

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley

on Saturday 1st March 2014 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman:

Dr J Warburton (at start of meeting)
Mr J Webster (following election of Chairman)

Members:

Mr GK Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mrs ID Bennett
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr CM Brooks
Mr AM Bullen
Dr A Cargill Thompson
Mr N Cole-Hawkins
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Maj MG Farnan
Mr NJ Francis
Mr GMLN Gilpin
Mr JS Harris
Mr P Hobson
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr CC Mallett
Mr MF Martell
Mr JF Miller
Mr B Morgan
Mr WCP Richards
Mr P Roberts
Mr R Roberts
Mrs K Robertson
Mr J Rossiter
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr R Sayer
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr PDC Turner
Sqn Ldr P Upham
Mr RHF Wills

In attendance:

Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager

Apologies for absence: Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr M Charlton, Mr ARK Clayton, Mr PR Coley, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr C Farr, Maj SB Fraser, Major T Higham, Mr JA Horton, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr K Hocking, Mr P Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr T Lehman, Mr D Lowe, Mr CN McEachran, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr K Nash, Col. WJ O'Leary, Brig J Smales, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Mr MP Watkins, Mr MJ Wood

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Vice-Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Vice-Chairman introduced John Webster as the only candidate for the position of Chairman and invited him to make a presentation to General Council on his candidacy. Questions followed.

Votes for Chairman were counted and verified by the scrutineers, Sarah Bunch and Ted Molyneux.

Chairman Election Result

47 papers returned

John Webster 41 Yes votes
6 No votes

John Webster was duly appointed.

INDEX G348 to G358

John Webster chaired the General Council Meeting as the newly elected Chairman.

G348 – APOLOGIES

G349 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 6TH SEPTEMBER 2013

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 6th September 2013 were received. There were no amendments raised. The minutes were duly approved.

G350 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 6TH SEPTEMBER 2013

Harald Dunton asked for an update of index G337 regarding shooting on MoD ranges.

Andrew Mercer responded that the NRA had met with TAS and there are a number of issues ongoing. Also it had met with the Defence Land Range Safety Team. A JSP013 document is due for redrafting and the NRA has been invited to give input into this at first edit. AM continued that the main issues for the NRA at the moment include Young Shooters, SARTS, ETR ranges and also protecting certain privileges such as home loading. There is an agreement in principle on how young shooters access MoD ranges, and also NRA and RCO's ability to use ETR ranges.

Harald Dunton then asked whether anything will be done with regards to difference in pricing for insurance and range hire at regional ranges.

Andrew Mercer responded that he is aware of the inconsistencies. However the NRA is looking to tackle this at a higher level by getting agreements in principle, and then cascading it downwards to the individual licensing officers to ensure fairness across all regions.

Bill Richards asked for clarification of the point G340 regarding the Queen's Final squadding as to whether it had reverted to that used in 2013 for this year's Imperial Meeting. JB confirmed that it had reverted to the system used for the 2013 meeting and would continue that way in this year's meeting.

There were no other matters arising.

G351 – FINANCE

AM provided an update of the NRA's finances on behalf of Derek Lowe.

Derek Lowe had circulated a financial report to the GC members prior to Christmas.

AM reported that the auditors had completed their audit of the NRA accounts to 31st December 2013. The accounts have now been finalised and there is an audit review meeting on Tuesday 4th March 2014 where the auditors will report their findings to the Trustees. There are no issues arising from the draft report received.

The financial results of 2013 are reported as:

- Turnover increased from £4.9M to £5.6M
- Cost of Sales rose from £2.8M to £3.1M
- Total overheads grew from £2.16M to £2.21M
- Net result is a surplus of £340, 905
- Overall result for Association including designated and restricted funds is a net surplus of £335,787

Headlines include a good year for range hire, membership and the curtailing of legal and professional fees seen in previous years.

The balance sheet shows net assets for the Charity rose from £5.87M to £6.27M.

The cash position is now strong, (the overdraft of £189k and £150k loan have both been paid off) and shows a positive cash balance of £400k at year end.

A bank account has been set up, following approval from the Trustees, for the Museum to be allocated funds directly for their use with a starting balance of £10k.

The Young Shooters Fund also now has its own bank account set up and has a balance of £30,797. Karen Robertson requested the opportunity to view statements for the Young Shooters Fund.

AM confirmed that Derek Lowe has access and would be able to provide the information at any time.

John Bloomfield thanked AM for getting the bank account opened.

G352 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Chief Executive's report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Charles Brooks raised the question surrounding the rental levels for club houses as he believes that it is unfair to charge club houses for the building when they have built them using their own money.

