

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the NRA Pavilion
on Saturday 17th February 2018 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster

Vice Chairman Dr JD Warburton

Members: Mr GV Barnard
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr CM Brooks
Mr AM Bullen
Dr A Cargill Thompson
Mr PAE Charlton
Mr PR Coley
Mr DC Crispin
Mr AJCB de Launay
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Dr N Fyfe
Mr J Harris
Wg Cdr CJ Hockley
Mr DR Lamb
Mr GAE Larcombe
Miss SS Lohmann
Mr D Lowe
Mr N McFarlane
Mr B Ritchie
Mr R Roberts
Mr P Ryder
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr IR Thomson
Sqn Ldr P Upham
Mr MP Watkins

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Secretary to Meeting
Ms A Gran - Trustee

Apologies for absence: Mr GK Alexander, Mrs ID Bennett, Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Mr M Bradley, Mr N Brasier, Maj R Bruce, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr M Charlton, Mr M Cotillard, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr CES Dickenson, Mr E George, Mr J Harper-Smith, Mr K Hocking, Mr A Hunter, Mr D Kent, Mr JM Kynoch, Mr T Lehman, Mr M Magan, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr MF Martel, Mr JF Miller, Mr K Nash, Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mrs K Robertson, Mr R Sayer, Brig J Smales, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr PDC Turner, Mr G Trembath, Dr AP Wolpe, Mr MJ Wood.

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INDEX G503 to G516

G503 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as noted above.

G504 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman requested that all members declare any conflict of interest at any relevant point of the meeting.

G505 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 8TH SEPTEMBER 2017

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 8th September 2017 had been, circulated, approved and published.

G506 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 8TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Harald Dunton (HD) asked whether the Trustees had agreed to publishing the minutes of Council meetings on the website once agreed as per the General Council minutes.

Andrew Mercer responded that Council minutes have never been published as they are minutes of the Association and for sight of the General Council members only who represent the membership. The minutes of the General Council are the only minutes published on the website. AM added that the Charity Commission does not recommend minutes of board of Trustees are published.

HD also remarked that the September minutes asked for the Trustees to consider producing the minutes from Council meetings in the same timeframe as the General Council minutes so they can be shared with General Council in a more timely fashion.

The Chairman responded that the discussion had not been held during the October meeting and further discussion would be held and advisement would be sought at the April Council meeting.

Peter Coley (PC) asked for an update on the £20 surcharge for Imperial Meeting paper entries. AM confirmed he would check and advise the process in place for this year's entry.

No further matters were raised.

G507 – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman was pleased to report that although the Association is currently undergoing its annual audit, the draft accounts show a surplus of £172k for 2017. He added that over the past 5 years, the Association has spent almost £2.8M on capital expenditure, while its cash position has improved by nearly £750k. This shows the enormous amount of good work done over that period to catch up on a number of outstanding capital expenditure issues.

The NRA finished the year with just over 8500 members which is up almost 500 for the year. The ranges have never been busier.

The Three Year Strategic Plan for 2018-2020 has been finalised and published. The Chairman thanked everyone for their input into the process and noted that we have received positive comments following publication.

The Association is now in a much better place to face future challenges than it was 5 years ago.

G508 – FINANCE

The Treasurer presented his report to the meeting.

The £172k surplus is for a combination of the general fund and restricted funds. The surplus on the general fund is £106k which is lower than the budget set. The two main reasons for this are 1) the depreciation of capital expenditure made in 2017 was not sufficiently factored into the budget and 2) the projected income from the Pavilion has not been realised due to the works still being undertaken on the building.

A £106k surplus on a £6M turnover is modestly positive. The Treasurer remarked on a significant depreciation charge which is levied before we reach the surplus number. This is not a cash expense, but reflects the amount of investment we should be making. Cash generation in 2017 was c.£600k with an investment of about the same amount.

The Treasurer also commented on the reserves policy which requires a cash balance of £200k throughout the year. This was met for the majority of 2017. The Strategic Review for the next three years has increased the cash minimum balance to £250k to reflect the increased operational footprint.

