

# NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

## Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting  
held in the NRA Pavilion, Bisley Camp  
on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 18.00

### **Present:**

Chairman	Mr D Lacey
Secretary General	Mr A Mercer
Treasurer	Mr A Reynolds
Members	25 Registered Members in attendance
	15 Online attendees

## **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) **Election of the President** The Chairman informed the meeting that His Majesty The King Charles III has given permission for Council to name His Majesty as the new Patron of the Association. Therefore, no election will take place and the position of President is vacant.
- (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 haysmacintyre LLP, Chartered Accountants, as Auditors. The Resolution was approved.

### **SPEECH AND RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

Attached as Annex.



Chairman

## **Annual General Meeting – 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

### **Record of Proceedings**

#### **Chairman:**

I would like to call the 2024 Annual General Meeting of the NRA to order, and welcome those who have joined us here in the Pavilion, and those who are watching our live-stream of the event. This is the first time we have provided a live stream of an Annual General Meeting, which is designed to promote engagement by the members with the work of the Charity.

This meeting will be followed by the Annual General Meeting of the National Shooting Centre Limited, which is the wholly-owned subsidiary of the NRA that carries out commercial activities. We hold separate meetings to highlight the different functions and responsibilities of the two organisations.

In this week we mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day. Former combatants are now friends. In the words of one German ex-serviceman quoted in the papers this week, “Now the times have changed and the enemies of 80 years ago are friends and comrades and fight together against their enemies of the daily means. What has happened in Ukraine is for us to stand together with the British and French and all of our European friends and give a signal to say never again”.

I can also report that I received an email from Philippe Ginestet, Chairman of the Normandy Rifle Club and a Vice President of the NRA, which I also want to convey to you:

“Dear David, on behalf of the Normandy Rifle Club members, and on my personal behalf, I am delighted to present the warmest and deepest testimony of our infinite gratitude to the thousands of British soldiers and those coming from the Commonwealth who sacrificed their lives during and after the D Day on the Normandy beaches to liberate France. 80 years later we still maintain an intact admiration for their bravery and their heroism. Many of them were NRA of GB members. Today in that 6<sup>th</sup> of June we think strongly about all our liberators. Kindest regards, Philippe Ginestet”.

I think we can all endorse those thoughts, and we thank Philippe and the Normandy Rifle Club for them.

We have three standing resolutions on the Agenda. That will be followed by speeches from me, the Treasurer and the Secretary General. There will then be answers to the written questions we received in advance of the meeting, followed by an open forum for people to ask questions from the floor. Those watching the livestream will be able to see and hear the proceedings, but not ask questions. I would encourage everyone watching remotely to email me or the Secretary General with feedback on their experience of this live-stream experiment.

Before proceeding further, I am very pleased to announce that with the gracious permission of His Majesty King Charles III, Council has named The King as the new Patron of the National Rifle Association.

That means it is no longer appropriate to propose the first resolution concerning the election of The King as the President of the Association. The post of President is therefore vacant and Council will be considering potential candidates for election to this post for the 2025 AGM.

The second standing item for voting at this meeting is the re-election of the Vice-Presidents. There is a list of Vice Presidents printed on the agenda. You will see that Alastair Macpherson and John Fitzgerald, two of our Australian Vice-Presidents, have passed away since the last AGM.

I now propose that all the Vice-Presidents listed be re-elected by a show of hands.

I'm pleased to say that has been passed unanimously.

I now propose the resolution that haysmacintyre LLP be re-appointed as our Auditors.

I'm pleased to say that has been passed unanimously.

This brings us to the speeches by me, the Treasurer Andrew Reynolds, and by our Secretary-General, Andrew Mercer.

### **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 Wharncliffe 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.

I now call on the Treasurer to report on financial matters.

### **Treasurer's Speech**

Good evening.

Turning to the consolidated NRA/NSC Group financial statements and the Income and Expenditure Accounts to start with:

In the year to December 2023 total consolidated income rose 14% year on year to £10million producing a consolidated net surplus, including a £9,000 gain on restricted fund investments, of £51,000 or a net margin of just 0.5%.

This compares with a surplus of £160,000 in 2022.

