

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

FINAL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley
on Friday 12th June 2015 from 3.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster (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 PR Coley
Mr DC Crispin
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Sqn Ldr A Fox
Maj SB Fraser
Mr JS Harris
Mr P Hobson
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr D Lowe
Mr M Maksimovic
Mr MF Martell
Mr K Nash
Mr P Roberts
Mr R Roberts
Mr J Rossiter
Mr P Ryder
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Sqn Ldr P Upham
Dr J Warburton (Vice Chairman)
Mr MP Watkins
Mr D Young

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager
Mrs A Grant - Trustee
Mr D Lacey - Trustee

Apologies for absence: Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr M Charlton, Mr ARK Clayton, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr NJ Francis, Dr N Fyfe, Mr GMLN Gilpin, Mr J Harper-Smith, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr JA Horton, Mr K Hocking, Mr P Hunter, Mr A Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr T Lehman, Mr CN McEachran, Mr CC Mallett, Mr TS McDowell, Mr JF Miller Col. Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mr WCP Richards, Mrs K Robertson, Mr AJD Saunders, Mr R Sayer, Brig J Smales, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Mr PDC Turner, Mr MJ Wood

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INDEX G394 to G405

G394 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received.

G395 – WELCOME TO NEW TRUSTEE

The Chairman welcomed David Lacey as one of the Council's new Trustees. David Lacey gave a two minute introduction to the meeting and was welcomed by the members.

G396 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 21st FEBRUARY 2015

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 21st February 2015 were received.

DY requested that his name be shown as attending that meeting.

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

G397 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 21st FEBRUARY 2015

Harald Dunton raised a query regarding the Regional Ranges Working Party as he hasn't seen anything regarding the Terms of Reference or requests for volunteers to join the group which conflicts with point 18 of the Council minutes which refers to the Regional Ranges Manager.

The Chairman confirmed that the Council were waiting until the new Regional Ranges Manager had been appointed, which has now happened. Once he has 'got his feet under the table' the new Regional Ranges Working Party will be chaired by James Harris and invitations will be issued to those people who would like to be part of that group.

Harald Dunton asked that the minutes of the Council meeting of 16th February be changed to reflect that applications have not yet been requested for the working party, but for the role of Regional Ranges Manager.

No other matters were arising.

G398 – THE COUNCIL

The Chairman confirmed that the members had received the minutes of Council meetings held on 13th December 2014 and 16th February 2015.

The Chairman gave a verbal report of Council meetings held on 24th April 2015 and 12th June 2015.

NSRA

All members had received a letter concerning the relationship between the NRA and the NSRA.

The NRA have a claim against the NSRA for an uplift in value for the Lord Roberts Centre, based on an uplift clause signed by both parties at the time of sale.

As a result of that, the Chairman and Chief Executive have had a very cordial meeting with two members of the NSRA, Richard Watchorn, Honorary Treasurer and Ken Nash, Vice Chairman. During the meeting various options were explored, the most important one being the closer working relationship between the two organisations.

Both sides understand there are two membership departments, two finance departments and two competition departments and looked at whether there could be an economy of scale if they got together. The conclusion of that particular discussion was that the anxiety that that would cause is not worth the financial benefit to both sides.

The conversation is not over, and at the invitation of the NSRA the NRA are exploring other options as to how the organisations can work together in the future and that is underway at the moment.

The Chairman reported that the NRA has asserted a claim of c. £250k-400k based on the uplift clause. The NSRA have appointed two different people to get their own advice as to whether the claim is valid and if it is valid, that the claim is a reasonable amount.

The request for the latter advice should not be interpreted as an admission on the NSRA's side that the claim is valid; they are trying to telescope the time it is going to take to come to each of these conclusions.

The Chairman will update the General Council in due course once further ideas have been discussed with the NSRA.

The Chairman concluded by saying that a coming together of the two organisations should not be construed as a takeover. Both sides are going into this with the confidence that the result would be better for both organisations.

John Kynoch asked whether there was a clause in the original sale of Site 103 allowing the site to revert to the NRA if nothing was done with it within 10 years.

The Chairman confirmed he is unaware that such a clause exists.

John Kynoch asked whether Site 103 could be included as part of the negotiations with the NSRA.

The Chairman confirmed the Trustees would agree to that. At present there is a lien over that site so it is not currently in the sole gift of the NSRA to give.

Rule 150

The Chairman began by thanking Alice Gran and David Lacey for all their assistance, professionalism and hard work on this matter.

