue is that the NRA thought that the companies were working on a pro-bono basis and they would get their money back if the development was successful. However, in the case of Synergy, they thought that they were going to be paid for it. Andrew Mercer stated that in terms of cost, it was less than £10k.

Peter Coley asked why the employment settlement of Graham Gold's case was confidential. Andrew Mercer confirmed that it is because that was part of the settlement agreement and therefore we are unable to report. Richard Bailie asked whether the settlement figure was considerably less than had been budgeted for. Andrew Mercer confirmed it was.

No other items/matters arising.

G326 – FINANCE

Chairman asked that any Management Accounts questions be deferred until the AGM and raised with other questions which may well be asked.

Alex Cargill-Thompson raised a query regarding the figure for charitable activities, as well as the Journals figure at £25k. He had been under the impression that the new Journal arrangements were to be cost neutral, with advertising covering the cost of production.

Andrew Mercer used the comparison with the CPSA's accounts whose Journal costs £160k. NRA Journal costs are still expensive, and there is an on-going review, however not cost neutral.

The Chairman then moved onto the statement which had been provided showing finances, including the balance sheet, up to 30th April 2013. Whilst budgeting for a loss of £27k, we've actually achieved a surplus of £5k.

Peter Coley raised a question on how land can depreciate as shown in the accounts. John Webster speculated that it could be for some work put into land which has then been capitalised at some time in the past and therefore has been depreciated over time.

Karen Robertson raised a query regarding whether the budgeted figures including the income received from Imperial Meeting entry fees and ammunition costs. Andrew Mercer stated that it does not. However, the figures for income and expenditure are taken into account when the event takes place and there are provisions and accruals for that. All income for the Imperial Meeting is currently on the balance sheet and not the income and expenditure account. An example of this includes the membership fees which predominantly come in during January-March, but they are spread throughout the year in equal amounts. Equally the same is done for any income received for events which are allocated to the month the event takes place rather than when we receive the income.

No other questions raised.

G327 - HBSA

The Chairman stated that HBSA had approached the NRA earlier this year to request becoming a member of General Council. Two possibilities would be either as an ex-officio member, or a discipline representative as there is availability for both. Chairman asked General Council how they would like to proceed with that request.

Alex Cargill-Thompson asked whether there was any additional information as to why they wish to become members and what they could bring to it.

Ray Wills gave his opinion as Historics & Classics representative. Whilst he believes HBSA could bring some good support to General Council, however there are other organisations who could equally provide such support.

John Kynoch expressed his view that an ex-officio appointment would be much better than mixing up the discipline representatives.

The Chairman asked the question of General Council whether they would like to invite HBSA to become a member of General Council as an ex-officio member.

Alex Cargill-Thompson asked whether any other organisations could be invited to join General Council.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that a sub-committee should be set up to meet with all possible organisations to understand what they could bring to General Council as members. Alex Cargill-Thompson and George Barnard agreed to meet and report back to General Council within the next month.

G328 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Membership Committee meeting of 11th May 2013 were received.

Karen Robertson raised the point that the final minutes had only been sent out earlier in the day. She also commented that the draft minutes had not been sent out for amendment or agreement. KR also raised the point that she had said at point M278 had been incorrectly reported.

It was agreed that due to the late receipt of the minutes, any questions and decision would be postponed until the next meeting.

No further questions raised.

G329 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Shooting Committee meeting of 31st January were received. No questions raised.

A verbal report of the minutes of the Shooting Committee meeting of 23rd May were received.

John Bloomfield raised the point of harmonisation of eligibility rules as they are currently different for the Elcho, National and Mackinnon matches. John Bloomfield has asked Dick Horrocks, President of the English 20 Club to lead the Home Countries to regularise their eligibility rules.

The next item was the delegation of powers and officials under Rule 103. This will allow a number of decisions to be made during the Imperial Meeting by either the Chairman of the Committee or a nominated representative on behalf of the Shooting Committee.

Dates for the Imperial Meeting in 2015 have been discussed and recommendations have been made to hold it earlier in the calendar, as per 2013 which will have the Queen's Final being shot on the 3rd Saturday in July (18 July 2015), allowing time for teams to travel out to the USA for the Palma and World Championship matches at the beginning of August. John Bloomfield is happy to provide electronic copies of the schedule of events for 2015.

John Bloomfield also stated that discussions are underway to reduce the length of prize giving. An update will be provided in due course following discussion with the Match Riflemen.

The issue of vehicle access to the ranges was discussed. Due to the bad weather last year, vehicular access was restricted in the last week. It is proposed that this will continue this year. Therefore the ammo issuing will be from 300m shed and also at 600 yards.

