

# NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

## Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting  
held in the NRA Pavilion, Bisley on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at 18.00

### Present:

Chairman	Mr JGM Webster
Treasurer	Mr D Lowe
Trustee	Mr D Lacey
Chief Executive	Mr A Mercer
Secretary	Mrs GJ Thatcher
Members	47 Registered Members

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### PROCEEDINGS

Attached hereto and initialled by the Chairman of the meeting as a record of the meeting.

### ORDINARY RESOLUTIONS

a. **Election of Officers**

- (1) **Re-election of the President** The Chairman proposed on behalf of The Council that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales KG, KT, GCB, AK, QSD, CD, PC, ADC(P) be re-elected as President.

**The Resolution was approved.**

- (2) **Election of Vice-Presidents** The Chairman proposed on behalf of The Council that the existing Vice-Presidents be elected en bloc. Two additional VPs were put forward for consideration – Mahendra Persaud of Guyana and Des Vampleew of Canada.

**The Resolution was approved.**

- b. **Appointment of the Auditors** The Chairman proposed on behalf of the Council the appointment of Hays McIntyre, Chartered Accountants, as Auditors.

**The Resolution was approved.**

**SPEECHES AND OPEN FORUM**

Attached as Annex.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John G. Wright".

Chairman

## **Annual General Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

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### **Proceedings**

**Chairman:**

Good evening everyone. I think we should start the proceedings.

Before I start, I think we should note that since we last gathered we have lost a few notable friends from shooting. In particular, four Vice Presidents of our Association. They are Haddon Donald from New Zealand, Sir Roger Bannister, Jim Thompson from Canada and Richard van Lingen from South Africa.

So I think it would be appropriate if I could ask you just to remain silent for a moment and remember these and other friends of the Association who have departed in the past 12 months.

Thank you very much.

On a lighter note, I would like to open by recording that one of our Vice Presidents was decorated recently in the Queen's Birthday Honours list. I think we would all like to record our congratulations to Colin McEachran for being awarded the MBE for services to target shooting and to Commonwealth Games Scotland.

*(Applause)*

Thank you very much.

Before I get into the agenda, I think I should apologise for some confusion that may have reigned. The original intention of this particular meeting had been to not only go through the usual agenda, but was also to consider an alteration to the Second Schedule.

In our quest to seek Privy Council approval prior to it being approved by us, because we thought there was little or no sense to get our approval without getting Privy Council's pre-authorisation, we omitted to circulate that particular piece of documentation in time.

So we should proceed with the traditional agenda that we usually adhere to at an Annual General Meeting, for which I can confirm that proper notice was given and which was published in the customary way. Anyone interested in attending these proceedings has not therefore been disadvantaged.

This was considered by your General Council this afternoon to be an appropriate way forward.

Obviously, we still have the electronic voting vote to conduct and Andrew (Mercer) has been tasked to go away and consider how and when that might be done.

With that, I would like to start our meeting with the election of the President. It is my great pleasure to propose, on behalf of the Council, that His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales be elected as our President.

All those in favour?

*(unanimous)*

Anybody against?

*(none)*

Thank you very much.

There are no candidates for the election of Deputy President.

So to item number 3, the election of the Vice Presidents. I would like to propose on behalf of the Council that the existing Vice Presidents, as listed on the rear of the notice of the agenda, are re-elected en bloc.

All those in favour?

*(unanimous)*

Anybody against?

*(none)*

I would also like to nominate two further Vice Presidents for your consideration.

The first is Mahendra Persaud of the Guyana Rifle Association. Mahendra is a regular visitor to Bisley. Most notably however, the Guyana Rifle Association celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary recently and he was instrumental in ensuring that those teams from these islands and elsewhere that journeyed there for these celebrations had a wonderful time. He has been a stalwart of Guyanan and West Indian shooting for a very long time and I think it would be an appropriate acknowledgement from us as the National Rifle Association of the UK to recognise Guyana and its 150 years with this proposal.

The second person that I would like to nominate is Des Vamplew. Des is the Executive Vice President of the DCRA (Dominion of Canada Rifle Association), which is also celebrating their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Des has been a fairly frequent visitor to Bisley and has been a long time contributor to excellence in shooting for the DCRA, both as a competitor and as an administrator. He is also a former Commonwealth Games gold medallist.

Both the Council and the General Council have approved my proposing these gentlemen to you at this meeting.

May I have a show of hands? All those in favour of adding these two gentlemen to our list of Vice Presidents.

*(unanimous)*

Anybody against?

*(none)*

Thank you very much.

Item number 4. You will know that Hays MacIntyre were appointed as our auditors this time last year. They successfully completed the most recent audit. They have put themselves forward for re-election as our auditors. So I am asking the meeting to approve the appointment of HaysMacIntyre for a second year.

All those in favour?

(*unanimous*)

Anybody against?

(*none*)

Thank you very much.

We will now go to our now usual customary speeches by myself and then Derek Lowe will follow me, and then we will hear from Andrew, our Chief Executive. These will include a review of the financial statements.

So I am pleased that we are able to report another healthy surplus in 2017, continued growth in our membership and continued capital investment in facilities for shooting. I hope by now you have all had the opportunity to read the Annual Report which was published at Easter and outlines our financial position.

Derek will follow me to review this, and then Andrew will describe the capital investment projects that are ongoing at the camp and other important matters.

But first there are a number of positive items that I would like to share with you. Our membership continues to grow; as of the end of May this year we have 8,604 members, 731 of whom are new members who applied for membership in 2017. We have received 520 applications for new membership so far this year.

This level of membership applications is the result of the hard work of many people, and of course is essential for the growth of our sport. It has obviously put pressure on the system, particularly on our training team, as the number of probationary members keeps growing. I'd like to pay tribute to the Membership Team, led by Georgina Thatcher and the Training Team, led by David Camp, for successfully keeping pace with this growth.

Range use by members and by corporate users also continues to grow. Range use by individuals and clubs is up 15% this year alone. This demonstrates the popularity of shooting, but this increasing popularity means that we must look to new solutions to increase capacity on our ranges. One answer clearly lies with electronic targets; we are expanding our use of these and introduced a further butt on Century Range earlier this year.

However, not everything goes to plan and we are behind - although not underwater - with the development of the other side of the Pavilion. The process of refurbishment has revealed more challenges than we were anticipating at the outset, but we are making sure that we do things properly and in a lasting manner.

At the end of last year we spent a lot of time developing a new 2018-2020 Three Year Plan. Prior three year plans have focused on several key elements; sound financial management, increasing and improving the services to members, improving the infrastructure and utilisation of Bisley Camp, increasing shooting activity, access and infrastructure at regional ranges, and improving communications to, and services for, all current and prospective members.