The first of a series of tests have been undertaken by the Proof House. The next set of tests are due to take place next week. They are being run by Dr Derek Allsop and the Birmingham Proof House. The Proof House have not released the results of the first tests. The Proof House have said they are 'very pleased' with the results of the first set of tests.

The review by external Counsel of the assertions made that the NRA had behaved illegally has been assisted by David Lacey and Alice Gran, as legal professionals and independent of the original allegations, who helped pull all the relevant information together to instruct Counsel. We have received the first draft from Counsel of his opinion. The Chairman read a précis of the Counsel's conclusions as follows:

“The NRA instructed Nicholas Doherty, a barrister with significant expertise on firearms matters, to advise on certain allegations made in respect of Rule 150. He has provided his opinion to the NRA in which he confirms that

- a) Neither implementing Rule 150 of the rules of shooting, with an additional concession that is not referred to in the 1999 Memorandum, nor allowing the use in competitions of rifles with reduced chamber dimensions as described in Rule 150, resulted in the NRA committing any offence under the Proof Acts or breaching the International Proof Convention, or breaching any duty it owes to its members.
- b) A person does not commit an offence under the Proof Act if he or she submits for proof testing, pursuant to the 1999 Memorandum, a firearm with non-standard dimensions but fails to certify the specific non-standard dimensions required to be certified to the Proof House under the 1999 Memorandum”

The detailed opinion is still being reviewed by the Trustees.

The original intention with regards to the review of whether there was any impropriety as to how the 1999 Memorandum became Rule 150 was to instruct external counsel. However, Council have taken the decision that David Lacey and Alice Gran will be asked to run this part of the enquiry because they are both professionally trained lawyers and they are independent of the “dispute” having not been members of Council at the time this issue was raised. John Kynoch, who originally raised this before General Council, has agreed that he is happy for David and Alice to conduct the enquiry. The process has been approved by Council, and David and Alice will be interviewing various people prior to producing a report.

The Chairman requested any other questions.

HD asked whether the list regarding acceptable First Aid courses for MoD ranges had been sent out. The Chief Executive confirmed it had.

HD also asked for an update on junior shooters and whether they would have their own certification card. David Young added that it seems to be a tick box exercise by the MoD. The Chief Executive agreed; however the NRA has to work with the regulations set by those who own the regional ranges.

Martin Watkins asked what is being done to make television coverage more amenable to the spectators of the Commonwealth Games and also raised the issue of full-bore shooting being omitted from the 2022 Commonwealth Games altogether by the Durban Committee. Is there anything the NRA can do to promote full-bore to be represented that those games?

The Chief Executive responded that British Shooting is working hard to assist with this; however full-bore shooting offers little to the broadcasters which is the main problem.

MW responded that there is a meeting in the Far East for the Commonwealth Games in July which the NRA could make presentation at which may help. MW will send the meeting details to the Chairman.

ACT asked whether it would be worth holding a media day allowing the media to ‘have a go’ to bring them into the world of shooting.

John Bloomfield responded that it is the host country’s media who release the TV feeds to other countries, so if there is no feed from them to the shooting fraternity, nothing can be done.

G399 – FINANCE

DL presented his finance report to the meeting.

2014 financial performance was very strong with a surplus of £430k which was up 26% on the previous year. Revenues were £5.27M up from £5.07M in 2013. The most important for members is the NRA generated a cash flow of £746k from operation and reinvested all of it in capital expenditure. The cash balance remained static at £394k.

The budget for 2015 is a surplus of £320k which is on track. That allows for a capex of £500k and maintaining the cash balance above £200k throughout the year.

DL expressed his thanks and congratulations to AM and team and Ray Hutchings and the support services team for their hard work during the year.

Finances are serving the shooting and this is being demonstrated; also communication has improved through reports to General Council and the general membership with regular Journal articles and AGM speeches.

No questions were raised.

G400 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The Chief Executive's report was presented to the meeting.

The Chief Executive discussed the Bisley Master plan in greater detail. The main focus will be to ensure the overall feel and unique atmosphere of the camp is retained.

The plan will be a 3 year plan and will be presented to Council for agreement. The pace of development is likely to increase and be done sensibly and thoughtfully.

Accommodation and retail offerings are two major areas for development as well as the continued development of the ranges.

The emphasis is on developing Bisley to generate cash to use for improvements and also to develop a cash flow which will support shooting out in the provinces.