The main drivers for this year-on-year deterioration in performance was a 75% or £250,000 hike in utilities bills and an increase in staff costs by about 12% to £3.4M, which was the result of a combination of wage and staff number increases.

The Group also spent over £500,000 during 2023 on maintenance of the estate and ranges which was in line with the amount spent in the prior year.

The Group's revenue has historically had three main sources: range fees, membership subscriptions and estate income. However, as mentioned last year, the importance of the BSG business which we acquired in August 2020 remains pivotal: its divisional profit in 2023 was 5 times that of the consolidated Group for the year. It is clear that BSG makes a very significant financial contribution to the Charity's ability to pursue its charitable objectives such as holding marksmanship competitions and training. To that end, during 2023 the NRA provided £94,000 to support the training and resources for members to participate safely and responsibly on the ranges, and £378,000 support for the extensive programme of competitions, including £60,000 for young shooters under 25 with the Imperial Meeting discount.

Both programs aim to ensure that future generations will appreciate the discipline, focus and camaraderie integral to our activities.

Moving to the Group Balance Sheet:

The group's net assets remained at £9.1million although the Charity's free reserves, which considers our liquidity, continued to be negative as a significant proportion of the Group's assets are in the form of Fixed Assets such as Land and Buildings.

However, a RICS valuation obtained in August 2020 of £10million for the estate, obtained for the sole purpose of financing security, continues to enable us to access a £1million overdraft facility. This facility is an important part of the Charity's reserves policy in the absence of an unrestricted sinking fund.

Thankfully, the overdraft was not needed much through 2023 and the year-end unrestricted cash balance, which is historically the peak point in the year, was a healthy £600,000.

However, the year-end net current liability position gives greater colour around this cash balance: The NRA received its 2024 subscriptions during the last month of the year, which flatters the year-end cash balance as this is almost entirely 2024 revenue.

This brings us on to our Cash Flow.

The Group remains very much hand to mouth with discretionary capital and maintenance expenditure being adjusted in order to cope with lower net operating cashflow generation and continued higher working capital requirements. The latter in particular was caused by higher ammunition stock given the question mark over possible supply issues.

Despite this, the NRA managed to invest just under £500,000 on range and estate improvements and on freehold and leasehold additions.

The tight liquidity has been monitored monthly in one of the Trustees' Key Performance Indicators - the Acid Test Ratio – which measures the proportion of cash and readily monetizable assets to the level of current liabilities.

The Trustees have set a floor threshold at 1x cover, but this was in breach for 10 months of 2023.

Our expectation is for the unrestricted net cash position to remain positive throughout 2024 and our base case forecasts provided to our Auditors, haysmacintyre, during the external audit are that we will also end 2024 with an improved net positive cash balance and will have made headway in reducing the acid test ratio breaches.

As a result, the primary financial aim for the Trustees in 2024 remains for us to continue to improve our balance sheet resilience as described in our Reserves Policy.

Our projections for the current year are that the Group will generate a surplus before changes in investments of around £400,000, which would represent about a 3% net margin on the Group's turnover.

This will allow for expenditure of around £1.1M on capital assets and maintenance to enhance our members' experience and ensure the highest standards of safety.

We also plan to maintain a significant level of support for the Group's charitable objectives with a projected spend of £275,000 on mixed military and civilian competition and youth shooting.

In closing, the Charity looks forward to a 2024 with fewer adverse economic headwinds but I am sure you will all acknowledge that the global geo-political situation underscores an ever-greater need for the NRA and its role in promoting and encouraging marksmanship in defence of the Realm.

This will only be possible with your continued support. Each one of you plays a vital role in the lifeblood of our association and only together, will we continue to uphold the values of tradition, safety, and excellence that defines the National Rifle Association.

Thank you.

### **Secretary General's Speech**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

2023 proved to be a year of challenges and opportunity for the NRA. We did not escape from the effects of the much reported "cost of living crisis"; our particular version saw significant increases in energy and payroll costs wash away the increases in our revenues.

But as the Treasurer has reported, we still reported a surplus in 2023, albeit an extremely modest £51,000 from a turnover of £10 million.