The review of the past 5 years' accounts shows the degree of success we have enjoyed. Since the beginning of 2013, we have spent almost £2.8M on capital expenditure, whilst improving our net cash position by almost £750k. As a result, we are now debt free, we have refurbished several ranges and other facilities at the camp, and we have reinstated a full maintenance programme for the entire estate.

Our membership continues to grow from 6,891 at the start of 2013, to 8,505 by the end of 2017, which is an increase of over 23%, and we enjoyed a net increase of 490 members in 2017 alone. Consequently, our ranges have never been busier, and we continue to see a consistent annual rise in range utilisation.

Price rises for membership, training and shooting have been kept flat in real terms wherever possible, and subsidies have been found to encourage younger shooters.

The new 2018-2020 plan seeks to build on these achievements of the past 5 years and more. It has been developed in consultation with representatives from two different sets of stakeholders; tenants at Bisley and regional clubs. It has also been reviewed by the members' representative body, the NRA General Council. Its reach extends to increasing our support for shooting in the regions away from Bisley, expanding training courses and competency certification, and focusing on improving the perception of target shooting, whilst continuing to build on our sound financial base and infrastructure.

The reach beyond Bisley is particularly important at this time. I believe it was correct that we focused mostly on Bisley over the past 5 years, since our world-famous range complex remains a mission-critical asset, given that it is considered the home range for around 16,000 fullbore shooters.

Maintenance programmes and investment had been necessarily shelved during prior financially challenging periods, and some catch up was required. But this investment has enabled us, as the range operator, to increase range capacity across a wide range of disciplines, and grow non-member income for everybody's benefit. It also demonstrates our commitment to our broader public benefit requirement as a charity, at the same time as improving service to our members.

But - and this is quite a big but - there are another 20,000 or so fullbore shooters that practice their sport on some 300 privately-owned ranges and 24 MoD ranges. In fact we estimate that out of the holders of the 200,000 firearms certificates and 650,000 shotgun certificates in issue, the NRA directly, and through its affiliated organisations, accounts for around 52,000 target shooters.

All these fullbore shooters have common interests, whether they are currently NRA members or not. They want access to ranges, they want to be able to practise their sport safely, as do the operators of the ranges that they use, and they want those who regulate shooting to do so using an informed and rational approach.

Access to ranges outside Bisley is not always straightforward. Privately operated facilities are typically 25 metre to 100 metre, no danger area ranges whereas most longer range shooting requires access to MoD ranges. Civilian shooting is low priority on MoD ranges, whilst privately operated ranges are subject to increasing scrutiny with respect to their operations and safety certification.

So our three year plan involves developing better access to MoD ranges, implementing robust safety systems for private ranges, and more investment into regional ranges including exploring opportunities to acquire and develop them.

As ranges get busier, we need to sustain our exemplary safety record for everybody's benefit. Access to MoD and privately owned facilities is possible because of the confidence the operators of those ranges have in the NRA's shooter certification card regime. Over the course of this year we will be implementing a programme whereby the NRA will issue all shooters certification cards centrally, with tests conducted by NRA affiliated clubs as at present, but with increasing levels of support from the NRA for the many dynamic and enthusiastic regional affiliated organisations that often depend upon a small handful of committed volunteers.

Increasing regulation and scrutiny from the authorities is inevitable in the current times. The NRA will make resources available to continue making progress in developing influence with Government, the Home Office and the Police Licensing authorities. Our efforts today have been on promoting and informing.

Our three year plan involves the careful, consistent and professional promotion of marksmanship. We all know that we have a good story to tell, including the all-inclusive nature of our sport without reference to age, gender or physical ability, our exemplary safety record and the fact that shooting is a major sport across the country, and we excel at it here in the UK.

I congratulate, in particular, the medal winners among the Home Countries competitors at the recent Commonwealth Games in Brisbane. They took five out of the six medal positions in fullbore, including David Luckman, who made the double-double of pairs and individual golds in successive games for England.

So before I hand over to Derek, I would like to end by thanking my fellow Trustees, some of whom are here in the room, and Andrew Mercer and his staff for all their energy, enthusiasm and hard work over the past 12 months. Much has been achieved and I remain bullish about the Association's very positive future.

*(round of applause)*

Derek Lowe, Treasurer

Thank you Chairman.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am pleased to report on a healthy financial standing for the NRA over the last year.

In 2017, our revenues increased to £5.98m, up from £5.73m in 2016.

We invested just over £700k on capital expenditure, bringing the total for 2013-2017 inclusive to £2.8m, which is around 80% of the £3.5m in cash generated by our operations over those 5 years. That means we averaged over £500k per year invested in new facilities, in addition to annual maintenance spending on existing infrastructure, which in 2017 cost just over £350k.

The remaining 20% of that £3.5m (nearly £750k) was spent on a combination of repaying the financial debts which were due in 2013 (£339k) and improving our cash position by £403k. That brought the cash balance at the end of 2017 to £584k, exceeding the policy minimum of £200k.

The recent strategic review for 2018-2020 targeted capital expenditure of £500k per year, maintenance spending of £400k per year and an increased cash minimum of £250k, which is intended to make the NRA ready for unforeseen events, whether contingencies or fresh opportunities.

In 2017, we generated a general fund surplus excluding investment returns of £106k, by comparison with an equivalent of £64k in 2016. The budget for 2018 looks to a surplus of around £150k, alongside capital expenditure of up to £700k. Of course, the busiest time of the year is still ahead of us, but the figures to April are just ahead of budget. I hope you share the encouragement I feel from the financial performance in 2017.

Every year, the Trustees face a complex mixture of competing opportunities and interests. We aim to strike a balance between them which serves all our beneficiaries as a charity, and, as our own rules require us to do, without special favour between the interests of different members, whether based on geography, shooting discipline, property or otherwise.

The Trustees believe it is fair that shooters pay what it costs to deliver the services and goods we consume, most notably on the ranges and around the Bisley estate. This principle is how the Trustees seek to avoid having one shooting constituency being asked to subsidise another, in particular as between those who don't shoot at Bisley and those who do.

We do not wish this to be at the expense of affordability, however, which is why we continue to preserve the real-terms cost of core goods & services by limiting most price rises to the inflation rate. For Target Rifle shooters in particular, the benefits of introducing GGG ammunition in 2015 continue, with its combination of accuracy and lower pricing.

When I took up the post of Treasurer in 2013, I highlighted two areas I felt to be of particular importance and they remain so today.

