

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held by Video Conference Call on Saturday 30th May 2020 at 18.00

Present:

Chairman
Treasurer
Secretary General
Members

Mr D Lacey
Mr A Reynolds
Mr A Mercer
77 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.

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.

SPEECH AND RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Attached as Annex.

Chairman

Annual General Meeting – 30th May 2020

Proceedings

Chairman:

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the AGM.

It would very helpful if you could keep your microphones muted until we get to the voting part, just to ensure good sound quality.

I see some of you have got cameras, some are just attending by voice which is fine. And just a sound check, I'd like Andrew Mercer to raise his hand if he can hear me speaking clearly. (Yes) Thank you very much for that.

These are unusual times, but I am pleased that Bisley has been able to re-open to individual shooting and want to start by thanking all the professional staff for their considerable efforts in making this happen.

The Second Schedule requires the AGM to be held by 30 May¹ in each year, to consider three resolutions that I will turn to shortly. In the past it has also been an opportunity for the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary General to make statements and to answer questions from members.

Rather than reschedule the meeting entirely, on the basis that the Covid-19 pandemic makes it impossible for us to meet, the Trustees decided to proceed with the AGM to deal with the three standing resolutions required under the Second Schedule and to take the opportunity to provide answers to written questions.

We will hold a Special General Meeting in the form that we are all used to, once travel and other restrictions are lifted and we can meet at Bisley. I would like to emphasise that today's meeting is not intended to replace the normal meeting format, it is a stop-gap to enable us to deal with things that we are required to deal with by the end of May under the Second Schedule, in a way that complies with the coronavirus restrictions.

Also, the Bisley General Meeting will not go ahead this year as the Imperial Meeting has been cancelled.

I would like to turn first to our three standing resolutions. These resolutions have been traditionally passed by consensus so I will take each one individually and ask if anybody opposes the motion. If there are no objections, I will take it as passed by affirmation of the meeting.

The first resolution is the election of HRH the Prince of Wales as our President. I'll start by asking whether there are any objections to passing that resolution to elect him as our President?

I hear no objection, so on that basis I will take that resolution as having been passed by affirmation of the meeting. Thank you very much.

The second resolution turns to the re-election of the Vice-Presidents, as listed in the notice of the meeting.

Once again, I will ask if there are any objections to the passing of that resolution.

¹The correct date for the AGM to be held by is 30 June.

And, I hear no objection so I will take that as passed by affirmation of the meeting.

The third one is the re-appointment of haysmacintyre LLP as our Auditors for the coming year.

I'll start by asking are there any objections to that resolution?

Yes Chairman.

Thank you very much Martin (Osment). That's Martin Osment for those of you who haven't got it on the screen. Would you like to say a few words in opposition to the motion and then I'll ask the Treasurer to reply.

Martin Osment:

Thank you Chairman.

To keep it simple, I have put the position in the chat² which hopefully everyone has access to. The core of it is very simple. That the members of ABCAT consider that the statement in the accounts regarding the spend on Bisley Shooting Ground Limited is totally inadequate and are asking for the accounts to be withdrawn and reissued with an adequate explanation.

Personally as a member of the NRA, I support that.

Chairman:

I am just conscious that this is a resolution for the re-election of haysmacintyre as auditors, rather than a resolution for approval of the accounts. Did you have any particular objection to haysmacintyre being reappointed as our auditors as that is the substance of the motion?

Martin Osment:

Given that I've had the opportunity to make the point that is of concern, and I don't personally and for ABCAT, I am not aware of any deficiency in haysmacintyre themselves, I am not opposed to reappointment.

² ABCAT on behalf of its members requests that:

1. that Hayes Macintyre are only reappointed auditors if the accounts are reissued with a note explaining what the professional spend on the Bisley Shooting Ground Limited matter was to December 2019 and to April 2020, and an estimate of potential spend.
2. The trustees must include a note explaining which RICS and legal firms are advising them in this matter. They should confirm that the advice they have received meets the Charity Commission definition of commerciality. The trustees shall include in their note the estimated benefit of winning this action.
3. The trustees shall undertake to produce annual audited service charge accounts the first of these shall be also certified by a competent RICS firm.
4. The trustees shall issue an analysis by individual lease or other matter of the last 5 years professional spend.

The members wish to advise the Trustees that should this not be provided for, then they will feel obliged to oppose the adoption of the accounts, and also good governance requires that they express dissatisfaction with the re-appointment of the present auditors.

Chairman:

Thank you, that's useful clarification. If then there is no opposition to the reappointment of haysmacintyre, is there anybody who proposes to object to the reappointment of haysmacintyre?

If there are no objections, then I will take that third resolution as having been passed, which is the end of the required portion of the meeting, and I thank you all for your assistance in getting us through that process.