Surpluses are important as they enable the funding of new capital projects, be they a new online range booking system, more electronic targets, extended firing points, refurbished buildings; new accommodation developments at Bisley; or the acquisition or development of ranges away from Bisley.

Developing and acquiring regional ranges is a grinding marathon demanding resilience and persistence. With booking targets on MoD ranges becoming ever more challenging we need to explore every opportunity to retain, re-open or develop ranges away from Bisley. In 2023 we invested significant resources in progressing plans to reconfigure new ranges on a site near Glasgow, and negotiating the purchase of a shooting ground in Nottinghamshire. It was also the year that saw the culmination of 5 year's work to commission, build and open a new firing point on Warcop range in Cumbria, enabling 50 calibre shooting at tank hulks. The Warcop project succeeded due to cracking support from MoD range staff, the hard work and determination of Chris Stephenson, Chairman of the Fifty Calibre Shooters Association and NRA Regional Ranges Manager, Nic Couldrey.

World events continue to present challenges and opportunities. Conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza have disrupted our usual supply chains of ammunition and components. Our success in securing bulk deliveries of most popular lines of ammunition is countered by the problems of funding of record stock holdings that restrict our ability to commission other projects.

These conflicts have prompted concerns regarding National Security. These may provide opportunities for the NRA to be more effective in delivering activities in evidence and supporting Defence of the Realm. Training people to shoot accurately and safely is a core activity and skill set of the NRA.

On a national level we are seeing growing scrutiny on compliance with the rules and regulations governing the civilian ownership and use of firearms, and the operation of Home Office Approved Clubs. In most cases problems arise because certificate holders or club officials have a relaxed interpretation of the rules. There are also cases resulting from over-enthusiastic or poorly trained firearms licensing personnel. We find that offering training, advice, and support to hard-pressed police firearms teams is more productive than retreating to the trenches to throw brickbats. The focus must surely be on ensuring police firearms licensing staff are properly trained and resourced to concentrate on assessing the suitability of the applicant and certificate holder.

The General Election will undoubtedly change the landscape for the shooting community. Major issues such as the UK Reach proposals to prohibit the use of lead in ammunition outdoors, the review of firearm fees, and proposals to remove the requirement for licensing sound moderators are likely to be determined by a Government whose attitude to target shooting is not clear.

We need to pay attention, work with our colleagues from other shooting organisations, and bring our resources to bear to ensure that the impact of proposed legislative changes do not damage target shooting.

Much of the work we do with the MoD, government, police and other statutory bodies goes unreported, and there is always a fine balance between the need to be effective and the need to secure credit for the NRA for our efforts.

The NRA's home at Bisley is the engine room for the charity but there is a growing need to focus more of our resources to support target shooting in the regions. We recently hosted a forum for club officials in Solihull, attended by representatives of clubs from as far afield as Cornwall and Scotland. The lively debates focused on the big issues of the day such as

access to MoD ranges, lead in ammunition, regional training and firearms licensing. I was struck firstly by the fact that the club officials had committed a great deal of their time and money to attend the Forum on behalf of their club members; and secondly by the complete lack of debate on matters such as caravan sites and potholes that account for so much vigorous discord at Bisley. We need to engage far more effectively with target shooters who never shoot at Bisley.

The NRA has proved resilient over the decades but we cannot be complacent. There is much to do but never enough resources to do it all. Thankfully target shooting is a life-long passion for many, and I remain optimistic that we will navigate our way through the challenges ahead.

Thank you.

*Chairman:*

That takes us to answers to written questions. We received 10 questions by the published closing time of noon on 1 June. Some of the questions are quite detailed, so in the interests of time I will summarise those questions. The full text of the questions will appear in the minutes.

The first question comes from Robert Sayer:

*“For years there have been rumours that the NRA wants to sell the Bisley camp site and move the shooting site to somewhere else. Can you confirm these rumours are false and there is no intention to sell the Bisley camp site”.*

Answer: Yes

The second question comes from Alex Atkins:

Summary: What is the NRA doing to counter the apparent co-ordinated pressure from Firearms Licensing Authorities to frustrate the firearms certificate renewal process?