The first is that we should apply our financial resources to serve the shooting of both the present and the future. The challenge early on was to ensure we had financial resources at all, without which no organisation would survive, let alone thrive. It takes repeated surpluses and reliable cash generation for us to invest in facilities and services which promote and deliver shooting, whether that of our members or our clients. The healthier finances in most of the last 5 years have freed up the time and attention of management and Trustees, allowing us to concentrate more on our operations and investment in our longer term future.

The second area is the importance placed by the Trustees on effective communication around our finances: within management for operational effectiveness; among the Trustees for oversight, direction and support; and out to General Council and individual members for transparency and enfranchisement. In addition to speaking at this meeting, I provide a written or verbal report to each General Council meeting and there is a regular article in the Summer Journals.

I record the Trustees' thanks to the Support Services team, led by Ray Hutchings, for making the communication and understanding of our finances so effective and timely throughout the year. They make a critical contribution.

I now hand over to Andrew Mercer. Thank you.

*(round of applause)*

Andrew Mercer, Chief Executive

Thank you Derek.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am grateful to both the Chairman and Treasurer for setting out some of our policies and achievements over the past 12 months.

For my part, there are wider issues that I feel need drawing to your attention away from the more routine Bisley camp fair that can, too often, distract us from the major strategic issues facing target shooting.

The NRA faces an interesting conundrum as whilst our membership and demand for our ranges are both growing apace, storm clouds are gathering if we raise our eyes up from the Bisley plains.

Shooting and the ownership of firearms is seen by too many as a bad thing and the NRA, and many other shooting organisations, have done little to counter this view. Our communications are often targeted towards our friends, and we do very little to persuade or inform those who do not know or care little about shooting or merits about owning guns.

Furthermore, we are all too quickly tarnished by association with those with evil or dishonest intent, and commit terrible actions with firearms. If a young man steals a Mercedes car, gets drunk and then kills a child on a pedestrian crossing, then the media and general public do not demand action against all Mercedes drivers or car owners. So how have we allowed for this situation to arise? When there is a shooting incident, the media, public and authorities respond by calling for ever greater sanctions and restrictions against the law-abiding firearm and shotgun certificate holders.

The current proposals to prohibit 50 calibre and MARS rifle are just one recent example. The Home Office have ventured not a shred of evidence that such a ban would enhance public safety, but continue with their efforts to legislate.

Banning 50 calibre and MARS rifles is akin to installing speed bumps on the M3 to stop speeding on the M4!

It is hard not to form a view that a headline grabbing ban of such rifles is designed to distract attention away from the real problem that is knife crime.

However, shooting has a great story to sell, and there are plenty of us who enjoy this great sport. I estimate there are 2.75 million legally held firearms and shotguns held on certificate in the United Kingdom. Target shooting is surely the most acceptable public face of firearms ownership we can promote as it does not have the additional hurdle of justifying the shooting of live quarry.

The NRA Trustees recognise this challenge and have authorised our staff to start promoting target shooting to the wider public. Our ambition is to normalise target shooting and we expect no direct return for our efforts. We do not expect new entrants to the sport, or increased membership of the NRA. Wider acceptance of shooting and firearms ownership is our primary goal.

I have to tell you that our plans are at an early stage, and will focus on all forms of target shooting with the National Shooting Centre as the lead identity. Social media will be our primary platform, our current NRA Facebook presence has good reach, and probably the highest engagement of any shooting organisation. But the wrong content will not allow us to engage with those who have no interest or knowledge of firearms ownership.

Our resources are limited and needs to be carefully used. Enlightened and progressive engagement with the licensing police is an area of increased effort by NRA staff. Police budgets are under pressure and firearms licensing is an easy target for cost cutting. We remain committed to offering services, free of charge, to train FEOs and help improve their service to the shooting community.

It would be wrong of me not to mention one of the many improvements at Bisley before I conclude, and I'd like to comment on electronic targets.

They are not new technology, but have been slow to appear on our ranges. Thankfully our recent installations on Stickledown and Century ranges are proving that the NRA has the ability and finances to install reliable and accurate electronic targets.

That is not to say there haven't been problems, but Intarso targets have proved their worth, and have quickly become the target of choice for many regular Bisley shooters.

I have received fulsome praise for these targets. Compliments to me are something of an unusual experience!

*(laughter)*

But I've been generally delighted by the number of shooters who have been tempted to have a go at long range shooting, because they can now book a target for one hour.

Capturing the fall of shot electronically gives us the opportunity to ultimately display live scores on scoreboards, and online. Something that is essential if we are ever going to make the leap to conveying the excitement of target shooting to a viewing audience.

If we are going to secure target shooting in major international sporting events, such as the Commonwealth Games, then we need to develop exciting visual imaging for the broadcasters.

Thank you for your attention Ladies and Gentlemen, I shall hand back to the Chairman.

*(round of applause)*

### Chairman

Thank you very much.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we now come to the open forum section of our meeting.

Those members who have questions are invited to come forward and ask them. I would be grateful if you could keep your question relatively short. No more than 2 minutes in duration would be helpful.

Thank you.

Robin Pizer:

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

I would just take you up on one point you made in your earlier introduction. The agenda and the accounts were not circulated to members, as required by Rule 14 and I would urge you in future to abide by the rules in the Second Schedule.

And when you come to circulating the electronic voting proposals, please do circulate them to members as per Rule 14, because last time you brought this to our attention, there were a number of problems with it, and I think people will want to know that has all been resolved.

Chairman:

We agree.

But I would like to say, we are following our customary practice.

Robin Pizer:

Customary practice, I don't know when it was introduced, but I think fairly recently.

Chairman:

It was customary practice under your chairmanship as well as mine. You are right and we've discussed the point. If we are going to have a rule change, we need to give people the time to consider it and then not be disadvantaged by being excluded from coming. We are therefore having this meeting without the rule change item and as such the agenda is quite benign.

Robin Pizer:

Yes, I agree. The agenda that has been put up today is well known.

However, the real reason I want to talk to you about, Mr Chairman, is why has the General Council minutes of February 2018 and the NRA Spring Journal 2018 not accurately recorded concerns of the Proof Masters about NRA target rifles?

They have recorded "the status quo ante remains", but this is untrue. Members need to know that the Proof Masters have told the NRA representatives that the 1999 agreement has been breached by the NRA. The Proof Masters are adamant that no reduction in throat length is permitted by the 1999 agreement. Dr Allsopp's report of 2015 requires extra experiments to be done to determine if the safe reduction in throat length was possible.

There will be no additional experiments as the NRA appear to have no interest in them. So there will be no new agreement permitting a reduction in throat length. Very few rifles compliant with the 1999 agreement are proofed these days. E.g. at Birmingham in the last 10 years, none, and only a few at London.

The Proof Masters are very upset at the NRA attitude and are considering their position.