I have also received written questions and I would like to thank Mike Jenvey, Phil Northam and Tom Reynolds for sending in questions for this Meeting.

I will summarise the questions briefly, I hope they will understand me doing that, but the full text of the questions and my answers will be published on the NRA website for everyone to read.

And of course, at the Special General Meeting, there will be an opportunity for questions from the floor.

I'll just ask everyone to go on mute, that would be very helpful because I don't think I can compete with the voice.

The first question from Mike Jenvey concerns caravan rents and the availability of rebates or concessions for caravan owners on the basis that they have not been able to use their caravans during the last couple of months. And he also provides an interesting suggestion involving Gift Aid and donations which I'll come to.

The payment of licence fees while the caravan sites are closed is not unfair because the fees represent a charge for a pitch on which to keep a caravan. The NRA continues to provide these pitches, enabling owners to continue to leave their caravans at Bisley. The Trustees appreciate that some people may use their caravan only during the Summer shooting season, and that is now likely to be significantly curtailed, but its important to remember that the license fee reflects the use of the pitch, and for example there would be no rebate in an ordinary year if a person did not use the caravan, whatever the reason.

I would like to thank Mike for his constructive suggestion of giving people the option of converting their refund of a license fee into a donation and then enabling us to claim Gift Aid rather than receiving a refund. We would need to seek advice on the land law and the tax implications of doing that before we could adopt his idea, and that is probably not justified by the amount it would raise.

Having carefully considered the matter, the Trustees concluded that it would not be appropriate to refund license fees given that owners may continue to keep their caravans at Bisley. However, if this would result in particular hardship due to the personal circumstances of any caravan owner, then I urge them to contact me or the Secretary General to discuss the matter.

His next question concerned the deadline that had been set by Guildford Borough Council concerning remedial works to caravans.

I am pleased to be able to report that the Secretary General has been in touch with Guildford Borough Council to seek an extension of the deadline for completing the remedial works to caravans to 30 September 2020. The Council has not yet responded but we will continue to keep asking the Council to confirm the extension. At this stage we are working with caravan owners on the basis that an extension will be granted to 30 September. And we will keep owners informed if we are able to secure a further extension to 2021.

His third question concerned the notification of General Council elections.

The announcement of General Council election was published in the Journal in accordance with the Second Schedule. It's an important principal that we follow the procedures set out in the Second Schedule in relation to holding elections, so that everyone can be sure of the rules and that they apply equally to everyone. Of course, any member can propose that those procedures be changed as happened with the introduction of electronic voting into the Second Schedule.

I have asked that the Secretary General include on nomination and voting papers any information that a member might need from the Second Schedule such as the qualifications for voting, standing for election or nominating candidates, so that people do not need to refer to the Second Schedule when they complete those forms.

The next question concerned voting at annual general meetings and the use of electronic voting for that purpose.

As we've just gone through, there are three items requiring votes at each Annual General Meeting. These are the election of HRH Prince of Wales as our President, the election of Vice-Presidents and the appointment of the Auditors. These are routine and have been non-contentious in the past. We decided not to implement electronic voting for these resolutions on the basis that it would not be justified. I am pleased that the resolutions were passed by assent without the need for a formal ballot.

I hope that we will be able to hold all future Annual General Meetings and Extraordinary and Special General Meetings in person so that we will not need to implement real-time electronic voting. Instead, electronic voting will be used to maximise the engagement of the membership in decisions that take place outside a formal meeting, such as elections. One example of this is the current round of elections that is being held for positions on General Council. The use of electronic voting will result in significant cost savings for the NRA and, more importantly, I hope will provide broader engagement of the membership in the voting process, particularly amongst those who are far more used to clicking a button than finding a post box.

The next questions come from Phil Northam.

His first question concerns the suggestion that Phil made to rename the Times prize; a suggestion that he made at the 2019 Bisley General Meeting. That is a matter for General Council to take forward if it thinks appropriate. It has not chosen to do so at this stage, but I will raise it at the next General Council Meeting so that the minutes reflect that it has been considered.

His next question concerns the help that we can give to University clubs.

I agree that University shooting clubs provide a valuable resource for people to continue shooting after leaving school, and to introduce new people to shooting.

The Trustees have agreed that University rifle clubs will be offered a free first year of NRA affiliation from 2020. Iain Robertson, the NRA's Safety Legal and Technical officer is available to assist anyone running a university club with questions on Home Office procedures and on firearms licensing. And Phil noted in his question that those can often be quite complicated questions and daunting, particularly if you are new to shooting.

You can find Iain's contact details on the website under the heading Our People.

