

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

FINAL

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley

on Saturday 13th June 2014 from 2.30pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster (Chairman)
Vice Chairman: Dr J Warburton (Vice Chairman)

Members: Mr GK Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mrs ID Bennett
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr AM Bullen
Dr A Cargill Thompson
Mr M Charlton
Mr ARK Clayton
Mr N Cole-Hawkins
Mr PR Coley
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Maj MG Farnan
Mr NJ Francis
Mr JS Harris
Mr P Hobson
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr D Lowe
Mr M Maksimovic
Mr CC Mallett
Mr JF Miller
Mr K Nash
Mr P Roberts
Mr R Roberts
Mr J Rossiter
Mr R Sayer
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr RHF Wills
Mr MP Watkins
Mr MJ Wood

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager

Apologies for absence: Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Mr CM Brooks, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, , Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr C Farr, Maj SB Fraser, Mr N Fyfe, Mr GMLN Gilpin, Major T Higham, Mr JA Horton, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr K Hocking, Mr P Hunter, Mr A Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr T Lehman, Mr MF Martell, Mr CN McEachran, Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mr WCP Richards, Mrs K Robertson, Mr AJD Saunders, Brig J Smales, Mr D Stimpson, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Mr PDC Turner, Sqn Ldr P Upham

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INDEX G359 to G368

G359 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received.

G360 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 1st MARCH 2014

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 1st March 2014 were received. Peter Coley (PC) advised that he was not in attendance and asked his apologies be noted. GT confirmed that had been updated.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting and duly approved.

G361 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 1st MARCH 2014

Harald Dunton (HD) asked for an update of index G350 regarding charges being regularised for insurance and range hire at regional ranges by the military.

Andrew Mercer (AM) responded that there are more pressing concerns regarding some safety issues we have had with two incidents recently that have preoccupied the NRA. Charges are still on the list of to dos but not a priority at the moment.

HD was accepting of the situation.

There were no other matters arising.

G362 – FINANCE

Derek Lowe (DL) covered the main points of the speech he will be giving at the AGM.

For the first time since 2009 the NRA has reported an annual surplus last year of £331k, compared with a budget of £150k.

There has been a significant turnaround from 2012 which was a transition year.

2013 should be the first year where we can see where some of the operations and finances can be heading.

The budget for this year looks for a surplus of £450k which is modest by any commercial standard against revenue of just over £5m.

Net current liabilities at the start of last year were £247k. 2013 closed with net current assets of £142k. Trustees and management can now concentrate much more on operational matters and the future, which is a significant improvement over the last 18 months.

DL will be making a few points to the AGM about the importance of ploughing our surpluses back into the facilities around camp, and to highlight the investments that have been made. As you are aware, there was a strategic review received from the Chief Executive last autumn, which highlighted an intention to spend up to £1 million over three years on maintenance and improvement.

In 2013, £123k was spent on improvements and maintenance of the ranges, and in the fifteen months from the start of last year to March 2014, over £400k has been spent around the rest of the camp on areas like roads, accommodation, training and visitor facilities and towards establishing a wi-fi network.

The Trustees are aware of the increase in different types of disciplines and a much broader spread of shooting interest than ever seen before. We are now at a point where no single discipline represents the majority of members.

The increase in membership will afford commercial opportunities for the clubs to increase their own memberships. It will be for club officials to investigate how their own clubs can find ways to serve new members and to improve their own business there including holding new events. The Membership department is very keen to help clubs understand how they can improve in that way.

There are also issues around pricing that the organisation is aware of. There are many different constituencies we need to equitable balances between different interests as we deliver marksmanship for both our own members and outside.

DL recorded his thanks to the Support Services Team, led by Ray Hutchings, for the timely and accurate information that they have been providing over the last 18 months.

Better information is being delivered to the membership; the accounts were published very early, in March, and have been available online. DL has also produced an article which will appear in the Summer Journal outlining some financial points.

A particular effort is being made to ensure people are fully involved and engaged with the financial position that the NRA finds itself in.

No questions were raised.

G363 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

The Chief Executive's report was circulated prior to the meeting. AM apologised for the late delivery of the report.

The report highlighted some key issues that are currently being addressed, ranging from MoD, Rule 150, staff, property and various other items.

AM wanted to tackle the question raised in the March meeting surrounding the length of leases that the NRA currently offers its tenants as to why the lease is restricted to 21 years or less.