*“What is the NRA position on the apparent coordinated pressure from numerous Firearms Licensing Authorities to frustrate the firearms certificate renewals process? I understand that NRA now has hundreds of prospective members who cannot be processed due to delays in police vetting, and I know of several shooters, including [personal information redacted], who have had renewals refused with little or no justification. These cases often lead to lengthy legal battles to obtain a renewed FAC. Members of my club, across various constabularies, have suffered similar tactics. Renewals submitted in good time are ignored, existing licences are allowed to lapse, and are then immediately followed by threats of prosecution for illegal possession. Thankfully, the members in question have lodged their guns in storage. Some have been visited by authorities wishing to take the guns into their possession, which is then considered a voluntary surrender, for which there is no appeal process. What is the NRA doing to counter this recent tightening of conditions and questionable tactics to reduce the number of FAC holders?”*

Answer: We recognise the frustration that members feel when the system does not work as it should. The NRA liaises with firearms licensing authorities on a regular basis to enhance their knowledge of shooting activities and the positive contribution that they make. We host



firearms training courses for firearms licensing officers from various constabularies. Members can also obtain advice from the NRA's Legal & Technical Officer on matters relating to their renewal or grant of a firearms certificate.

Question 3 comes from Gillian Kale

Summary: What is the pricing policy of the NRA and is there a danger that by setting prices too high fewer people use the NRA facilities and so income reduces?

*“What is the NRA’s pricing policy re the point of negative returns (i.e., pricing too high, so that less people use the NRA facilities and income is reduced) for the remainder of 2024 and 2025? According to forecasts from the Autumn Budget in November 2023, the UK economy is expected to grow by 0.7 percent in 2024 and then by 1.4 percent in 2025. The UK’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while initially strong, has stalled recently, primarily due to high inflation driving down consumer spending. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 added additional upward pressure on energy and food prices, causing inflation to soar to even higher levels. Although the UK labour market has been generally robust since the pandemic, prices rose faster than wages for a long 20-month-period between 2021 and 2023. This predicted rate of growth is low when compared with the higher overall world average. And lower still against average G20 emerging countries.”*

Answer: It is important the NRA remains on a firm financial footing. The charity has three main streams of revenue. The first is membership fees. The second is rental income. The third is the profits generated by the National Shooting Centre on its commercial activities including range hire and ammunition sales. Rental income is set by the terms of the lease. All of the other income streams have been increased in 2024. This is mainly a reflection of the significant increased costs in running the charity and the National Shooting Centre. Utility bills rose 75%, wages are up 12%, while memberships subscriptions for 2023 rose by 14%. Demand for range space continues to be strong. All of this suggests that people recognise the need for the NRA to remain financially viable. We have not seen any evidence that dropping prices would result in a significantly greater income as a result of increased membership, range usage or sales.

Question 4 comes from Dr Michael Atkins:

Summary: What action is the NRA taking in relation to the proposed ban on lead in ammunition?

*“As you will be aware, lead is a topic of concern to all those involved in the sport of shooting. Can we have an update, please, on where we are and what limitations /prohibitions are planned and the time frame. For example, will lead rounds be allowed on target shooting grounds and also for clay shooting? How will this affect hobby shooters and competitive shooters alike? Will England be in or out of step with regulations in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and mainland Europe? Will there be any compensation offered for firearms/shotguns that cannot be "converted" or use an alternative to lead? I appreciate some answers are still to be determined but a "heads up" for NRA members will be most appreciated (with apologies if this topic is already on your agenda.”*

Answer: The consultation by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) on the socio-economic assessment of the proposed restrictions on lead in ammunition closed in December 2023. There were more than 8,000 submissions and the HSE requested approval to extend the period within which it must make recommendations to the Secretary of State to review all these submissions. This approval was granted and the HSE now has until September 2024 to formulate its recommendations to be sent to the Defra Secretary of State and the Scottish and Welsh governments. Those authorities will then decide whether to implement any regulatory measures in light of the recommendations of the HSE. Therefore, we don't know at this stage what, if any, new regulations may be introduced. As this is a devolved matter, it is possible that the rules in England, Wales and Scotland will differ. We anticipate that lead shot will be banned on clay shooting grounds. There has been no indication of what, if any, compensation arrangements may be included in the recommendations. The NRA has consistently made the case for allowing lead rifle ammunition to be used on ranges where arrangements are in place to control the lead. We have also argued for transitional periods to allow time for people to adjust to the requirements of any new regulations.