Nic Couldrey also provides advice to clubs that operate their own range. I would urge anyone running a University club, or thinking of starting one, to contact Iain or Nic if they encounter difficulties with administration or licensing issues or problems with range operations.

The next question from Phil concerned the help that the NRA can provide in dealing with the sometimes tricky question of medical checks required for the grant or the renewal of a firearms certificate.

And on this subject, NRA staff, particularly Iain Robertson, routinely offer advice to members regarding FAC application and renewal queries, including the need to provide medical information. In many cases, local GPs are providing information without cost or at a reasonable cost. I know that is not always the case, and Medcert, which was set up precisely to deal with this issue, enables FAC applicants to provide the medical information required by licensing authorities. The NRA is not planning to duplicate that arrangement, as Medcert seems to be working well for people who have difficulty obtaining the necessary medical information from their GP.

His next question concerns winter damage and what we are doing to ensure that the facilities, particularly Bisley, are more resilient to bad weather.

And it's true that the exceptionally wet weather over winter 2019/20 did cause damage at Bisley. NSC staff are reviewing the maintenance of the ranges and taking steps to minimise the impact of adverse weather on range operations in the future.

Some examples of that include moving some of the firing points forward of their current position during bad weather to enable the NSC to provide a better surface for shooters. That would not be done in competitions but will allow more practice to take place.

Also by resting some of the areas of the ranges, the ground recovers, the grass returns which makes the ground more resilient to dealing with heavy rain. And of course, heavy rain can also cause damage to the sand backstops, and so the NSC is trialling alternatives to sand that will be just as effective at capturing bullets, but less affected by the rain.

He also mentioned the defence cell ballistic walls, particularly as used on Winans Range. Those defence cell walls were constructed using the methods recommended by the manufacturer but once again we are trialling new filling materials to see if that improves resilience of the defence cell walls to bad weather.

He also raises the point of covered firing points. And it's true that covered firing points would certainly help encourage greater use of the ranges for practice, especially in the Winter. I suspect in the Winter we'd also appreciate heated firing points as well! The NSC plans to introduce fixed covered firing points at 200 yards on Short Siberia, and will continue to review proposals more generally for fixed covers on firing points to enable more use of these ranges to be made for practice.

And his last question concerns the support for Scouts and for other youth groups.

And the Trustees recognise the value of encouraging youth marksmanship as part of its charitable objectives. As a result of that, there are various concessions available for young shooters, both from the NRA and from the National Shooting Centre. These include a 25% discount on weekday range hire for schools and universities, free NRA membership to all Under 21s, a 40% discount on membership for people aged 22 to 25 years of age and a 40% discount on competition entry fees and training course fees for all Under 25s.

The Trustees value the contribution that all clubs, including the Scouts, make to shooting. They are also conscious of the importance of treating all clubs in a consistent way in relation to range bookings and charges. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to offer special discounts for the Scouts Rifle Club, as opposed of course to individual scouts.

The last question comes from Tom Reynolds, and his question relates to the access to the Young Shooters Fund.

The Young Shooters' Fund was established in 2000. The balance of the account as at 30 April 2020 was £58,080. It is a restricted fund of the NRA and so can only be used for the purpose for which it was established. That purpose is to provide financial assistance to young shooters in order that they may participate in shooting disciplines controlled by the NRA. This will normally be done by interest-free loans to purchase equipment.

The Fund is administered by a Committee established under the Terms of Reference for the Fund. NRA staff are also working on proposals to broaden the activities of the Fund, within the scope of its purpose, to increase significantly the number of rifles available to young shooters. Recipients for support and help from the fund should fulfil the following conditions: you must be an individual member of the NRA, be 14 to 25 years of age at the time of application, have been an active competitor in an NRA discipline for at least 12 months in the last 2 years and be limited in your participation or progress by lack of suitable equipment.

Any young shooter who would like to submit a proposal for support from the Young Shooters Fund should contact the Secretary General with details. I have also asked the Secretary General to post the Terms of Reference for the Fund on the NRA website so that its available to everyone.

That is the last written question that we received.

I would like to thank all those who submitted questions for this somewhat abbreviated Annual General Meeting.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Special General Meeting which will be held once the Government lifts the travel and meeting restrictions. That meeting will be held in the usual format with statements from NRA officers and an opportunity for questions from the floor.

In the meantime, if anyone has any questions on any matter, please email me at chairman@nra.org.uk.

I've already had engagements with a number of members on a wide range of topics which I have found very useful. So please if there is anything that you would like to discuss, whether in a follow up to this meeting, or any other subject, please do send me an email at chairman@nra.org.uk.

That brings me to the end of this abbreviated AGM, and I would like to thank you all for participating in this novel format.

Thank you all.

Martin Osment:

David, thank you for your courtesy.

The meeting closed at 1825pm