Some research has been done on that, and a summary of why the NRA does what it does (and the rationale behind it) is reasonable and well explained. It is not a Charity Law issue; it is more an issue in terms of property law and protecting the integrity of the freehold interests that the Association has on the majority of Bisley camp.

AM gave an update on the report from the Treasurer. The current management accounts to the end of April 2014 show a surplus of £62k ahead of budget. This was boosted by an injection of £48k but as at this moment in time we expect to meet the budgeted surplus of £450k.

Alex Cargill-Thompson (ACT) made a point of accuracy. Regarding the summary about discipline days, as was discussed between the Match Rifle community and the NRA, it was felt that because of the quite theoretical nature of a lot of the elements of Match Rifle, e.g. hand-loading, long distance wind reading, putting together bespoke rifles, etc., rather than getting people out on the range shooting when they would learn relatively little, a more theoretical session in form of a weekend long seminar would be more useful. Nick Tremlett had organised one of these which was advertised to the membership in March.

HD asked where the £48k had come from.

AM responded that the NRA were made aware that there were dormant bank accounts with the NRA's name on them. It took around 18 months to persuade Barclays to release the money to us.

Guy Larcombe (GL) asked for an update on the Wi-Fi situation and if there was a date for completion.

AM responded that a new IT Projects Manager and one of the key projects is to make the Wi-Fi live. AM expects the Wi-Fi to be live by the Imperial Meeting.

GL then asked if John Carmichael had responded to the letter surrounding the Rule 150 issue.

AM confirmed that a response had been received that morning.

JW added an update on the progress made on the Rule 150 issue. The Council had promoted to General Council a series of three things to do:

1. Update the 1999 Memorandum.

The protocol to a series of tests has been agreed with Roger Hancox, the Birmingham Proof Master. It has been difficult getting hold of test barrels and JW would like to express his thanks for Mik Maksimovic for his assistance in getting the barrels provided to us. Roger Hancox has a preferred expert, Dr Derek Allsop. The Council have proposed a series of tests to be done which will incorporate different free bore lengths, with a range of different loads, but all the same bullet. The Council are waiting for the Proof House to confirm that is the right thing to do and then those tests will be undertaken. As it involves a not inconsequential amount of shooting and time, we are awaiting Roger Hancox's and Dr Allsop's agreement.

The objectivity required with respect to these tests would be fulfilled by Dr Allsop actually conducting the tests under Roger Hancox's review.

2. Review how the 1999 Memorandum got to become Rule 150 as it stands today.

We have engaged the services of a QC to undertake an independent review of Rule 150. It will cost the Association a modest amount of money, but a budget has been approved for that. The Council did not want to use a known member of the association to ensure there could be no suggestion of impropriety in the process. Jean Ritchie QC is going to review the documentation and report her findings in due course.

3. John Carmichael's (JC) assertion of the National Rifle Association has been behaving in an illegal manner.

The Council asked JC to substantiate these serious allegations by saying exactly what law he felt had been broken, so that the Council could refute that claim and have someone independent review both sides and opine. JC has only just reverted with a note and it requires a much more careful reading that has been possible to give it. JW said that it does not appear at first glance that JC has answered the question as stated and volunteered to meet with JC to correct any misunderstanding.

JW confirmed these three processes were in train but would take time to work through.

HD asked that as the testing will be done with one design of bullet, which bullet will be used.

JW stated that the most popular "issued ammo" bullet would be used, the Sierra 2155 bullet, and it would be tested in factory and hand-loaded compositions to give a comparison.

ACT wanted to ensure that sufficient testing is done that the conclusions are statistically significant.

JW responded that the Council agree. The thought is that a minimum of 10 shots and testing two different barrels would be done.

ACT also believes it would be worth getting someone independent to look at the statistics.

John Bloomfield (JB) confirmed that Dr Derek Allsop's background is RMCS Shrivenham where he ran the ballistics laboratory which would give him the experience to provide the statistical feedback.

Tony Clayton requested guidance from the Council as to what to do if a firer, either on Stickledown or Century ranges find they have extracted a live round from the chamber and left the bullet behind.

JB confirmed that this would be addressed at the Imperial Meeting

Reg Roberts (RR) asked whether there were any indicative prices for the new serviced caravan pitches and leases.