Spencer Site has seen 24 of the 26 caravans sold to date and the Chief Executive hopes to win his £5 bet that all units will be sold by Queen's Final day.

The home loading issue with the MoD has gone quiet. There has been a small amount of interested generated with the HSE from the Gairlohead incident but the NRA are hoping to reassure them with the report.

Bisley ranges are getting busier both with corporate bookings and civilian bookings. The range office took a record £55.4k last week alone in range takings.

Membership has seen around 75 new applications each month this year which is causing a capacity issue with the Training team with over 128 probationary members working their way through the training programme.

A consultation process will commence regarding the report from the Heritage and Landscape architects that have identified buildings on camp which are important to the look and feel of the site, as well as those which are not. The first draft was provocative with over 40 buildings listed for demolition! This has been revised moderated and will be put out for consultation in due course. The plan will be a three year plan covering 2016-2018 and will be signed off by the Trustees.

Guy Larcombe asked whether the works to Butt 18/19 had been completed and signed off.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the work has been completed and is awaiting certification but the MoD are too busy to sign the work off at present; but they have confirmed the NRA can continue to use the ranges as if they had been certified so it will not affect the Imperial Meeting.

HD asked how much the architects were being paid for their professional input.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Heritage architect was being paid £5.5k and the Landscape architect was being paid £6.2k.

ACT asked whether any thought was being given to cars on the camp.

The Chief Executive confirmed that plans will be developed specifically for car parking on the site with allocated areas for parking.

HD asked how the increased number of FAC issues would be met. The Chief Executive confirmed it would be through an additional member of staff in a part-time capacity.

No further questions were raised.

G401 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th January had been circulated. There were no questions.

The Shooting Committee Chairman gave a verbal report of the meeting held on 29th May.

The harmonisation of eligibility rules for the major matches is ongoing. The problem has been narrowed to the Elcho rules and is now with the Match Rifle sub-committee for discussion.

The electronic targets for installation on Butt 19 are on camp and will be installed after the Imperial Meeting for testing.

A visit to Stickledown butts was suggested by David Stephens for new competitors to understand how difficult it is to mark down there which may reduce the number of complaints. It was concluded that it would not be viable to do during the Imperial Meeting.

The Target Rifle representative, Nigel Cole-Hawkins has resigned due to business matters and his replacement will be voted on during this meeting.

The remainder of the meeting was spent organising the Imperial Meeting administration.

600k rounds of GGG were delivered a week ago and one batch has been pressure tested at the Birmingham Proof House and falls within the limits allowed. There are three batches within the delivery and the other two batches will be going to the Proof House for testing next week.

The ammo has been tested and the groups are on display at the meeting for the General Council members to review along with comparison against the RUAG ammunition. The average group size for the three batches in proportion to the V-bull has produced figures of .66, .77 and .59.

Reg Roberts asked why the price of the ammunition was 79p when it had been previously discussed as being sold between 73p and 77p.

The Chief Executive responded that the price discussed was between 77p and 79p. The decision to charge 79p gives a small margin and just above that of the margin gained on the RUAG ammunition. The Chairman added that some importers were trying to persuade the NRA to sell it at a higher price but the decision has been made to hold the price at 79p

No further questions were raised.

G402 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

MM reported that membership is busy this year with over 7,700 individual members and over 700 clubs, 90 schools and 78 associations, and seeing record takings for use of the ranges.

Membership Committee will be working closely with the Young Shooters Fund to help promote young shooters.

The website traffic on the NRA website is being collated and will be discussed prior to a new website being developed.

Training has moved into the Shooting division from Membership which is much more in alignment to what they do.

The NRA is in a healthy position with new members coming on board.

Better communication is required and the social media is helping towards this.

No questions were raised.

G403 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

It was recorded that the following Elected Members of General Council under Second Schedule Rule 7(g) have been elected unopposed:

Ordinary Members

GK Alexander
CM Brooks
MMJ Charlton
JM Kynoch

Regional Members

Mrs ID Bennett	-	West Midlands
PR Coley	-	South Western
GAE Larcombe	-	Southern
JF Miller	-	Greater London and South East

Discipline Members

JN Morgan Hosey	-	Civilian Service Rifle & Practical Pistol
A Bullen	-	Sporting Rifle

An election will be held for the Target Shotgun Discipline Representative against:
J Harris and A Wragg

G404 – CASUAL VACANCY TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

As per the Second Schedule, Rule 7g (xi), a casual vacancy has arisen for the position of Target Rifle Representative.