Chris Hockley (CH) remarked that the net current assets/liabilities shows actual liabilities and asked if we should be worried about that.

DL responded that this figure includes committed income which the Association has received but cannot recognise. The Association takes in membership income in November, but that is regarded as a liability until it is released to P&L over the year. Thus there is typically a significant membership fee liability at year end.

The Chairman added that member prepayments are more than £670k in the draft year end accounts which dramatically affects the calculation of net current liabilities. He added that the NRA's operating cash flow for 2015, 2016 and 2017 are £450k, £928k and £584k respectively. The capital expenditure for the respective years are £399k, £705k and £723k. This investment has pushed depreciation up dramatically, so depreciation has gone from £340k in 2015 to £393k in 2016 and £478k in 2017, although it is a non-cash item.

Silke Lohmann (SL) asked when the annual accounts will be published. The Chairman confirmed that the audit review meeting is due to take place in early March and the Association will aim to have the accounts signed off and published by 31st March.

Paul Charlton (PCh) asked if the new auditors had reviewed all the systems and produced a report for the NRA and if so, to whom is that report presented. The Chairman confirmed that Haysmacintyre are now the auditors, that they had undertaken a complete review of the NRA's systems and provided an interim report for the Association to review and implement. The auditors will also produce a management letter post audit for the Trustees which will be reviewed by them.

No further questions were raised.

G509 – OPERATIONAL UPDATE

The Chief Executive presented his report to the General Council members.

AM reported on three updates since the report was circulated.

Firstly the North London Rifle Club lease renewal was signed and completed on Wednesday 14th February.

Secondly, AM has spoken with the Home Office on their proposals for offensive weapons to find out how the review is going. They were not terribly forthcoming, other than to say they had received a very substantial response to the consultation and that was giving them cause for reflection. The NRA are planning further steps to take to discourage the Home Office and government from enacting the proposals they have put forward.

Thirdly, AM and John Bloomfield (JB) had visited the Proof Masters in January. AM thanked JB for his input and assistance. The Proof Masters have concluded that their proofing of target rifles will continue as before and no further pressure tests will take place. The status quo remains. AM believes that is a good result and allows the NRA to move forward.

AM reported that the NRA are very busy at the moment with a particularly busy January on the ranges and are set for a very busy 2018.

HD asked whether AM had received any comment regarding the proposed Home Office fees for clubs. AM reported that he has attended a number of meetings with other shooting organisations who have collectively proposed a set of fees which are being presented to the Minister for approval. The fees are significantly less (c.40% of the original fees proposed) and we are awaiting to hear whether they will be accepted.

HD asked whether the Association will be commenting on the GDPR implementation. AM reported that the Association has published guidance on GDPR on the website. The Chairman remarked that the penalties for misuse of data have increased significantly and therefore there is the incentive to ensure the correct procedures are followed to avoid such penalties.

David Crispin (DC) remarked on the refurbishment of Winans range, and was pleased to see it had been done, but wanted to raise concerns about the noise pollution, especially for the Surrey Rifle Association, as the noise is now unacceptable. AM responded that he is genuinely surprised at a Bisley-based club complaining about the noise of shooting. Shooting takes place from 8.30am-12.30pm and from 1.30pm-5.30pm and those have always been the hours of shooting. AM has received the odd complaint when Cheylesmore range was refurbished but Bisley is a rifle range.

DC remarked that if someone builds a new range next to someone's caravan then he understands complaints. Winans was an unused range which has been repurposed, but DC doesn't believe thought was given to the impact of noise to the club. DC remarked that because it is used as a zero range it has extended hours and only closes for 15 minutes during the lunch period.

AM responded that the middle bay of Winans is being used as a zero range at peak times, such as the Imperial Meeting, but at all other times it is treated as a normal range.

DC asked whether shooting will be extended into the evening as well. AM responded that it has been used occasionally by one club who was shooting there on a Tuesday evening, at the same time as the clays were open for late evenings. DC remarked that the clays range was more distant and therefore less intrusive.