AM responded that tenants pay a ground rent which the building sits on for the first term of the lease. At the renewal the building is not taken into account as it is deemed to be a tenant's improvement. However, on the second renewal it should be rentalised. This is the NRA's understanding of property law with respect to a Charity.

AM is looking to ensure a fair but affordable rent for all club houses to ensure the clubs remain on site and is dealing with them on an individual basis.

Charles Brooks mentioned the fact that if a tenant builds their own property on the site, they would expect more than a 42 year lease before having to start paying for the building.

Peter Hobson raised the point that there is an unfairness across the site in terms of rental prices where some club houses pay less than a caravan owner.

Karen Robertson asked whether the 2007 property policy had been updated, or whether it would have different policies for different situations.

AM confirmed that the policy does need updating. John Webster added that it was a work in progress for the Trustees. The two main principles being looked at are that it's affordable and it's fair.

Richard Bailie added that the biggest restriction the NRA has is only being able to grant leases of up to 21 years. This is because the Charity Commission view a disposal as a lease of longer than 21 years and the NRA is not allowed to dispose of property.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the property policy would be updated and the Trustees would look at the possibility of creating a pricing matrix to a fairer pricing policy.

An extract of these minutes would be published for the membership to read.

Peter Hobson commented that the idea of a residents committee had been suggested a number of years ago but nothing happened. PH then suggested that all the lessees appoint someone to represent the tenants on camp.

Peter Hobson also acknowledged the assistance provided by Richard Bailie over the past year.

George Gilpin raised the point Peter Hobson made of creating a body to represent and responded that there already an Association of Bisley Camp Tenants and that there should be a dialogue between the association and the NRA.

AM confirmed that he had offered on two occasions to speak to the ABCT about the NRA's position and views of rents, which had been refused. AM has since met with Martin Osment who speaks on behalf of ABCT and conversations are ongoing. AM remains concerned that there is a great risk that points of principle get in the way of commercial common sense and therefore trying to undertake rent reviews in an individual and fair manner.

George Gilpin also asked about the 21 year lease and the inability to grant a renewal without excluding the protection afforded by the Landlord and Tenant Act.

Richard Bailie responded that he couldn't answer that question.

JW agreed that the Trustees would review and respond at a later meeting.

No further questions were raised.

G353 – COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Council meetings of 16th August, 4th October and 2nd November 2013 were received.

A verbal report was given from the Council meetings held over the last six months, including 1st February 2014.

John Webster gave thanks to AM and his team for the sterling work done in the first year under his leadership to have put the NRA in such a good financial position.

The management accounts that are now being used match almost to the penny the financial accounts which is very encouraging as accurate financial information is now being produced on a regular basis.

JW gave thanks to Derek Lowe for his work making sure the formatting of the management accounts are in an easy to read and follow format.

Derek Lowe will be circulating more financial information to General Council and membership on an ongoing basis.

A large amount of time over the last few meetings has been spent on the three-year plan. There are a number of issues which are being worked through as part of that plan including ensuring correct reporting of different accounts, e.g. the Museum and Young Shooters Fund.

There is also a group looking into increasing Corporate Days and utilising more support from the disciplines and GB teams to help create more income.

Costings of major prize meetings have been undertaken and are still ongoing but will help to ensure the prize meetings generate a moderate surplus of no more than 5% and ensuring that one event is not subsidising another.

Also Council has spent time discussing the Bisley Prize Meeting as during the AGM in June 2013, it was felt that the meeting was becoming too expensive. The membership had been questioned on their views of how we could make the Bisley meeting more attractive and better value for money. Council is in the process of exploring ways in which we could reduce the cost by using different ammunition from 2015, or by having competitor marking which wasn't as well received as originally thought.

Council will update General Council once more planning has been undertaken.

Barry Morgan has been spearheading the NRA Journal and lead a review of the survey of the Journal. JW thanked him for the amount of hard work undertaken so far.

ACT asked about the possibility of separating the Journal into a quarterly magazine and an annual journal of record.

JW responded that this had been discussed but until the contract with Blaze is bedded down, the idea has been put into abeyance. JW did declare an interest in the idea of having the two different journals, but noted that it would be an expensive option and therefore more consideration be given on how to achieve that.

The meeting of 2nd November resulted in a better process for the selection of Team Captains.

Also Council had discussed the need to consider the workload of the Trustees. AM has taken on a lot of the external appointment previously held by the Chairman and it is felt it is a positive step within his role.

JW then raised the fact that other Trustees are now required. The Council will be looking at different options such as someone from the military, and a name has been put forward for that, but also need to look for others and would welcome any ideas and names.