Steve East has been nominated by Guy Larcombe, Karen Robertson and James Harris. If elected, he will serve until August 2016 which is the remainder of the current term for the position.

The Chairman asked for a show of hands. All members were in favour.

Steve East has been duly elected to the post of Target Rifle Representative until August 2016.

G405 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Peter Coley raised a question regarding postal entries to the Imperial Meeting.

PC believes the General Council were not given the opportunity to discuss the £20 admin charge for a paper entry.

The Chairman replied that as this is a financial matter, it is at the sole discretion of Council to decide this, thereby ensuring that responsibility and accountability are aligned. He added that there has been an email exchange on this subject between PC and JW which was circulated to all members of General Council.

PC raised the point that GC members should have been asked to advise and ultimately to propose that the charge be cancelled for the following reasons: Council sets the policy which the Chief Executive follows but in the Council minutes of 13th December 2014 it says that discussions were held around a discount for online entries. It was agreed there would be no discount for paper entries. PC believes that is a specific item and not a policy, but if it was a policy the opposite has happened.

The Chairman replied that a discount is a lower price and an absence of discount means a higher price. One price is lower than the other which is the same result.

PC believes that is not what was authorised and that is his point.

The Chairman replied that it was too complex to offer a discount to online entries. PC has been advised that it is very easy to offer discount online by applying a voucher code. At the present time there is no discount for online entries. Postal entries are being charged £20 but some people are refusing to pay it and school children have been let off the £20 altogether.

The Chairman confirmed that paper entries create more cost which needs to be recovered. The original discussion was regarding a discount and the dictionary defines a discount as a price lower than that which is generally available. The generally available entry here is a paper postal entry. It was easier to recoup the costs incurred by paper entries by putting an additional fee on the paper entry rather than trying to subtract an amount from an online entry. That was the decision by the Chief Executive which he felt was a perfectly appropriate way to execute the discussion held in the Council meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that schools who found it difficult to input numerous entries under the same login, will not be required to pay the £20 fee and this will be a 'grant' by the NRA to help young shooters, and is entirely consistent with the NRA's policy of supporting young shooting

The Chief Executive also confirmed that anyone who had refused to pay the £20 admin charge would not receive their cards until they have paid any outstanding balance.

PC proposed that the £20 fee be cancelled and refunded to all those people who have paid it.

The Chairman responded that the fees could not be changed for 2015 but would be reviewed for 2016.

PC proposed that there be no £20 admin fee from 2016 onwards.

The Chairman added that the reason the admin fee had been levied was to incentivise competitors to enter online. It is a more streamlined and helpful way for entries to be received and processed. A discount will be offered for online entries from next year onwards. PC will be satisfied with that for 2016.

Simon Fraser added that it must be ensured that the system works correctly for everyone to avoid issues for online entries. He also asked that there continues be opportunities for leniency on the basis of entering collective entries.

ACT added that there has long been the principal that shooters should pay for the services they consume, rather than spreading the cost over the entire membership and this is a good example and is only a case of semantics.

Guy Larcombe wanted to commend the efforts of Murray Hossack, NRA IT Manager on all his help and patience in assisting with his online entry.

Reg Roberts raised the concern surrounding communication which was brought up at last year's AGM. General Council members are here to support the Council and the report by AM in the Journal states that NRA staff are being attacked on areas of capex. RR would like to understand what areas these are.

The Chief Executive responded that one of the hardest jobs he does is to maintain the morale of the NRA staff. They are subject to constant and pernicious complaint, at times in a very unreasonable and unpleasant way.

There is a very passionate group of membership with some very active and dynamic users of Bisley. The vast majority of people for the vast majority of time are an absolute delight to do business with. But there are some who treat the staff with considerable disrespect. That can be difficult at times. The staff care passionately about the NRA and Bisley and sometimes the pernicious complaints about areas we are trying to improve do hurt.

There is no one thing but when we do something that is considered to be positive and beneficial, there will always be 5% who come at you with vigour and venom who will always be remembered. A classic example is the road at the back of Century where £80k has been spent to upgrade a shocking part of the Bisley infrastructure. AM has taken at least a dozen complaints on that and so did the contractors! They are good quality contractors being described as gypsies which is extremely offensive.

The NRA does make mistakes' but we don't do it without care and it would be nice to be appreciated by everyone.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 16.20pm

Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 4th September 2015

2.00pm

Bisley Pavilion