Question 5 comes from Mike Townsend:

*"When is the NRA or NSC expecting to install some charging points on camp for electric cars? I have asked this question several times since 2021, but have yet to receive a reply!"*

Answer: The electricity supply on Camp is limited, and there are increasing demands on it each year. That said, we are investigating the possibility of installing EV charging points at the electricity sub-station by the Lord Roberts Centre. There are important issues to resolve including how we would control access to it and how it would pay for itself given the significant capital costs involved. In the meantime, charging is already available locally, including at the BP Service Station at West End.

Question 6 comes from M J Scrivens:

Summary: Can the existing 300m range be converted to a "No Danger Area" range to enable greater use of it.

*"300m shooting is the only ISSF discipline that is conducted under the auspices of the NRA and the 300m range on Century is the only available 300m range in the country. Given the very limited facilities it is amazing that the UK has done so well at it over the years (in my younger days I was a member of a number of medal winning teams) and it is very disappointing that we have been given progressively less range access as every year passes, to the extent that this year effective access has virtually ceased since our members often travel a considerable distance so only having the occasional couple of hours is virtually useless to us. It is no exaggeration to say that 300m shooting has virtually been destroyed in the UK. I would also point out that many TR shooters also use the 300m range when it is available. One solution would be to make the 300m range a "No Danger Area" range which would enable it to be used far more and is highly likely to be technically feasible if the NRA put its mind to it. Please give urgent consideration to this issue."*

Answer: A No Danger Area range ("NDA range") is one in which all shots can reasonably be expected to be captured within the range, including ricochets from ground strikes. This avoids the need to have a danger area behind the stop butt. To convert the 300m range to

an NDA range would require a number of major modifications. We would need to re-profile the ground between the firing point and the butts. The height of the stop butts would have to be increased. We would need to install canopies to capture shots that would otherwise go above the stop butt and may also need intermediary baffles between the firing points and the targets to catch mis-directed shots. All of this is possible, but the cost is significant. The Trustees would need to be satisfied that incurring this cost would be in the best interests of the charity, having regard to the other competing demands for expenditure on Camp.

Question 7 comes from Graham Fielding:

Summary: Mr Fielding requires an SCC to shoot as a visitor at Altcar range. He does not meet any of the criteria for automatic renewal of his SCC. As a result, he needs to attend an assessment at Bisley every 4 years, which is difficult for him as he lives in Lancashire. He would like the NRA to automatically renew SCCs for people who hold an RCO or RSO qualification.

*"I am extremely disappointed that the only way I can obtain a Shooters Certification Card is by attending a 40-minute course at Bisley. My SCC expires at the end of the year and was previously renewable by qualification as an RCO. This is no longer the case and as I don't shoot in NRA competitions, I understand that I have to attend a 40-minute course at Bisley. I find this most unfair as I live in Lancashire, as do many more of your individual members and question if this change in requirement is purely a money-making scheme for the NRA. I am an instructor for Probationers in my club, shoot on a weekly basis, rifle, carbine, semi auto .22LR, MLP and Home Load my own ammunition. I spent 22 years in the army and another 25 working for the MOD where I have fired everything from .22 to 120mm tank ammunition. Whilst with the MOD I was the team leader of the Ammunition Consultancy at Fort Halstead and have vast experience of firing weapons of many nations. Now I am retired and no longer wish to take part in competition shooting I do promote shooting within the community and shoot as a visitor at Altcar for which I need the SCC. I request that the AGM reconsider the requirements for issuing an SCC to holders of RCO and RSO without having to attend a course at Bisley or take part in Bisley sponsored competitions. I understand the reasoning the SCC is linked to weapon handling and not to the running of a range. However, the people who carry out the assessment are either RCOs or RSOs. In my club we have a number of both. Although we are not affiliated to the NRA due to the excessive costs. We have in excess of 150 members and the only ones who are members of the NRA are those who are qualified RCO's/RSO's. It therefore becomes prohibitively expensive to become affiliated to the NRA. I therefore request that this is discussed at the AGM with the views I have outlined being expressed to the members."*