Have you seen the cautionary advice to policy holders issued by the Proof Houses, ten or more years ago, to the gun trade, including auction houses, about insurance? One of the points it makes is the presence of genuine proof marks in the small arm does not guarantee that the item in question is still in proof, since these proof marks are rendered invalid if a small arm has in some way been weakened following its last proof. So, any insurance of a rogue gunsmith maybe invalid if, for instance, the throat length is shortened after proof.

If, Mr Chairman, anything I say to you is a surprise, I suggest on Monday morning, you get on your bike, get up to Birmingham and get a personal briefing on the Proof House concerns and where this is leading to, then fully and accurately report this back to the TR shooters.

Thank you.

Chairman:

Thank you, Robin.

Carol Painting:

I have a short question and I think you can all hear me as I'm in the back row.

Is there any plan to mend the roads in the near future?

Chairman:

Yes there is. The Chief Executive has in his objectives only one financial objective which has a number on it, and that is he has to spend a given sum of money every twelve months on fixing the roads. I believe that sum is £45k and the roads will be fixed by the end of June. Or certainly, they are due to be fixed by the end of June. We've had some issues trying to get on the agenda of our tarmac layer, but it's in train and it will be done before the meeting.

Carol Painting:

Thank you.

Phil Northam:

A related question. With the increasing use of the ranges which is which is to be applauded, especially in the winter which weakens the land, we are desperately in need of some reinforced car parking. Is there an agenda to supplement the car parking and also make some of the car parks more usable, especially during the winter months.

Andrew Mercer:

The car parking is becoming an increasing problem. I think we've invested heavily on Century Range. Stickledown is showing wear and tear and that is causing some considerable concern.

Within the camp, I've got plans for the area in front of Fultons, the area behind the offices, and so those are on our features, they will be done in the Autumn.

Phil Northam:

In time for the Winter? (Yes). Thank you.

Martin Osment:

Mr Chairman, I submitted a list of five questions in writing in advance. Are you able to answer those today.

Chairman:

I think we are unable to answer some of them.

Andrew Mercer:

You have submitted a series of questions as ABCAT. ABCAT are not affiliated to the NRA, but I'm quite happy to take whatever questions you want to raise as a member.

Martin Osment:

Those were my questions.

Andrew Mercer:

As you raised them as an ABCAT member, perhaps you could remind me what they were.

Martin Osment:

Just for completeness, the first question was about where the post nominal letters are published, which has now been sorted out as they are now in the current copy of the Bisley Bible, but they were not in previous copies.

Andrew Mercer:

So was your question asked before or after the Bible was published?

Martin Osment:

I can't tell you that – I don't know.

Andrew Mercer:

The bible was published in March, I think it was, and you raised your questions when?

Martin Osment:

I looked on the website at the then current version of the bible and couldn't find it. I couldn't find it via website search either. (OK) But I have since been provided with that list, so that obviously is now available. But just as a general comment, there are a number of things that if you search for on the website, you don't find them. Another example is the date and time of this AGM. The only way you actually find it is if you look for the General Council meeting, and you'll find there is a reference in the date and time.

Chairman:

I'm sorry; that's not true. I did it yesterday. I went to the search engine and I put in Annual General Meeting and two clicks later I was on.

Martin Osment:

Well, I did it about 10 days ago, John and it still wasn't showing up.

Gary Alexander:

So it's improving then!

Martin Osment:

It's not an issue or anything. The next question was who is current supplier of electricity to the camp and what is the tariff being charged.

(*voice from the audience – I'm sorry can we have that question again*)

Chairman:

So the question is, who is the current supplier of electricity to the camp and what is the tariff being charged.

This is a question that we discussed at the General Council meeting earlier on today.  
Andrew, would you like to take this?

Andrew Mercer:

We have five substations, but the primary supplies come to three main ones around the camp. Their supplies are all delivered by EDF. The average unit rate charge is 11.5p per unit.

Martin Osment:

Thank you Andrew.

And then there were two questions relating to litigation costs. Clearly, that's not necessarily appropriate for a verbal answer. Are you able to provide that information in writing?

Andrew Mercer:

Please remind me what the questions were?

Martin Osment:

The first one was litigation was threatened by Barlow Robbins Solicitors against myself and Andrew Paul on your personal behalf and the question was what was the breakdown of that, and to what extent was the NRA funding that?

Andrew Mercer:

I think the fact that you were held to account and you published an apology actually for things that you published online, to sit there and ask me who paid what on the legal fees is inappropriate. That is a confidential matter that I'm not prepared to disclose.

Gary Alexander:

Perhaps he's offering to recompense us?

Andrew Mercer:

As you have published an apology, are you offering to recompense?

Martin Osment:

Let us be clear Andrew. What we published was material we were asked to publish.

Andrew Mercer:

But you published it, did you not?

Martin Osment:

We did not edit it, we didn't vet it, we didn't endorse it.

Andrew Mercer:

But you published it online.

Martin Osment:

Just as you put material in the Journal, which I could take issue with you, and in the light of what you have just said, I will in future.

Andrew Mercer:

Thank you.

Martin Osment:

So are you prepared to answer the question?

Andrew Mercer:

No.

Martin Osment:

OK. And we then went on to ask for a breakdown of all legal actions during the preceding three years where solicitors have acted for the NRA or NSC, identifying the parties fees incurred and a summary of the outcomes.

Andrew Mercer:

I think in general terms I can give a broad breakdown of the legal and professionals. Last year we spent somewhere in the region of £150k in legals and professionals; about £94k of that was legal fees, and around a half of that was spent on, not litigation, but lets say disputed matters that were related a variety of matters.

We are not prepared to give individual breakdowns of how much was spent on claims against individual tenants in the way that you've asked. That is not appropriate and we are not prepared to do that.

Martin Osment:

OK, thank you. And the other one was we were asking for the budgets for expenditure made and planned in respect of works on the Pavilion and the Exhibition Hut.

Andrew Mercer:

The Pavilion: the capital expenditure to date, about £360k; planned, another £300k planned this year.

Exhibition Hut: capital expenditure to date, £10k; planned expenditure this year £30k.

Martin Osment:

Thank you.

And obviously, what do you expect those two lots of expenditure to achieve?

Andrew Mercer:

Good value for the NRA.

Chairman:

I think it's worth saying as I mentioned in my speech that we are behind where we thought we would be on the remainder of the Pavilion.

I think it is fair for everybody to understand that that is not because there are massive cost overruns with what we are trying to do there. But like any building project, the things that you can't see before you start, tend to surprise you on the down side which we've certainly experienced.

We did receive a six-figure sum from the previous tenant for dilapidations. That proved to be too optimistic, although it was undertaken by a third party professional.