DC wants to seek a practical solution to this and whether a sound barrier can be erected, such as a fence. Iain Thomson remarked that there is a fence already erected around the range. DC remarked that the fence is therefore not efficient in dampening the sound. AM responded that we have taken sound readings and the highest levels were recorded on the zero range, not Winans. AM added that to stop any noise leaking back towards the Surrey Rifle clubhouse would be impossible.

DC responded that the noise needs to be reduced to acceptable levels. AM responded that the club house is based on a busy range complex and it needs to be accepted that during shooting hours there will be noise. Any out of hours shooting needs to be treated sensibly and sensitively. Most of the shooting on Winans range will be during current shooting hours.

DC will review the situation over the coming months as the season kicks off and monitor it closely as the club is entitled to quiet enjoyment, especially during lunchtime. AM repeated that he is genuinely astonished that the Chairman of a senior rifle club at Bisley takes issue with noise from the rifle ranges. DC responded that AM doesn't have to sit and listen to it, DC does which is why he is taking exception as the association has made changes to the area around the club which they pay good money for and they now have to endure the extra noise which wasn't there before. DC will monitor it over the next few months and feedback to AM.

SL asked whether the Surrey had been consulted about the changes. AM responded that they hadn't because it is the NRA who is responsible for the ranges and they have taken a derelict range and refurbished it to bring it back into use.

No further questions were raised.

G510 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

AM reported on three items in Mik Maksimovic's absence from the Membership Committee meeting held on 9th February.

There will be a repeat of the Meet the Clubs day held in the Pavilion on the Saturday of the Phoenix meeting in May. Invitations will be sent to all clubs on Monday. AM added that SL will kindly be producing guidance notes for the exhibitors to help make their attendance as productive as possible.

A lengthy discussion was held on how the NRA might support youth shooting organisations more effectively. A number of initiatives were raised and those will be reported in the minutes of the meeting in more detail.

A good conversation was held regarding the value of better targeted communications with the membership and how this can be improved.

Guy Larcombe (GL) added that a discussion was held regarding the insurance for over 80s. AM confirmed that communication had been sent to all members in this age bracket informing them confirming they are entitled to shoot at Bisley and the only limitation was personal accident cover. A notice was also published on the website.

SL remarked that communications to members could be better and a good example of this is the recent communication regarding dogs on the range. JW remarked that range safety orders do not belong to either the Trustees or General Council. The responsibility lies with the Chief Executive, so if he recommends that dogs be prohibited, he is doing that because there has been a rise in the number of incidents of dogs at large on the camp. Dogs at large on ranges where shooting is taking place endangers people involved.

The Chairman continued that the issue has now been dealt with. Therefore as a group, the members of General Council need to remind all fellow members that to bring dogs to Bisley is a privilege and not a right, and they must be kept under control.

SL stated she agrees with the rule put in place, but believes the way it has been communicated is wrong and has caused more issues.

AM replied that there is a balance between communicating the rules to members against general communication. The range is a regulated area and safety is key. Therefore rule based communications are required. AM does agree that communications could be improved and that this will be addressed.

Anthony de Launay (AdL) asked SL what her objection is; the notice that appeared on the website? SL believes the communication could have been better structured as it wasn't clear. AdL disagreed and believes the current communication is very clear.

IT asked for clarification on what the safety issue is. AM responded that stopping shooting due to dogs running on the range is not desirable. People travel a long way and spend a lot of money to shoot at Bisley and to have their shooting disrupted because people aren't in control of their dogs is unacceptable.

IT agrees completely, but it has been communicated as a safety issue so what is unsafe? AM remarked that people attempting to recover their dogs can be dangerous. IT asked if that had happened. Some members responded that it had.

IT asked how often that had happened. AM responded he didn't have figures, and asked IT if he shouldn't use his initiative and common sense unless he can evidence every instance. How many intrusions are enough before AM can change the rules?