AM confirmed that the capital cost of the pitches will be around £8,000 - £10,000 per pitch. The NRA is looking to recover 65% of that amount. With a 10% commission we are looking to earn on the new caravans we expect around £3,000 with the balance being taken up with the lease. The capital cost of signing up to a 20 year lease could be anything from £3,000 to £4,000. The annual costs we expect to be around £1,800 and £2,000.

JW added that there are 387 caravan berths on the camp, subject to an annual licence. The Council felt the time was right to look at the stock of the caravans and sites and look at ways of improving the portfolio. There appeared to be an opportunity to improve the stock and have different caravan opportunities for different people; at one end, annual licences and at the other fully serviced pitches with modern caravans. The NRA will then be able to offer members longer leases rather than an annual licence. Site 4 and SAS were selected as these slightly smaller sites on camp to allow the work to go ahead.

GL commented that there had been a lot of complaints expressed on the social media about the caravans. GL had asked those people if they would like to contact their regional representative. GL asked if any of the regional reps had heard from the membership on this subject.

All regional reps present confirmed they had not received any contact.

Matthew Charlton (MC) asked if the plans for the new pitches were communicated to all members or just to those affected.

AM confirmed the movement had been communicated to the people affected. They have also been offered first option on the new serviced pitches.

Two demonstration units will be arriving on site on 4th/5th July and the full marketing packs will be available then.

GL asked if members will be allowed to move their own caravans back onto the new site.

AM confirmed that was not the case. There would only be new caravans available for those

itches. All the information will be sent out once finalised so everyone knows exactly what is available and the costs.

PC asked why the decision had been taken to build a serviced caravan pitch rather than new lodges.

AM responded that cost was the factor in that decision.

Martin Watkins (MW) asked what the situation was with regards to a hotel being built on site.

Ken Nash, Chairman of NSRA, responded that the hotel would be going ahead, subject to board approval. However, the NSRA board are still awaiting confirmation of the plans.

ACT asked whether the current infrastructure of the camp is able to support the new developments.

AM responded that the infrastructure had been 'beefed' up over the last year including one new substation and the doubling of the electricity capacity of another. Gas and sewerage are also acceptable.

John Rossiter (JR) asked whether the possibility of putting another range in behind Melville Stop Butt was going ahead.

AM responded that there are no plans to do any developments which would affect BSRC or Melville. They are important ranges and we would be looking to add to them rather than replace.

HD asked for an update on hand-loaded ammunition following the two recent incidents.

AM responded that the MoD don't like hand-loaded ammo at all because it introduces uncertainty. It is a serious issue which needs to be addressed.

JB added that everyone who does hand-loaded their ammunition should take more care and ensure that their ammunition is not going to cause problems. That message needs to go out to all the regions and membership.

Rae Wills (RW) asked about T1346a regarding the enquiry about hand-loading numbers across the disciplines.

AM responded that more time was needed to conduct a proper analysis of who uses what, why and how. Some sampling will be done in due course.

No further questions were raised.

G364 – COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Council meetings of 13th December 2013, 1st February 2014 and 15th March 2014 were received.

A verbal report was given of the Council meetings held on 25th April and 13th June 2014.

JW updated GC about the maintenance on camp. Surpluses will be deployed to projects which need to be completed on the site, rather than being retained. The NRA are committed to ensuring improvements are made to the infrastructure.

The Membership database has been active for the last couple of months and is bedding in well. Congratulations were given for the work done in getting it up and running.

The majority of the existing Trustees had been to a day's training course held by charity lawyers which gave an update on what it is to be a Trustee of a charity.

The Trustees have adopted a Social Media Policy as of today which sets out how one should behave as a Trustee in various social media.

There has been a large interest shown for the available Trustee positions on Council. With the new members coming on board soon and with the elections taking place on General Council in July, it was felt that all Trustees and General Council members should consider what the general bylaws of General Council are and co-define how GC should conduct themselves and what their responsibilities are.

Codes of Conduct and Bylaws of General Council were lost in the changes made to the boards in 2003. The Trustees felt that good governance would be to review and create a new set for GC members and would like to suggest this to the GC members for agreement.

Questions were requested.

ACT asked for reassurance that the Trustees and executives of the organisation were taking the security of the new membership database seriously.

AM confirmed that the database is very secure and is a recognised, professional database package also used by other sporting NGBs (e.g. judo, cycling).