Some important things to remember. The NRA is an income and expenditure organisation. Were this a corporation, it would have been perfectly feasible for us to go out and borrow the sums of money to do the sort of things that we would like to do to the other side of this particular building, and that would enable us to accelerate its completion.

However, we have, as a group of Trustees, chosen to husband our capital as much as we possibly can. As Derek said, the cash balance was £200k minimum cash balance and we have raised that to £250k.

Because of that, and because of some prioritisation of capital expenditure projects that we have done, that has put the expenditure for the second half of the Pavilion project to the second half of this year, rather than the first half of this year. This is disappointing because it's not ready for the Bisley meeting which is what we would have liked.

The choice boiled down to putting in 12 electronic targets to accommodate the increasing demand for shooting, or accelerating some of the work on the Pavilion. Because we don't consider it wise to borrow any money, we took the decision to prioritise effectively what was a capital project which we had originally put into the first half of next year, rather than the first half of this year.

These are the sort of decisions that Andrew and the Trustees are trying to juggle. I would just like to ensure that everybody understands: there is no huge cost overrun on the project next door. Silke (Lohmann) was kind enough in our General Council meeting to say that quite clearly there may be people who think that because it has taken so long, it's not unreasonable for them to assume that it's way over budget and we're digging ourselves into a huge hole. We are not. We have to reprioritise or prioritise different expenditure and husband our capital as we are dependent on cash flow. That obviously makes it more tricky to juggle some of these things.

If we had not put in those electronic targets with the poor supply of markers that we have been experiencing, shooting should have been curtailed. We thought that was a reasonable decision to take with our finite amount of available capital, and I think that makes sense.

*(hear, hear)*

David Friend:

Did I hear, or read that when the refurbishment of the Pavilion was done, that it was unexpected to find asbestos problems?

Andrew Mercer:

No.

Chairman:

No, you shouldn't have done. There are two things that we have experienced. Some of the infrastructure isn't as robust as one would like it to be as you begin to investigate, particularly the roof.

David Friend:

Sorry, when did you find out about the asbestos?

Andrew Mercer:

Asbestos was already identified in the survey.

David Friend:

Prior to taking over?

Andrew Mercer:

It was well known. The extent of the asbestos and where the nooks and crannies actually lay, that wasn't as well surveyed as we'd thought.

Chairman:

This is my understanding of it.

The extent of the asbestos was pretty well understood. But you can only understand what you can do with that asbestos when you've got a proper plan of what it is that you are actually going to do to the building. When you start to move columns around and drill out conduits and all that sort of stuff, it became evident to us that we were going to have to disturb more asbestos than we originally thought. So we haven't found new asbestos. We've had to do more to the asbestos than we originally anticipated. Not hugely, but significantly.

Thomas Harrison:

With regards to the Exhibition Hut which has now been lying empty for several years, and been trashed inside as I understand it, what are the plans? It's not earning anything!

Chairman:

It is actually! It earnt more in January this year being empty!

Thomas Harrison:

As a film set! (yes). When are we going to return it to shooters rather than just flogging it to the film people?

Chairman:

You claimed it hasn't been earning a penny for several years. That is not correct. Allow me to pass you to Andrew who will give you the answer.

Andrew Mercer:

There are plans currently underway to convert it to a 'club house to rent' for want of a better description. We are also looking to relocate some of the activities that currently take place within the Pavilion, which is some business we do with the CNC, but its primary function is to provide accommodation for visiting clubs and organisations who want a club house to rent. There will be three sets of toilets; disabled, ladies and gentlemen, a kitchenette, a store and then a large open space that will be centrally heated, well decorated and robustly furnished. So visiting clubs and organisations have got a club house that they can use as and when they want.

There are other organisations, like our good friends from the HBSA, who used to run Arms Fairs at various instances.

Thomas Harrison:

And what timescale is this going to take, as it's taken a long time so far!

Andrew Mercer:

Yes I know, we've had problems. There was a slightly unfortunate set of discussions with the Conservation Officer, so we've engaged with Planning Consultants and I expect the work to be concluded by the end of this year.

Thomas Harrison:

When will the planning complete?

Andrew Mercer:

I'm expecting it to be ready by Spring next year.

Chairman:

Any further questions?

Phil Northam:

It took me marginally over two hours to struggle 60 miles to attend. For those who live further afield, that's more acute and it comes with the territory being a Friday. The traffic and the road are not amenable to travelling and predicting an accurate journey time of arrival.

With the introduction of electronic voting, can we please canvass the wider membership about potentially moving this meeting to a time when other members from further afield, those who work, those who are at college and those who are only able to attend on a weekend, could attend and therefore enhance democracy and representation of the membership?

Chairman:

Perfectly happy to do that. I'm never quite sure why it has alighted on this particular day. It's been on this particular day as long as I can remember. But in the dim and distant past it was held in London for a while.

John Bloomfield:

It used to be in March. When the financial year ended at the end of September, the AGM was held in March and sometimes it was held in London. And I think it was mostly held in London until John Jackman became Chairman and then it was held here and part way through John's chairmanship, the end of year date changed from September to 31<sup>st</sup> December and the Annual General Meeting got moved. I think it has to be held before 30<sup>th</sup> June.

Chairman:

It has to be held before the end of June. As we are now publishing accounts at the end of March, or thereabouts, that does give us some flexibility. Although in recent times the NRA couldn't publish its accounts out much before this date anyway.

This date has always given us the flexibility if we ever had a 'bump in the road' like we did in the past, but it seems perfectly obvious that we could move it to tomorrow for example. But I for one am not wedded to mid June or thereabouts.

Phil Northam:

I think the introduction of electronic voting gives you an opportunity to use that in a way that many members, younger or a long way away will be able to come along with potentially a better set of compromises for this meeting.

Andrew Mercer:

It would.

Chairman:

I understand and we should definitely look at that.

Mick Barr:

Mr Chairman, I would like to step out of line if I may and pass a compliment!

I first started coming to Bisley around 1957/58, something like that, and I don't think Bisley camp has looked so clean, tidy and professionally set up for a very long time. So I'd just like to thank Andrew, the staff and your good self and your fellow Trustees. Well done!

Chairman:

Thank you very much.

*(hear hear – round of applause)*

Andrew Mercer:

I shall give you the tenner later on Mick!!

*(laughter)*

All joking apart, that is very kind, and I'm very grateful and I shall pass that onto my staff, who will appreciate it.

Chris Law:

Is there any likelihood of a development on Caravan Site 7 which has been on hold for a while?