The second restriction proposed is that 300yrd and 500yrd F-Class will shoot on Butt 11, as will the disabled shooters who are unable to get across the range. Buggies will not be allowed on Century, unless you are a disabled shooter. Staff usage will also be greatly reduced.

Doug Watt raised the question as to whether this restriction could be extended beyond the Imperial Meeting, particularly during the Smallbore meeting as this is possibly when the worst damage is done by vehicles.

John Bloomfield confirmed that this was being looked into by both himself and the Chief Executive and will be worked into the contract.

The next subject raised was a refund policy which has been instigated. If a competitor pulls out of the Imperial meeting then an admin fee will be charged, the amount depending on the point at which they cancel. If they have already been squadded then the charge will be greater.

John Bloomfield confirmed that disabled shooters on Stickledown will be able to take a vehicle forward on the range. Non-disabled shooters will not be allowed.

Disabled access will be decided on a case by case basis and decided by Peter Cottrell in consultation with others. Enforcement will be made by NRA staff. Anyone not adhering to these rules could face a disciplinary hearing.

Tony Clayton queried the buggy access for F-Class shooters on Stickledown. John Bloomfield confirmed this would need to be looked at.

George Gilpin expressed his view that buggies do not harm the range and are specifically built for use on soft ground and does not understand why they would not be allowed on the range. Concern was expressed that we have the wrong policy regarding buggies.

No further questions were raised.

Pricing of Imperial Meeting

John Bloomfield brought up the petition which has been raised by Richard Shouler.

Andrew Mercer has undertaken to carry out an extensive analysis in August of the costs and income associated with the Imperial Meeting.

The cost in previous years have not been accurately reported and therefore the analysis being done in August by Andrew Mercer should provide an accurate report of what the meeting actually makes and therefore what can be adjusted to assist in the costing of the meeting.

One of many options to reduce cost could be competitor marking which would provide a small saving of c.£60 per competitor. However, this would reduce the number of shoots available throughout the meeting.

A questionnaire will be sent out following the review asking for feedback from the competitors, as well as those who have not shot recently, and possibly the TR membership.

The Chairman raised the point that there would be a discussion during the AGM on all the financial items, followed by asking Richard Shouler to present his petition and say what he wants to say, prior to opening up to the floor. Questions are welcome, however, to avoid repetition, they could be saved until the AGM.

Karen Robertson wanted to raise the point that following a survey completed a couple of years ago, the reduction of Imperial entries were more down to a lack of understanding by shooters of what meeting actually was, or when it was happening or how to enter it. More advertising is needed to attract more entries.

Options for advertising following discussion include contacting secretaries of various shooting clubs, flyers, NRA Bulletin, invitations to Bisley for 'practice' shoots', emails. All disciplines should be included.

John Warburton raised a request for Shooting Committee and Council to consider. The generally held view amongst TR shooters in Yorkshire is that the NRA make a fortune from the Imperial Meeting. Consequently there are a significant number of people who on principle will not shoot the Imperial Meeting. There are some serious misconceptions amongst the membership and something needs to be done to redress that situation and hopefully the report by Andrew Mercer will do that.

Chairman confirmed that was a very good point and patience would be required so that the review can be done. Figures seen in the accounts over the last number of years have not included permanent staff costs and overheads. The last time a review was done was in 2005 when the inclusion of permanent staff costs and overheads turned an apparent surplus into a large loss. Ultimately the NRA need to know whether they are making money, breaking even or making a loss and the review should provide this information.

John Bloomfield confirmed that the Umbrella Tent would be located on Exhibition Lawn during the Imperial Meeting.

A question was raised regarding the situation regarding electronic targets. Andrew Mercer confirmed that the new electronic targets will be hardwired and it is all currently being looked at.

No further questions were raised.

G330 – THE COUNCIL

The minutes of the Council meeting of 5th February 2013 were received and there were no matters arising.

The minutes of the Council meeting of 12th April 2013 have not yet been circulated and the Chairman apologised for this. They will be circulated in due course.

John Webster confirmed that much of what he wanted to raise had been covered in the Chief Executive Report already discussed.

John Webster wanted to confirm the backgrounds of the three new Trustees who were elected at the previous General Council meeting. Gary Alexander and Derek Lowe already known to the Council. Barry Morgan was co-opted to Council. An engineer background with project management skills and procurement expertise. He has spent time working with the MoD, a Parish councillor and a Treasurer of his local shooting club in Frome.

Derek Lowe has taken over from Debbie Meredith as Treasurer and took up post following the finalisation of the last set of accounts. Derek Lowe has pointed out that the NRA Council lack true FCA skills so a decision has been taken that Council will recommend to General Council that an FCA be appointed to the body of Council to assist in audits.