John Kynoch (JK) raised the point that there has been a delay in the release of the minutes coming to General Council and wanted to ask that there would be not be delays in future.

JW responded that it has taken some time to release the information due to the various things which have taken place over the last 6 months, but that GC members do get a verbal report at each meeting.

ACT raised the action point T1319b from the October meeting for biographies for GC.

JW confirmed that this had been held in abeyance and it was decided that updated profiles would be created and sent out to General Council once the new Trustees are on board.

No further questions were raised.

G365 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Shooting Committee meeting of 23rd January 2014 were received.

There were no questions or matters arising.

A verbal report of the Shooting Committee meeting of 29th May 2014 was received.

JB reported that the incident at Kingsbury range is now completed pending any disciplinary action. The MoD has accepted the comprehensive report that Iain Robertson (IR) wrote. The NRA is now the MoD's investigator of choice for any incident involving a civilian rifle on MoD ranges. JB commended IR's work in producing the report.

The ammunition for the Imperial Meeting will be RUAG for both short range and long range. 350k rounds have been delivered. Test groups for the ammunition will be available for viewing during the Imperial Meeting in the front office.

JB confirmed two new AI rifles had been purchased for the McQueen A and will be issued with GGG ammunition.

JB updated General Council on the future dates for the Queen's Final. 2015 corresponds with the 2014 dates. It has been recommend by Shooting Committee, and accepted by Council that the 4th Saturday in July be used as the guideline for future meetings. Therefore 2016 will be 23rd July, 2017 will be 22nd July. 2018 would move to 28th July and that will be kept under review pending a discussion with the schools during this year's meeting.

George Barnard (GB) asked why the decision had been made to change the type of rifle used in the McQueen A.

JB confirmed that the NRA had bought two new rifles in order to have two decent rifles to shoot with. AM added that we wanted to ensure consistency by using the NRA's own stock for McQueen competitions.

John Warburton (JWa) mentioned that the current contract with RUAG expires after this year's meeting. JWa requested an update on the Shooting Committee's thoughts for future ammunition providers from 2015 onwards.

JB confirmed that examinations of various suppliers is still ongoing. A special order of GGG was trialled during the Purples Match in April and that produced good results. It looks a promising proposition in terms of pricing. A decision will be made soon.

G366 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

GA confirmed that membership figures were still increasing by around 100 new members a month.

GA extended this thanks to Richard Blackmore for all the work and effort he has put into the new membership database and the work he and his team have achieved in getting new members onboard.

The Membership Committee has been inquorate but the results of the Membership Committee elections have been received today.

Paul Hunter	28 Yes	7 No
Guy Larcombe	30 Yes	6 No

Both duly elected to the Membership Committee.

The Membership Committee is now quorate. An election will be held in due course for a new Chairman which will also give a new Trustee on the Council.

G367 – REVIEW OF TRUSTEES

JW provided an update of the Trustee application process.

There are three co-opted positions available on the Council. There have been 14 expressions interest to date. They are Graham Stott, Richard Seddon, Malcolm Sperrin, Paul Gardener, John Humphries, Matthew Green, Chris Rolfe, Peter Lomas, Neil White, Chris Barker, Alice Gran, David Lacey, Graham Clark and James Harris.

Each candidate received a letter from the Chairman with information regarding the commitments required as a member of Council and requesting a CV so the Trustees can process through to interviews. Seven CVs have been received. The closing date is 30th June when the CVs will be circulated to all Trustees to review. The Trustees will then meet and put forward final recommendations to General Council at the September meeting. Ideal skill sets would include FCA, Legal and Estate Management.

A formal induction process will be put in place to ensure new Trustees are trained and fully understand the position they hold on the Council.

ACT asked for JW to confirm the process would be the Trustees would select the favoured candidates which would then be put forward to General Council.

JW confirmed that the Trustees would put forward their favoured selection of candidates for approval by the General Council.

ACT asked that an explanation to the solution be given when presenting the candidates.

JW confirmed that would be done.

G357 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Five Ordinary Members will be retiring this year and an election will be held in July for those vacancies. The announcement of results will be made at the Bisley General Meeting.