Andrew Mercer:

We have some very exciting plans for Site 7, which came in about two or three weeks ago. What is not so exciting is the capital sum associated with those plans and I need to talk to the Chairman when he's in a more relaxed mood to see how we can actually go about funding this because it is a bit of a back breaker. We are talking very significant sums, and the problem is with Site 7, you can't do a bit of it, you've either got to do the whole lot or not at all to make it worthwhile.

But it is hot on our list of caravan sites for development, but it is a very substantial commitment, and I'm not sure yet how we are going to fund it within the current financial policies that we currently have.

Chairman:

Let me put a bit of flesh on that bone if I may? We want to have accommodation to try and suit all pockets. That is very much the way that the Real Estate Policy is set out. But we also believe that if we get power and hard standings and foul drainage to various sites, that would be a good thing.

One of the nice pieces of 'financial engineering' which was helpful with the new Spencer Site was that it was a requirement that everybody had a new caravan. And that was partly because that helped us fund the capital investment on which those caravans were then placed, ie the hard standing and the drainage.

For those who have got caravans, but would like to put it on a nice hard standing, we don't have that ability to garner a contribution from the sale of a new caravan. So that does mean a higher investment and if we are talking doing it out of cash flow, we will still be talking about it in five or six years time.

Andrew has got to try and convince the rest of the Trustees, and certainly the man sitting on his left (Treasurer) that there is capital available and that's going to be quite a tall order, without going to the bank. I'm just a little uncomfortable at the moment going to the bank.

Chris Law:

Have we got a ball-park price for that sort of development?

Andrew Mercer:

It's around £10k per pitch.

Chairman:

And so you suddenly look at 50 caravan sites and that's your sort of number. It's not trivial.

Andrew Mercer:

It's a year's capital expenditure in one project. And there are a lot of competing demands for capital at Bisley Camp, and away from Bisley Camp as well.

Chairman:

Watch this space.

Silke Lohmann:

I had a few problems with the website when I tried to enter the Imperial, and it seems that the new website, which probably cost quite a lot money, isn't quite up to scratch yet. It doesn't talk to the bit that we enter for the competitions. Can you let us know what the plans for that is and when that changes?

I mean, I must say my mistake probably was I did it just before GDPR and filled in all the forms and ticked all the boxes, and then it didn't recognise my password, so I couldn't enter the competition.

And that leads me to another question, I'm slightly worried about the company you are using for the data storage, it seems slightly odd as well I'm afraid. I'm sure you can put us in picture.

Andrew Mercer:

I actually issued an apology about the new website before we launched it in anticipation of complaints, and I didn't get a single complaint, which was a bit disappointing really!

*(laughter)*

So I think it's settling down. The big obsession I had before the launch was functionality because we use the website for quite a lot of purposes. The problem is, the website itself is just one part of the chain of programmes and software that we use to deliver a variety of things.

So effectively you go through the front door, which is the website, then you go into various supplementary software packages that do our accommodation bookings, or online this or online that, and it is the interaction between these different systems, between the website and Azolve, and between Azolve, the membership database that holds all the core records, and the booking system or the competition entry system, or the accommodation booking systems that causes issues

We got the website pretty much right. A lot of the interconnectivity was then reliant upon an upgrade of Azolve, the database. That has been something that has been ongoing now for about a month or so which has been tiresome and traumatic. The leverage that we can apply against Azolve is limited because they are doing it free of charge. So I can bang my hand on the table as much and as loud as I can, but they are effectively doing this as part of their routine upgrading.

When we started with Azolve, they wrote a number of bespoke add-ons to fit our own peculiar way of doing business, and it is not surprisingly the add-ons and how they interact with all these different systems that has been the problem.

We started off about 6-8 weeks ago with two sides of A3 worth of queries. I think we're down to one side of A4 now. Once we've got Azolve properly bedded in, we can go to work on making sure that the interconnectivity between the membership database website and the competition entries run rather more smoothly.

The staff keep talking about API, and I still haven't got a clue what API means. But apparently that is what links and allows different software packages to recognise the identity of the same individual. So instead of having to sign on twice, you sign on once and it recognises and takes you through.

And that is something that we will be working on as we work our way through this year. It is not a quick fix issue.

Silke Lohmann:

But isn't that one of the key things. Who designed your website? Did you go to a company, or was that in-house?

Andrew Mercer:

It was done by a company.

Silke Lohmann:

Most companies will start with, you know, the architecture and that should have been covered.

Andrew Mercer:

They did. With respect, you are missing the point. It wasn't so much the website, its what the website plumbs into. And we knew full well what the website connectivity with the Azolve database would do. But what's happened, Azolve has effectively upgraded, we were on an old version of Azolve, and it's that upgrade that has caused the problems.

Silke Lohmann:

Rather bad timing!

Andrew Mercer:

Well yes it is, but the reality is that as we are getting busier....

Silke Lohmann:

And how much did the website cost us?

Andrew Mercer:

The website cost £23,472.

Silke Lohmann:

And that's from? We paid that since?

Andrew Mercer:

That was paid last year.

Silke Lohmann:

And it's still not working!

Andrew Mercer:

With respect, that's unfair. It is working.

Silke Lohmann:

It is not working properly!

Andrew Mercer:

I don't think there is any such thing as a perfect website. It is much better than the old website. There are elements of the functionality that are still work in progress. I think we've had fair value for our money.

David Friend:

Why did you get rid of a website that worked perfectly well and substitute it with one which is rubbish?

Andrew Mercer:

I would take issue. You are entitled to your opinion that it's rubbish. It's different.

David Friend:

It is rubbish. I went to get online and it first of all comes up with an apology that you have to log in twice, so I go in and it still doesn't work, and then says if you have difficulty, press here. So I pressed here and another page comes up and it asks for all my details, gets round to date of birth, and I fill in the date of birth, and it won't accept it.

(*various comments & laughter*)

But because it turns out, when I rang up the next day, which happened to be the 1<sup>st</sup> June, and they said we haven't had a submission. I said that I had submitted it twice and they said, because you didn't have the date of birth, we haven't got a record of it, so I'm sorry you are going to have to pay 10% surcharge.

But the filling of the date of birth, turns out was an American date of birth!

Andrew Mercer:

With respect, the problem was you filled in the date of birth incorrectly.

David Friend:

I filled in the date of birth, 13<sup>th</sup> May 1934, or 13051934. It wanted it month first and the day in the middle which is American. What on earth is the point of having an American site in the UK?

Andrew Mercer:

As you know, we've had correspondence on this, because there was plenty of time for you to make contact with the Competition team and you didn't.

Silke Lohmann:

But you should not have asked for all that information again. Especially with GDPR, that is really not on. The people in your office should know all the details, so all they ask David is a couple of bits and bobs. He doesn't need to put in all that information. That's just not on.