AM's role is to run the ranges efficiently, safely and properly. IT remarked he wouldn't have an issue if he didn't see safety rules broken every time he goes on the range. AM asked whether IT reports any issue to the range office when seen. IT asked whether he needs to. AM remarked that if acting as an RCO your responsibility is to report any safety breaches to the Range Office. IT remarked he would do that in future.

JB pointed out that the previous rule has only been adjusted to include any animals brought onto camp and may not allow it forward of the firing point during shooting periods.

SL remarked that the original communication on the website wasn't as clear as it could have been and that the new communication is much clearer. The communication should be right from the start.

John Saunders remarked that we come to Bisley to shoot, not walk dogs. The Chairman thanked him for reminding everyone that we represent the NRA membership, whose main interest is shooting.

G511 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the 7th September 2017 were presented to General Council. No questions were raised.

James Harris (JH) then gave a verbal report of the meeting held on 20th January 2018.

The main business of this meeting was to discuss amendments to the handbook. There are a number of changes and JH ran through the main ones in brief.

A new paragraph has been added to define the new Range Safety Officer role and the course provided, which is a role aimed at members of clubs who own their own ranges or do not use military ranges. David Lamb (DL) asked what is the current situation for Range Conducting Officer renewals. HD responded that existing RCOs would have to undertake a new procedure which involves sitting an online exam. You do not need to requalify as an RSO in order to renew as an RCO.

JH continued that there is a change to expand and regulate the use of personal electronic devices on the firing point including iPads, iPhones, wireless headsets etc.

A members' regulation regarding wireless network communication in team matches has been included.

Changes regarding the administration of actions and disposals of breaches of safety regulations, which allows the Chief Executive to enforce them.

There has been some changes to the long range events to create a new long range aggregate. JH read the changes to the meeting.

The Gunmakers Trophy will now be presented to a new aggregate made up of the Lovell and the Corporation which will both be 1000 yard events.

The CivSR, Target Shotgun and GR&P handbooks were all approved without amendments.

A discussion was held on the amendments to TR 'A' and 'T' class criteria. That has been shelved and more developed roles will be formed next year. Any comments should be directed to Charles Dickenson, the TR rep.

No questions were raised.

Recommendations for events during the 150th Imperial Meeting were presented to Shooting Committee and were put forward for approval by the Trustees. All recommendations were accepted.

G512 – COUNCIL

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 16th August and 20th October 2017 were circulated to the meeting.

Derek Stimpson (DS) asked for point 28 under T1677 to be amended to reflect the Gunmakers Trophy had been donated by the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers.

DS then asked for an update on pistol shooting in Europe. AM confirmed that the NRA has sought independent Counsel advice as to whether he considered it a reasonable action. Counsel have advised that it is not appropriate, and warrants a breach of human rights. AM has therefore been charged to discuss this advice with the Home Office, which he will do during an arranged meeting in March.

No further questions were raised.

The Chairman gave a verbal report on the Council meetings held on 9th December 2017 and 9th February 2018.

The main highlights from those meetings were the review of the Strategic Plan 2018-2020 to ensure all observations were captured.

The Trustees are continuing to review and research the Real Estate Policy and in particular, have been reviewing the policy with the original drafter during a telephone conversation at the February meeting. There have been some assertions about the relevance of documents going all the way back to 1894, so the current Trustees are doing the archaeology to find out whether they are all relevant, and ensure that the assertion made in the Strategic Plan - that the real estate policy is fit for purpose – can stand.

The Commonwealth Games of 2022 has been granted to Birmingham and shooting had not been included in the programme, despite a number of protestations from the NRA. The Chairman would therefore encourage members of various Commonwealth Games elements to get in touch with the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) as much as they can to see if we can keep shooting on the programme. Notwithstanding this, the NRA, as the governing body, has said to the CGF that if shooting doesn't get reinstated, Bisley would be open for a parallel competition if they would like to hold one. JW believes this is a very long shot and it will be very difficult to get back in if it is taken out, and is sorry that the news is quite negative.