Answer: You need a Shooter Certification Card to shoot on ranges operated by the Ministry of Defence and to shoot at Bisley. It is up to the operators of private ranges whether they require shooters to hold an SCC. The SCC was introduced to provide evidence to the MoD of the competence of civilians using MoD ranges. It also provides comfort for other range users that shooters have demonstrated their competence. It is not practical to review competence on a case-by-case basis, even for people with Mr Fielding's considerable experience, which is why the current SCC process was adopted. Holding an RCO or RSO qualification in the past enabled a person to renew an SCC automatically. This was changed because the SCC is linked to safe handling of firearms rather than the safe conduct of a

range. The NRA has no plans to renew SCCs automatically for people holding an RCO or RSO qualification.

NRA members can obtain an SCC direct from the NRA that is valid for 4 years. Members qualify for automatic renewal of a 4-year SCC if they have, in the last 12 months, shot in an NRA competition or the F-Class League or shot at least three times with the NRA Shooting Club, in each case overseen by an NRA RCO/RSO and considered safe.

NRA members who do not meet any of the previous criteria need to complete a certification assessment to renew their SCC every 4 years. The assessment costs £32 for one category of firearm, £42 for up to three categories of firearms and £54 for 4 or more categories of firearms. Firearms can be hired for the assessment at an additional charge. The charges are designed to cover the staff cost and range time required for the assessment.

In Mr Fielding's circumstances he would either attend an NRA assessment every 4 years or he may find it more convenient to join the club with whom he currently shoots at Altcar as a visitor and obtain an SCC through that club.

Question 8 comes from Richard Stebbings:

Summary: Why has the fee charged to the organisers of the HotRod Hayride increased by only 6% while fee increases to members and affiliated clubs are at least 12%?

*"The NRA has a general policy of increasing its prices in line with inflation on an annual basis. Generally speaking, I do not disagree with this policy providing that it is uniformly and fairly applied. My club (BYSA) also has the same policy so that we track the NRA price increases. The organisers of the Hotrod Hayride have booked our clubhouse again for the duration of this year's event; when negotiating the booking (and trying to get a better price) the organiser informed me via email that "The NRA have given us a 6% increase". Why have the organisers of the Hotrod Hayride been given an increase in their fees of just 6%, when NRA members and affiliated clubs have been given fee increases of at least 12%, especially given that they are not members of the NRA, they are not beneficiaries of the NRA, nor are they in line with the charitable objectives and purpose of the NRA?"*

Answer: We are pleased that the Hotrod Hayride is coming back to Bisley for another year. The event showcases Bisley and its charitable activities to many people that we would not otherwise reach as a charity. It also provides valuable accommodation and food and beverage revenue to providers on Camp. The NSC is responsible for negotiating commercial arrangements for people like the Hotrod Hayride, and they conduct those negotiations robustly with a view to obtaining the best result for the charity. Pricing for any use of Bisley Camp will reflect the facts and circumstances of the particular event organiser.

Question 9 also comes from Richard Stebbings:

*"The elected members of General Council are elected by NRA members in part to represent the members of the NRA. Members of General Council raise member's issues at one of the principal committees, or General Council, however the response we receive from our Trustees is frequently that (examples below):*

*“the NRA is not a club run for its members, but is a charity run for its beneficiaries”, a current NRA Trustee*

*“if they don’t like it they shouldn’t pay” (i.e. if they don’t like it, they can leave), a current NRA Trustee, Feb 24th GC meeting.*

*What is the point of members of General Council representing the NRA members if the attitude of our Trustee body and the executive is that the NRA is not a member’s organisation, and if they don’t like it then they can leave?”*