Andrew Mercer:

You are entitled to your opinion. It's not as simple as you point out.

Silke Lohmann:

It would have been simpler if you dealt with those enquiries properly. How many did you deal with? I'm still waiting for an answer from you about that!

Andrew Mercer:

We dealt with about 100 queries.

Silke Lohmann:

How many?

Andrew Mercer:

A 100.

Silke Lohmann:

A hundred! Out of 700 who entered! That is quite a lot don't you think?

Andrew Mercer:

The primary reason for the complaint is that people have forgotten their password. Because they use the password once a year.

Silke Lohmann:

I had just entered the new password. I had done your GDPR thing. I've done everything and I still couldn't enter the competition, because it still didn't recognise my new password.

Andrew Mercer:

But you said you'd entered.

Silke Lohmann:

Sorry?

Andrew Mercer:

I thought you said you'd entered.

Silke Lohmann:

Well... I entered because, you might remember, because Hugh Dan was there as well, and probably not the best use of your time, but I couldn't get in there either, and I wasn't going to fill in all my details again to enter the competition. So Georgina was very kind and forwarded the email, or did she maybe get that email from the Membership Committee, because I was furious. I'm not giving you all my details again. You should know all of that and you shouldn't ask customers for all of that and make it more complicated. And if you had 100 people out of 700, that is extraordinary!

Andrew Mercer:

It is 835.

Silke Lohmann:

It was at that point 700.

Andrew Mercer:

But I'm saying now it's 835.

Silke Lohmann:

But still, out of 800 that's a lot. I think you should get back to your guys and sort that out!

Chairman:

This is not a good use of the AGM.

Phil Northam:

Can I raise one issue please?

Can I raise, for the benefit of more of the membership, the current plight of shooting in universities. That is where I came from so I owe it to them to do this.

This year, with BYSA and the help of a few others, we've managed to maintain the Home Office approval of Brunel (University) and they're beginning to re-constitute and come to Bisley and be active. We've just about managed to keep Reading's head above water and they are hanging on by a shoe thread, with one single shooter who is familiar with this camp and a committee of non-shooters.

I understand that Exeter have also narrowly avoided losing their Home Office approval, with a little bit of advice and help from BYSA, and mainly through networking through BYSA. I've heard through the grapevine that other universities are in a similar plight. They need help. They seriously need help. Particularly with understanding, and this is a continual task, understanding and remaining compliant with Home Office law, firearms law and storage law, because every three years we have new people with limited knowledge taking over the running of Home Office approved clubs and trying to maintain compliance with the law.

At the same time, they struggle with safety certification, they have no people to help them, other than those of us who volunteer our time, they have nowhere to keep some of their guns in many cases, and particularly their year is our winter year, they have nowhere to stay, and much of the accommodation on this camp is either too expensive for them, or in the case of L lines, is unheated, and is closed.

These are a few examples of the problems that face university shooting. It's a huge potential avenue for future entries into the sport. They are the people who will go on to earn sufficient monies to be able to participate. And I think we owe them much more help, practical help, hands-on help. I'm asking you, the NRA, what could we do in collaboration with these clubs and people like BYSA and Richard Stebbings, what can we do to actually enable that and make it come alive?

At the moment, it feels like we're fighting to keep clubs alive, let alone make them flourish and shoot.

Andrew Mercer:

I think there are some very good points in there. Some things I'm aware of, some things I'm not. Nic Couldrey, our Regional Ranges Manager, is active away from Bisley. He's been very busy looking at and dealing with an issue with the one of the London clubs, Imperial College, who have got a range complex that they are trying to recommission on the side of the M4, so he's met with them.

If we know there's a problem, and we get asked for help, we will go and help. I think the problem is, if there are people who have got problems and want our help, if they ask we will help, but it doesn't appear that we have that conduit. I think you're right; one of the problems is this continual change in officers and I think this is a problem that a lot of universities have because the officers are changing almost on an annual basis. The corporate knowledge is very hard to carry forward from one generation to the next.

Phil Northam:

Could the NRA develop Club Officer training? How to run a club, how to do simple accounts, how run a meeting? These are all life skills.

Andrew Mercer:

I think it's a terrific suggestion and one we can certainly pursue.

Phil Northam:

Could we allow them to attend spare spaces on the courses? Charles (Dickenson) and I ran the Target Rifle Skills course the other day with 6 members, 5? Another 5 would have cost nothing, especially using their own firearms and ammunition. The benefit to those 5 would have been a catalyst to their clubs. Can we open these courses? Almost for a nominal charge for these organisations?

Gary Alexander:

How do you feel about being co-opted onto the Membership Committee?

*(laughter)*

We already have Richard Stebbings for the very reason that we want to do everything we can to encourage the British Young Shooters Association, BYSA. And I think we've offered a lot of help and we've already done quite a lot, but the Membership Committee are ideally positioned between our membership division and the clubs that you are talking about to put all of this in place. And we've already been talking about it.

Phil Northam:

I would consider that if I could also bring someone from a university club who is a more appropriate age.

Gary Alexander:

No problem. Thank you.

Chris Law:

Could I follow that? What has happened to the Home Office club membership? It used to be a free issue of a firearms certificate for a club?

*(calls of 'it still is')*

It still is? Because at one stage there were talks about a very substantial increase.

Andrew Mercer:

I think what you are referring to is the Home Office Approved club fees; what they were proposing for first application was £1090, and £900 for the renewal. We have been very busy working with other shooting organisations to persuade the Home Office of the folly of their ways.

We've had a series of quite lengthy and, at times, slightly fractious discussions with the Home Office. We've met with the minister and they have accepted, in principle, the fees that we've put forward. At these meetings when saying we don't like, we don't like, we don't like, we need to say at a certain point what we do like. So we proposed a set of fees that were somewhere around the 38-40% of the fees they had proposed, which I think they have broadly accepted.

Interestingly enough, the one thing that I was particularly keen on, which I have been pushing on, but which we still haven't secured, is of that new fee structure, a 50% further reduction for university clubs, because of the very reason that Phil has alluded to; the fact that they forever have these changes of officers.

Apparently, according to the Home Office, Treasury are kicking up because of this issue of cross subsidiary, so we have had to provide extra evidence. I'm not entirely confident we are going to secure that 50%, but we've been making a big plea for it for the reasons Phil has alluded to.

Harald Dunton:

The method of applying for Home Office Approval or renewing changed as of Monday this week, and you now have to make all your applications online and three months before your current authority ceases.

*(it sounds like good practice)*

Chairman:

Any further questions?

Thomas Harrison:

Changing the subject slightly, the Imperial Meeting results used to be published in book form, usually in September. These days we've gone to supposedly quicker publication in disc form, but it doesn't come out until February! What's the problem?