CH asked whether we had approached the Associations' President for his assistance. JW confirmed that we had approached him but he had felt it appropriate to decline due to his position.

JB informed the meeting that during the Commonwealth Shooting Confederation Championships held in Australia at the end of 2017, a number of the major shooting nations attended a meeting and agreed a joint approach towards ensuring shooting had a foothold back in the Games, post Birmingham. A number of initiatives came out of the meeting and will be taken forward to gain more support for fullbore shooting.

PCh asked whether consideration had been given to costs of getting non-fullbore ranges up to ISSF standards/compliance in order to be able to host such competitions.

AM confirmed that consideration has been given to that. PCh asked what the costs would be. AM responded the main costs would be the electronic targets in the Lord Roberts Centre. PCh believes that ISSF ranges have to be orientated in a specific geographic way and that this should be checked in case we are unable to undertake a competitions because of this.

AM confirmed he would check that point. AM had spoken with the NSRA to ask whether they could run such events and they had responded positively.

Martin Watkins (MW) remarked that we would need to find out very quickly as to whether we would need to change anything to ensure we can host the competition if agreed.

DS asked that we keep the Commonwealth Games for 2026 on the agenda. The Chairman agreed.

Alex Cargil Thompson (ACT) asked for an update on planned revisions to the Second Schedule and requested that any changes be put to the GC members as soon as possible for consideration.

AM confirmed that the only matter being considered for this year is electronic voting and this will be addressed at the next Trustee meeting in April and shared with the GC members directly afterwards.

No further questions were raised.

G513 – ELECTION TO GENERAL COUNCIL

For information under Rule 7 (g) (iii) – Elected Members of the General Council who retire in 2018 who have been invited to declare if they wish to stand for re-election.

(* not standing)

Five Ordinary Members

GK Alexander
CM Brooks
MJJ Charlton
JM Kynoch
PDC Turner*

Five Regional Members

Mrs ID Bennett – West Midlands*
PR Coley – South Western
GAE Larcombe – Southern
JF Miller – Greater London & South East
MP Watkins – Wales

Three Shooting Discipline Members

JS Harris – Target Shotgun
M Bradley – CivSR & Practical Rifle
A Bullen – Sporting Rifle

G514 – RE-ELECTION TO DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The following members are due for re-election and have expressed their willingness to continue to serve on the Disciplinary Committee:

Michael Wood – Lay Member
Toby Lehman – Lay Member

G515 – RESULTS OF TEAM CAPTAINS

The Chairman announced the results of recent elections for Team Captains.

Kolapore Captain 2018 – Charles Brooks
GB Under 25 2018 – Liam Cheek
GB Gallery Rifle 2018 – Taff Wilcox
GB Woomera Match 2019 – Tim Kidner
GB Canada 2020 – Rex Barrington

The Chairman wished all captains every success in their endeavours.

G516 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A note from Colin McEachran had been circulated to the GC members which referenced the North London Rifle Club lease. However, following the completion of the lease, the matter was deemed closed.

Charles Brooks (CB) asked for more detail on the review of the Real Estate Policy.

The Chairman confirmed that the Trustees are looking to understand the rights of enfranchisement which is the main issue. There have been various pieces of correspondence over the years which refer to the relationship of the NRA with the MoD with respect to enfranchisement, the issuance of a lease being 21 years minus a day which obviates the risk of enfranchisement and what is the prevailing law, ie property law, tenant and lease law, or charity law, or a combination.

The Chairman confirmed the Trustees had a conversation with Mike Walton, the drafter of the 2006 Real Estate policy, who was extremely helpful and knowledgeable. The Trustees will continue to investigate all aspects of the policy to ensure they can confirm it is fit for purpose.

SL asked whether it would be worth setting up a Real Estate Committee to help set the policy as per the suggestion made by Colin McEachran's.

The Chairman believes this would be an abrogation of the Trustee's responsibility. The Trustees are personally financially responsible for every decision taken and the Chairman does not believe they could hand that decision to anyone else.