The candidates proposed and seconded for the vacancies on General Council are:

Ordinary Members

JPS Bloomfield
DP Calvert
DC Crispin
SJ East
MG Farnan
GMLN Gilpin
TS McDowell
J Morgan-Hosey
M Osment
JP Tapster
IR Thomson
S Wallis
A Wragg

Regional Members

HRM Bailie	-	Northern Ireland
GV Barnard	-	East Midlands
TLW Kidner	-	Scotland
DG Young	-	North Western

Shooting Discipline Members

Dr AWM Cargill Thompson	-	Match Rifle
NJ Francis	-	Gallery Rifle and Pistol
I Shirra-Gibb	-	300 Metres
P Ryder	-	Historic and Classic Arms

In excess of 2000 ballot papers have been received to date. JW recorded his thanks in advance to Anthony de Launay who will be the Returning Officer for this vote. Paul Charlton has been invited to assist in the process of scrutineering.

JW also passed his thanks to Georgina Thatcher and the NRA staff for doing a lot of work to get everything out to the membership.

Richard Bailie (RB) commented that the cost of holding the election at around £10k was expensive.

AM confirmed that a much slicker/IT based way of holding elections needs to be sought and we hope to have a suggestion for General Council to review soon.

Reg Roberts (RR) asked whether the new membership database could be used as part of the voting process.

JW responded that we would be unable to change the election process without making changes to the Second Schedule. It also must be recognised that not all members are connected to the internet.

JR mentioned that BASC are currently running an online election which may be worth investigating.

G368 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

RW commented that this is his last appearance on General Council. RW wanted to thank past and present members for the wonderful friendships and support given

The General Council showed their appreciation with a round of applause.

GL asked AM for a progress update on British Shooting.

AM confirmed that he had been to three Board meetings and is starting to build links with them. AM believes they are a positive force for shooting. Raising awareness of what British Shooting do is to become part of the communication process. He hopes to be able to create more awareness using the new Marketing & Communications Manager who has joined the NRA team.

AM would like to invite British Shooting to come to a future General Council meeting to present to the members.

PC asked if any progress had been made regarding Landmark and the Bodmin range. There are very few available dates available on the ranges down in his region and they have had to cancel the Open meeting.

AM responded that issues remain in that area and AM has visited Warminster recently. However the recent incidents on military ranges have superceded this, the main one being the issue of home-loaded ammo.

JW added that there are many things conspiring against access to military ranges including the structure of the Armed Forces who will be making much more use of these ranges.

AM continued that we need to show the MoD that we are a credible organisation to deal with on regional ranges in order to build relationships there for the different clubs and appreciates that South West region is one of the first ones which need the assistance.

AM asked all members of General Council to make the Council aware of any known redundant ranges in the country.

MW added that it is very important that the regional clubs who are not able to access ranges in their areas be aware that there are ranges in Wales which have had ETRs installed which has prevented civilians using the ranges as they are not able to go into the butts and use the targets for each shot. The hierarchy of booking the ranges is now the Army first, and down the pecking order through cadets, with civilian shooting at the bottom. Therefore there is always going to be the chance that you are cancelled at last minute. The clubs need to be working with the NRA to communicate with the Army to try and prevent these problems.

JW responded that having listened to the various issues raised it may be appropriate to create a Regional Range Committee. This was well received by members at the meeting.

ACT added that he believes that this issue needs to be looked at strategically.

Michael Wood asked whether the NRA had a map showing all military and civilian ranges in the UK.

AM confirmed that the NRA has a map of the ranges that civilians use, but not a map of the ranges the civilians don't use. NRA would like to link in better with the Regional reps on General Council to move this forward.

Martin Farnan added that prior to Landmark, every district had a range committee which met every three months, which involved civilian rifle clubs, military personnel and the range bookers. Landmark has never taken civilian shooting into consideration so there is no provision for civilian shooters.

Paul Roberts asked whether there were any plans for Open Days next year.

AM confirmed that the next Open Day will be in May 2015.

RW wanted to add that although short distance ranges are not what the NRA necessarily likes, they are useful for shooting. Given that we are no longer tied to the MoD on range design, he asked if there is an opportunity to look at restricting the danger area or having no danger area ranges. Butt stops can be expensive but may open up more opportunities.

AM responded that he has seen baffled ranges which are ghastly but that would be preferable to not shooting at all. AM doesn't believe we are position to be choosy.

It was agreed that AM would coordinate a working group for regional ranges.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 16.35 pm

Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 5th September 2014

2.00pm

Bisley Pavilion