Answer: The first quotation is something I have said in the past. The NRA is a charity and therefore exists for the public benefit. Its beneficiaries are the public. I will include a link in the Minutes to the Charity Commission website that explains this in more detail<sup>1</sup>. The NRA, like many charities, offers a membership scheme to provide a mechanism for people to make donations to support the work of the charity. The NRA is not allowed to function as a private members club and the Trustees are careful to ensure that the NRA does not do so. That said, the members are an important part of the public and General Council plays a valuable role under the Second Schedule in representing the views of members. The second quotation is a somewhat shorthand reflection of the fact that the National Shooting Centre operates in a competitive commercial environment and its customers have a choice as to where they spend their money. In a similar way, the accommodation and the caravan pitches provided at Bisley also operate in a commercial environment where customers have a choice.

Question 10, also from Richard Stebbings:

*“As an existing member of General Council, I feel like our voices are not being heard by the executive or Trustees, and the points we raise are, more often than not, simply dismissed with excuses. Instead of bombarding this forum with more questions, I want to know how we, as General Council members, can ensure that our concerns, and the concerns of the NRA members whom we represent, are properly listened to”.*

Answer: General Council has a valuable role to play in representing members by making recommendations to Council as described in para 8(a) of the Second Schedule. Any member of General Council can put forward a proposed recommendation. That proposal would then be debated by General Council and put to a vote. If the recommendation is approved by General Council, it is then sent to Council to consider. Another way of contributing to the work of General Council is through engaging with the Membership Committee, Shooting Committee and the Estates Working Group which each provide important forums for issues to be investigated, considered and debated in much more detail than is possible in a General Council meeting. The reports of these Committees and the Working Group can play a valuable role in informing General Council’s consideration of any proposed recommendations. The Trustees listen to the points of view put to them on various topics, and then must make decisions in the best interests of the charity, noting that points of view sometimes differ dramatically. A considered view from General Council on any topic makes an important contribution to that decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-benefit-rules-for-charities>

That brings us to the end of the written questions. I am conscious that we have just under an hour for questions from the floor, so could I have a show of hands of who would like to ask a question for allocating time. I see 4 hands, which gives us nearly 15 minutes for each question and answer, although I hope the questions and answers will be briefer than that.

Could I call on the first question please...

Gillian Kale, North London Rifle Club, and 4 other clubs

What I'm asking for is a policy on negative returns for 2024 and 2025. I've got three reasons for this. Already mentioned is the political and international situation, point one. Point two, we were told there was demand for the new caravan site, in fact there was a waiting list, and it's been advertised as long as, the same time as Waldegrave site, and yet the new site is only two thirds the size of Waldegrave. And despite that, we're coming up now to the Imperial, and it's only half- booked, basically. So, there is a sign that it's slowing down since the pre-Covid era.

There is also my third point. We need to watch membership. I believe since the end report, and I may be proved wrong here, that membership is now beginning to slip. Therefore, with all of those and other points that you both raised, I think we need to look at a policy for 2024 and 2025, in case our pricing brings us into negative returns.

Chairman:

Thank you, Gillian. Membership has reduced since last year by 67 against 10,200. I think the idea that it's starting to slip, we're not there yet, but you make a good point that we need to monitor it and make sure that we continue to get the support from members because their donations make a valuable contribution.

Half of the caravan sites on Wharnccliffe have now been reserved. The other half are still available, and there are caravans on site. As people generally buy caravans rather than pieces of concrete, I'm hoping more people will go down there and see the various options available. Buy now while you still can. In fact, it's a lovely evening so people might want to go for a stroll after the meeting and have a look.

Your first point is reinforcing the idea that we mustn't slip into negative return. It's a very valid point. There's no value in us charging so much that people stop coming. It's the job of, particularly the NSC that runs the commercial activities, to get that pricing right, so that we don't wind up charging lots and don't have people coming.

Mike Jenvey, RAFTRC

Good evening

One is a request on behalf Mary Nathan (nee Pearce) - please can the NRA staff be reminded of the speed limit on camp. She and others, myself included have seen several of the vehicles clearly doing well over 15 miles an hour when they're travelling around the ranges.

My second one is a request, if appropriate to clarify. You mentioned the Estate's Working Group just now, as a committee, that effectively for the last year has done very little, and we are looking at ways to try and improve that activity.