CH remarked that having a Real Estate Committee offering advice on certain matters and provide a communication link between the GC members and the Trustees. CH added that there used to be an Estates Committee in the past who advised in matters including state of the roads, buildings, leases, etc but this was stopped when the changes were made to General Council and the Trustee board.

Richard Bailie (RB) added that the Advisory Committee consisted of 5 or 6 people with experience in all aspects of estate management.

CB added that the Estates Committee went into the National Shooting Centre when it was created. The Trustee board at that time felt that it was not right that the Board dealt with leases directly and that there needed to be an advisory body in place. It was also a requirement of the Charity Commission that there needed to be a trading arm. The NSC Ltd continued to perform that role and advise the Trustee board until the role was disbanded and taken in hand by the Trustees under the chairmanship of R Pizer.

ACT remarked he could see some value in having a Bisley Facilities Advisory Committee which could cover everything to do with estates and tenants. SL added we should consider including someone from the regions as we look to invest more in the regions.

The Chairman agreed to put a suggestion for an Estates Advisory Committee to the Trustees for consideration.

HD asked for confirmation of the date for the September meeting. The date was confirmed as Friday 7th September 2018.

HD wanted to make the members aware that he had been contacted by the local FEO to confirm the shooting attendance of a member upon FAC renewal and that members should ensure their records are kept up to date.

HD remarked that the MoD have informed his club that unless they get a template put in place for some of the live fire training ranges that they use, they will not be allowed to shoot and as civilians they are not competent at getting these done.

AM remarked that the NRA are aware of that. The memo circulated previously regarding contacting the MoD was to address the issue of the high number of people contacting DIO at Warminster who are short staffed and under pressure following incidents on their ranges. There is a risk that if civilian shooting causes DIO too much unnecessary work, there is an easy way of stopping that! The memo was to ask clubs to engage thought before action, which has been well received.

The prohibition on some of the field firing ranges is as a direct result of the 50 cal debacle. The NRA have agreed terms with the MoD to re-licence the field firing ranges for civilian use once the position on 50 cal has become clearer. We expect that to happen in the next month or so.

The Chairman announced that a vacancy remains for the NRA Team Captain to the Channel Islands in 2019 and asked the members to communicate this to any interested parties. The closing date for applications is 13th April 2018.

SL remarked that publication of the Spring Journal is delayed. Any articles should be sent to the NRA for consideration the deadline for copy for the journal is 22nd February 2018.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 15.40pm

Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 15th June 2018

3.00pm

NRA Pavilion

REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Action Point & Date	Ownerships	Action Required
G491 – 8 th September 2017	AM	AM to action the repairs to the floor of the shower blocks next to the Target Shed following a request from Peter Coley
G491 – 8 th September 2017 & 17 th February 2018	Trustees	Harald Dunton requested that Council Minutes be agreed and circulated to General Council within two or three weeks of a meeting in line with the GC minutes to keep members up to date in a timely manner. Trustees to agree at October meeting.
G481 – 8 th September 2017	AM	AM to request an update on mixed motive investment from the Charity Commission and report to the GC members.
G491 – 8 th September 2017	AM	AM to look into the £20 paper surcharge fee for Imperial entries following a request by Peter Coley.
G492 – 8 th September 2017	Trustees/AM	The Trustees and AM have been asked to approach ICFRA to assist in the production of a world ranking system for shooting in the Commonwealth Games.
G493 – 8 th September 2017	JSB	JSB will produce and circulate a synopsis of the presentation on Rule 150 presented on 8 th September to the General Council members.
G498 – 8 th September 2017	AM	To produce a review of the use of muzzle brakes for consideration by General Council and Council prior to implementation.
G512 – 17 th February 2018	ALL	To encourage members of various Commonwealth Games elements to get in touch with the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) as much as they can to try and keep shooting on future Games programmes.
G516 – 17 th February 2018	Trustees	To consider the creation of an Estates Advisory Committee to assist the Trustees in real estate issues.