The Trustees had not met formally since the General Council Meeting of 8th February, however discussion has taken place in the meantime and three key issues have been identified:

1. Safety of loading issued ammo into or close to the lands of a rifle barrel. Negotiations are ongoing with the Birmingham Proof Master and it is likely that he will be undertaking his own testing with our assistance and cooperation. The Council have been offered the services of RMCS Shrivenham to do our own testing and thanks were given to Chris Hockley for offering this. However this is being held in abeyance for the moment until the outcome of discussions with the Birmingham Proof Master is known.
2. The process of the original drafting of Rule 150 and any changes made thereto. It was felt that the documentation around these events should be reviewed by an independent person, most likely with legal experience, who could also interview various parties if required.
3. Assertions made on 8th February about the “legality” of various throat lengths. The Trustees are currently deciding on the mechanism of how it is possible to assert what is considered to be illegal, to which The Trustees could reply as to why they might consider it not to be illegal and have Counsel review the arguments set forth and arbitrate as to which position is right.

Agreement would be sought to the general principle that an independent arbiter or chairman should preside over each of these issues to be able to reach a judgement ensuring the Association has done everything possible to put the house in order.

Guy Larcombe mentioned the discussions held during previous meetings around BSSC and BS and asked if any further movement had been made.

AM responded that he has attended two meetings with BSSC and believes both organisations have merit but more time is needed to understand both organisations.

Harald Dunton raised the point T1323 paragraph 17, about improving access to regional ranges. “It is suggested that Bisley issue all safety certification and also visit regional ranges on a regular basis” and asked what is the safety certification. AM confirmed it is the shooters certification cards.

Harald Dunton raised the point T1335 regarding the website. HD was unable to download the RCO certificate from the NRA website.

AM confirmed that the website is being upgraded at present including servers, fibre optic, wifi connection, and new membership system. However, more work needs to be done including the updating of the website.

Karen Robertson is finalising the changes to this year’s Bible and raised the question whether a decision has been made on the new Vice Chairman or whether it should be a ‘vacant’ position.

JW confirmed it should be ‘vacant’.

Charles Brooks asked for clarification on whether there were new processes for the appointment of Team Captains.

JW confirmed that way that that Team Captains came to Council was debated on 2nd November, and we now have a way forward as to how Council deal with those. The Council will also be updating the guidelines for Teams Captains once appointed.

No further questions were raised.

G354 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Gary Alexander reported that there is a current net increase of 100 members per month.

The Membership Committee are looking at working closer with clubs and disciplines to help maintain interest and increase membership.

More marketing and PR is being undertaken to help increase competition entrants.

General communication is improving with the membership including Facebook, Website, Newsletter, Marksman Calendar and Insurance.

The Membership Committee are looking for more members and would be grateful for suggestions and nominations.

G355 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Shooting Committee meetings of 23rd May and 5th September 2013 were received. No questions were raised.

A verbal report was given of the Shooting Committee meeting of 23rd January 2014.

Installing hard targets on Stickledown largely for the CSR events is being contemplated, replacing the falling plates target which were removed by the Army.

Access to ETRs has seen some discussion with DLRSC and an agreement, subject to final confirmation has been reached that NRA RCOs are qualified to run ETRs.

The military practice of charging for all available lanes regardless of number being used has been accepted as being incorrect.

A considerable step forward has been the invitation to comment on the draft of the next edition of JSP403.

Various safety issues were raised including the breech explosion at Kingsbury, with a report submitted to MoD. The conclusion reached was that an error with hand loaded ammunition was the cause.

The trend causing most concern is every recent case has been as a result of hand loaded ammunition. It was felt that education is needed.

The Imperial Meeting is being priced to create a 5% surplus for all competitions. Further investigation into increasing participation and also possibility of using less expensive ammunition on Century Range is on-going.

The expectation is that the Match Rifle prize giving will now be held earlier in the meeting, possibly after the Elcho Match. This is to be confirmed.

The Bisley Handbook is going to print on Monday. John Bloomfield recorded his thanks to Iain Robertson and Karen Robertson for all their assistance in getting it put together.

This year's Gallery Rifle & Pistol handbook is in production.

John Bloomfield expressed his thanks to James Harris for all the work done on the Multi Gun handbook.

A firing point survey is still ongoing and there is a schedule of works being published in due course.

The Team Captaincy appointment for the Match Rifle Team to compete for the Woomera Trophy in 2016 is in process.

The schedule for the appointing of GB Team Captains is now part of Martin Townsend's brief.

