

Chairman's Speech

Our Annual Report for 2023 has been published and outlines our financial position. It demonstrates a steady improvement in our finances, but there remains much capital expenditure still to be done. The Treasurer will address that in more detail in his presentation.

I am pleased to report that despite these challenging times our membership held steady, ending the year at 10,157 down 67 from the end of 2022. Sustaining this level of membership is the result of a lot of hard work from many people, and is essential to the growth of target shooting in this country.

Welcoming new members also means more training for probationary members. 860 members completed a probationary training course in 2023, which is a useful confirmation of the continued interest in target shooting.

I would like to pay tribute to the Membership Team, led by Georgina Thatcher, and the Training Team, led by David Camp, for successfully delivering these activities.

Range use at Bisley continues to grow, and we experienced high demand throughout 2023. Meeting that demand is an important challenge for the National Shooting Centre, which operates the ranges. Electronic targets continue to be popular and more of these were introduced in 2023. The increased growth in membership and demand for targets inevitably means that NSC cannot meet all the demand for targets. I want to thank all the professional staff involved in running the ranges for the way they have managed this increasing demand and balanced the many competing priorities for access to shooting facilities.

2023 was the second full year of operations by the NSC of Bisley Shooting Ground at Council Club and on Cottesloe Heath. Sporting clays provides a useful source of additional income for NSC and that income helps fund rifle range improvements and helps the NRA pursue its charitable objectives. I am pleased to say that Bisley Shooting Ground sporting clay operations contributed £269,000 in 2023 to the finances of the NRA.

The social and political backdrop for shooting remains challenging. The Government consultation on the use of lead in ammunition will raise challenges for everyone in the shooting community. The NRA is working with other bodies to help inform the Health & Safety Executive, the Environment Agency and Members of Parliament on the various ways that NSC and other range operators successfully manage lead on shooting ranges. The consultation process is on-going and the NRA will continue to contribute to the debate on this important topic.

There is always work to be done on improving facilities at Bisley and completing long-running projects. During 2023 we removed the asbestos and started renovation works to Site 103, completed safety improvements to Century mantlet and the markers gallery, upgraded the Intarso electronic targets, re-purposed the Bisley Gun Club clubhouse building, and refurbished three Pavilion rooms including creating one fully disabled-accessible room. During 2024, we plan to develop an online range booking portal, upgrade utility and service connections to Site 103, upgrade the accessibility of caravan site ablution blocks, and upgrade the electrical installations at Stickledown butts.

Construction works on Wharnccliffe Site (formerly known as Site 5) were completed in April and ten new caravans priced from £24,900 are available for viewing on-site. Of the 28 plots, 14 have already been reserved, leaving 14 still available.

As at today, we are cash positive, but this is a particularly high point in the seasonal cashflows. We must continue to rebuild the financial reserves of the charity to ensure its resilience to future economic shocks. In particular, we want to restore a minimum cash balance of £250,000 and maintain a 1x acid test ratio even during the low points of our cash cycle. This process will take a number of years.

I would like to conclude by thanking my fellow Trustees and Andrew Mercer and all the professional staff for all their energy, enthusiasm and hard work over the past 12 months. I would also like to thank the members of General Council for their contributions throughout 2023.