The audit went well this year and that can be credited to the work undertaken by Andrew Mercer and Ray Hutchings. The accounts this year contain no emphasis of matter.

Ray Hutchings will be leading the costings over the coming months. The management accounts figures have given the Council strong confidence which continues to grow as time goes on.

The NRA will be looking to repay the last instalment of the outstanding loan to the bank of c.£150k if the cash flow forecasts are robust.

Access to military ranges is coming to a helpful and workable solution following meetings with DLRSC and the MoD.

Barry Morgan has taken on the review of the Journal contract with Blaze Publishing. We are looking to gain more editorial control and better relationships with the publishers.

Discussions with Surrey Wildlife, Natural England and the MoD have been taking place regarding leases. Andrew Mercer has referred to this in his update. Relationships need to be put on a much better footing.

John Webster reported that a good relationship is being built between Andrew Mercer and Iain Root of the NSRA.

Council have also requested a strategic plan from Andrew Mercer for the next three years. This will be presented to the Council in the October meeting.

G331 – REVIEW OF THE SELECTION, APPOINTMENT AND ASSESSMENT OF NRA TRUSTEES

John Webster led a discussion regarding the selection, appointment and assessment of NRA Trustees.

It is generally agreed that a proper assessment and feedback about what NRA Trustees are doing is needed as trustees can be out of their depth and have made mistakes. A large amount of time has been taken to try and reach agreement as to what needs to be done. There are some conclusions about a way forward.

Two main items to consider:

1. Performance of each Trustee in their role as Trustee and how that is shared with General Council. This would provide a view of the effectiveness of each Trustee allowing an informed decision to be made when time for reappointment.
2. The breadth of skills on the Trustee body. An example of this being a fully qualified FCA.

It must be accepted that some outside assistance may be required from time to time and that will be discussed with General Council.

A decision was taken at the last Council meeting that the Chairman, John Webster and John Warburton would instigate a process to get feedback about each Trustee's performance so that General Council can evaluate the board as a whole. However, it is not known what process will be taken to do that. Therefore, they will take it under advice and report back to General Council.

Karen Robertson raised the question whether someone with particular skills needed to be a Trustee. John Webster confirmed that they don't and that was a very good point, and there is some flexibility with the option to co-opt.

The Chairman added that in 2009 he talked about a Trustee advisory panel which was used by trustees but not accepted by staff.. We do need to look at what skills are needed to ensure a good spread is available and advise General Council accordingly.

There is also an issue around non-members assistance and being able to appointment someone to Council for a short period of time. Liability insurance needs to be looked at. Also, the Second Schedule does not allow for short appointments to be made and may need to be updated.

The Chairman wanted to add to the discussion with an example of such a time when an expert is needed. He was in a meeting with British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) the previous day who require a medical advisor urgently and they need to know what type of doctor they require and where they would find one quickly.

G332 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Ordinary Members

Six members have been proposed and seconded to General Council with 8 positions available. 5 vacancies with a 3 year tenure, 2 with 2 year tenures, 1 with 1 year tenure. It was felt it was not sensible to spend c.£7k on postage to hold an election, to select one to serve a 2 year tenure. Andrew Mercer has spoken with nominees, and Matthew Charlton has accepted a 2 year term. The other five members will be elected for a period of three years.

Regional & Discipline Members

All other members automatically selected as no election required.

Under 25 GB Captain to World Championships

22 papers returned.

Paul Lanigan received 18 votes
Holly McCullough received 3 votes
1 spoiled paper

Paul Lanigan has been appointed as GB Under 25 Captain to World Championships 2015. The Chairman will write to him to congratulate him on his appointment.

It was confirmed that TR members of General Council were eligible to vote for the position.

Following discussion it was agreed that more guidance should be given to all younger applicants for what should be included in their CV. Suggestions for good practice should be sent to John Warburton or Robin Pizer.

G333 - AOB

The Chairman brought the BSSC strategy for 2013-2020 report to the attention of the General Council.

It was felt by some members that it did not apply to the NRA as a full-bore organisation. It applies more to the NSRA and CPSA. £1.1 million of Sport England money will be spent on development of shooting in England but with the bulk of that money on salaries with only £75k being made available each year to share between what British Shooting want to do and what the NRA, NSRA and CPSA want to do. The money is constrained by Sport England to be used as described in the British Shooting strategy.

Guy Larcombe requested that the Chairman take this back to BSSC concerning the amount of money being spent on salaries, and the amount being allocated to the various organisations. The Chairman said it was too late to do this as they were the decisions of Sport England.

The meeting closed at 4.50 pm

Chairman

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

Friday 6th September 2013

2.00pm

Bisley Pavilion