Andrew Mercer:

It's a really good question. I really don't know but I will do some research and let you know.

Thomas Harrison:

Well we did discuss it about three years ago Andrew.

Andrew Mercer:

Have we not improved since then?

Thomas Harrison:

No! It's got worse in fact.

John Bloomfield:

You can still get all the prize lists and results in book form. You just have to pay for it.

Andrew Mercer:

Do you?

John Bloomfield:

If you grease George's palm with sufficient money, she will certainly let you have one.

*(it doesn't come out any earlier though)*

Not necessarily.

Thomas Harrison:

It should be published in August!

John Bloomfield:

But all the results are available on the website.

Andrew Mercer:

I can't think of a sensible reason why we are being so late, but there must be one.

John Bloomfield:

You can access all the results through the website from the end of the meeting.

Thomas Harrison:

With the new website?

Andrew Mercer:

Yes

Chairman:

Any further questions?

Martin Osment:

John, if I may ask one other quick question.

The total income for the NRA at just over £5.9M. This means that tenants are providing some 21% of the NRA's total income, but none of the tenants or clubs have specific representation on General Council.

Can I therefore invite you to take to General Council, the situation that it's clearly very unfair to the tenants to not have representation, and that therefore there ought to be ex-officio members on General Council.

Chairman:

An ex-officio membership of General Council would require a change to the Second Schedule, so that's the first thing that we've got to think about. The second thing that we've got to think about is the degree to which the number that you're coming up with is actually the number that you think it is. I mean do you want William Evans to be part of that group? Do you want CNC, Surrey Wildlife Trust to be part of that group. So the degree to which £1.2M for what it is of rental income, is not represented by club tenancies.

I think I said in my Bisley General Meeting speech last year, the whole of Club Row pays less in rent than the tenant of the HAC for the HAC. So just bear in the mind that the number that you come up with looks like a great number, but it's not the reality.

The third I think you should know is that the General Council spent some time this afternoon discussing the creation within General Council of an Estate Advisory Committee, which would be formed with some terms of reference and with a mixture of what I would call expert and lay members. Not dissimilar to the Disciplinary Committee in that regard which would act as a body of the membership to advise Council on estate matters.

That is in hand. There used to be, in the good old days when General Council was the governing body, an Estates Committee, is that correct? (*Mick Barr – Yes*) In fact I might speak to you later on as we'd love to see what the terms of reference was for that.

In reaction to some of the discussions we've had at General Council, this seemed like a good way forward. Any member of General Council who thinks I'm not socialising this accurately, please speak. I think that is where we are.

Andrew Mercer:

And I think it's also fair to say that on General Council there are at least two Chairmen of some of the major Bisley-based clubs, in fact there are three that I can think of straight away!

I think there is pretty fair representation of Bisley Club House tenants on General Council already.

Chairman:

The degrees of freedom that we have as a group of Trustees to do the things that we would do if we were not a charity would be considerable, but they just don't exist for a whole variety of reasons.

The rationale for the advisory committee, having experts on it, was precisely because of that, because it is quite technical.

But let us also remember that General Council is there to provide advice to Council on behalf of all the members of the Association. So if we have tenants represented, do we also have a non-tenant group represented?

Martin Osment:

Thank you Chairman.

Certainly I think one must applaud the idea of actually moving forward on the Estate Advisory Committee. Yes of course one recognises that the ultimate duty falls to the Trustees.

I would like to comment briefly on Andrew's point about Chairmen of existing clubs being already on General Council. I think there are two things there.

First of all we are not talking about tenants representatives being on behalf of the clubs per se, we are talking about tenants representatives being on behalf of all tenants, be they clubs, residential tenants, major tenants such as Civil Nuclear Constabulary, etc.

I think really, if we can get this Estate Advisory Committee going, that's obviously going to be a substantial step forward. I would certainly applaud that.

Chairman:

Good. We have a task we think they can get their teeth into straightaway.

Mick Barr:

I should like to come in on this one John. Going back a number of years again, some members of Council were only interested in fighting their corner and that's why the NRA and their finances got in such a damn mess.

Chairman:

I understand, but I think the General Council's role is more of an advisory body than one that has any sort of teeth. The two things that drive it are its two committees, Shooting and Membership. Each of their elected Chairman is ex-officio a member of Council. The Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, which is a creature of the General Council, not of Council, is on Council. And then of course, there are three elected members of the General Council who are on the Council.

The membership itself has a terrific conduit into the Council itself, but the Council is fundamentally responsibility.

I think if there are no further questions?

Silke Lohmann:

It's about the corporate days. A few members are concerned that the NRA are now arranging corporate days and that might mean shooting towards the clubs who organise these as a means of a funding opportunity, that they may not be able to do that in future. And its sort of more should we all be working together and combine the corporate days?

Andrew Mercer:

I think what we are looking to do is to grow new business. We are certainly not looking to compete with the touring teams, who are very successful in what they are doing.

We are looking to create new markets and do shooting in a different way. So I think it is entirely complimentary to our activities. I think the touring teams have the opportunity and the great attraction of GB touring teams as coaches. We are using standard NRA, highly accomplished and very skilled and charismatic, I like to think, instructors. But it's different horses for different courses.

I think the promotional activity that we are starting to leverage should actually encourage other people to take up the opportunities offered by the touring teams.

Chairman:

We had this discussion at the Trustee level, and I should declare an interest as a not infrequent tourist. It is important that the level at which a touring team charges for a per person corporate day is at a sufficiently high level to enable a contribution to be made to the coffers to support these teams.

And therefore, the NRA will not undercut this pricing. We took broad soundings as to what that level should be.

Silke Lohmann:

But is there no opportunity to actually work together on that.

Chairman:

There is for sure, and I think Andrew is suggesting that actually marketing these things jointly is a good thing. But if the NRA is running a day, the funds it raises cannot go towards a particular discipline and particularly an elite team within that particular discipline.

If the NRA is doing these, it needs to be making sure that its doing it for everybody.

Silke Lohmann:

Well perhaps you should specifically say it goes to disabled shooting, or young shooters.

Chairman:

We could. Those are the sort of things we need to look at. But we are not trying to get in the way of a Martin Townsend or a Palma Team going out to raise money. That's a very important source of revenue, believe me, I captained the Palma team in Australia and it cost £180k! It's an awful lot for 26 people to pick up. We want people to represent the country at World Championships, and we need all the non-Bisley pounds that we can get.

I think we are probably done.

Thank you for coming, everybody. Thank you for your attention and I wish you good shooting over the weekend and let's hope the weather stays fine.

Thank you very much, we are adjourned.

*Applause*

The meeting closed at 19.26pm