Martin Farnan asked about point S720, B3 from September's meeting regarding a proposal by Chris Law that Rule 150 be modified to permit handed-loaded ammunition in TR events for the Imperial Meeting.

JB confirmed that we would not be going down the hand-loading route.

MF then asked if competitor marking would be the default for the Imperial Meeting.

JB confirmed that it would not.

Karen Robertson brought up that a rumour has been started on the Fullbore forum that a club has been told that all civilian clubs can no longer use ETRs on military ranges. KR asked if there was any truth in the fact that the NRA and MoD have been in discussions.

AM confirmed that there was no truth in the rumours.

G356 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL & COMMITTEES

Disciplinary Committee – Legal Members

Charles Brooks	45 Yes	1 No
Colin McEachran	45 Yes	1 No
David Lacey	42 Yes	2 No
William Mott	42 Yes	2 No
Robert Sayer	41 Yes	3 No

8 abstentions, no spoilt papers

All elected as legal members.

Disciplinary Committee – Lay Members

Neil Fyfe	44 Yes	2 No
John Horton	36 Yes	7 No
Alexander Hunter	43 Yes	2 No

4 abstentions, no spoilt papers

All elected as lay members.

Formal motion put forward to co-opt the three non-members to General Council under section 8. All agreed.

G357 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

It was recorded that the Elected Members of General Council who retire in 2014 have declared their wish to re-stand (except for Rae Wills). The following member positions will be elected:

Four Ordinary Members
Four Regional Members
Four Discipline Members

G358 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Alex Cargill-Thompson requested that the process for elections be properly documented and followed as some people had sent in CVs with more than 150 words, and some hadn't sent a CV until after voting forms had been sent back.

JW confirmed that the Secretary General and Secretary will advise GC of the processes for elections.

ACT also raised the question that according to the Second Schedule the General Council meeting should be held in January or February and not March.

JW confirmed that as General Council had met in February as a Special Meeting, this satisfied the need to meet in February. However the point was taken that there is no latitude for future years.

Rae Wills wanted to give his views surrounding disciplinary matters and rules. His main issues were that there is slight drift on how rules are looked at as there is not always the same result, especially with situations such as bringing the organisation into repute.

RW would like to ensure that the Disciplinary Committee is chaired in a dispassionate and independent manner at all times.

David Evans confirmed that a new set of disciplinary procedures are being produced for 2015.

Guy Larcombe asked whether a message would be going out to the membership regarding the Open Day.

AM confirmed that a message will be going out on the website this week.

John Bloomfield discussed the letter received by John Carmichael regarding Rule 150.

Following explanations of the points raised by JC, JW confirmed that the Trustees were in discussion regarding Rule 150 and are looking at the possibility of instructing an independent arbiter to look at the relationship between "jump" and pressure, the legality of throat lengths being altered from CIP, and the changes that were made to Rule 150 and these will be discussed further at the next scheduled Council meeting.

John Kynoch proposed a motion for consideration by the General Council members regarding the manner in which the NRA has dealt with Rule 150.

Following discussion, it was voted on and agreed that the motion would read:

"The General Council is concerned with the manner in which the NRA may have dealt with Rule 150 in connection with the British Proof Authority Memorandum of June 1999.

The General Council appeals to the Council, along with its advisory body in these matters, the Shooting Committee, to deal promptly with the matter having taken into consideration the wealth of information and advice available to it.”

It was also agreed that independent scrutiny is needed to help ensure the Proof Houses that the NRA are acting in the right way and the Trustees would put this in motion by looking for a legal/shooting specialist as appropriate who could conduct the necessary review(s).

Karen Robertson raised the issue of the Hog Rally not holding their event at Bisley this year and requested that everything be done to change this as it will affect the income of the Club Houses on the camp.

AM informed the General Council members that the Hog Rally had been asked to sign and agree to a standard licence agreement which meant that the Hog Rally take full responsibility for the event both in terms of insurance and liability, which they have refused to do. AM also stated that he had increased the cost for holding the event by £1,349 overall to help cover fixed costs as the event runs at a marginal profit.

Following discussion, AM wanted to make it clear that the NRA had not stopped the Hog Rally from holding their event, and that it was their decision not to sign the licence agreement. AM also believes that the NRA will be able to attract shooters back to the ranges on that weekend, thereby increasing the income for both the NRA and the club houses in future years.

The meeting closed at 18.00 pm



Chairman

DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

Friday 13 th June 2014	2.00pm	Bisley Pavilion
Followed by the AGM	5.30pm	Bisley Pavilion
Friday 5 th September 2014	2.00pm	Bisley Pavilion