Thank you very much.

#### Chairman

On the first point, we have signs for the 15 mile an hour limit. We have speed bumps, which I think are loathed by many people, but they do perform a valuable traffic calming function. I should confirm that this not the role of the potholes, and they are being filled. But it is an important message to everyone, particularly as we encourage pedestrian and bicycle use on camp, and that only works if people feel safe walking and cycling on camp. And, for all of us, just be conscious of keeping the speed down when driving around camp.

In respect to the Estate's Working Group, this was raised at the General Council meeting earlier, so I don't want to speak out of turn without the minutes, but I am indeed hopeful that it will take a more active role going forward with some constitutional changes to it.

#### Charles Dickenson, Royal Navy Target Rifle Club and nine other affiliated clubs.

The Services have traditionally held their championships and lead up to the Queen's, now King's, medal awards on Bisley Camp over generally a couple of weeks. I understand that this year they have effectively been priced off Bisley Ranges apart from the final of the King's Medal, where they need a large number of targets, and instead they're going to be using Ash and Pirbright ranges.

Now this is a considerable reduction in the NRA's income, in fact, more than the profit that the NRA made last year. It takes away one of the main charitable objective beneficiaries, which is military marksmanship from what we can claim we are actually contributing as a charity. And further to that, it also impacts all the clubs on Bisley Camp who are going to lose income by all those military shooters not being on camp to actually come and spend their money. So it's a triple whammy in many respects.

NRA lost its money, charitable objective not being achieved, and the Bisley clubs who depend on custom to actually be able to afford their increased rents, no longer being able to get as much income as they would traditionally expect.

#### Chairman:

Thank you, Charles.

Range bookings are a commercial activity conducted by the National Shooting Centre. There is, of course, also the charitable overlap, and the value to clubs for food and beverage.

Because it relates to the NSC, I will invite Andrew as Chief Executive of NSC, rather than hold the question over to the NSC AGM, to answer it here for the convenience of members.

#### Andrew Mercer

I'm not certain at all that the reason that the military, the marksmanship competition, DefOSC have been relocated away to the adjoining Pirbright ranges was on price and price

alone. I think there are other operational issues. We're very pleased to see them coming back this year, and I hope that will be the start of a return to the majority of the competitions that have been previously relocated to Pirbright. I think a lot of that started during Covid.

In terms of pricing, we have a long-term contract with the MOD for the provision of target hire, and that's on a rolling five or six years priced contract. That contract is set in stone and I've never had an approach where people have said to me it's too expensive and that's the reason why we're not going to use Bisley Camp.

Neville Stebbings

By my calculations, I've got about three quarters of an hour for my questions, so I'm going to make the most of it. Actually, I have two questions.

The first one is the simplest one, hopefully. If we have 10, 000 members, we have about 1 percent of the membership in attendance. Is this meeting being broadcast so people can participate by Zoom? Or something similar? And if not, why not?

Chairman

The answer to that is it's currently being live streamed, so this is going out over the internet, accessible to every NRA member.

Neville Stebbings

So they can watch it, but they can't respond, or raise questions, or vote, or participate in the meeting remotely.

Chairman

The votes are taken in the room, and people who don't wish to attend can submit a written question, as many people have done

Neville Stebbings

Most other organisations like ours allow participation remotely, including voting, and including submitting questions during the course of the meeting. Why aren't we doing that?

Chairman

This is a test of the system. If it's successful and we get positive feedback, then it may be that for the next meeting, Council will approve the expenditure on a more comprehensive interactive system.

Neville Stebbings

It's my understanding that this issue has been discussed during several general meetings over several years. When's the testing going to stop?



Chairman

This is the test, and I'm hoping that people will take up the invitation I made at the start of the meeting to email me or the Secretary General with their feedback. Did it work? Was it useful to them? Do they want more? And then we'll be able to test the reaction.

I'm looking forward to receiving lots of emails from members.

Neville Stebbings

Will you publish the synopsis of the emails that you get, and some sort of a report?

Chairman

I think in the meeting in the record of the proceedings, it'll show the number of people who attended remotely.

Neville Stebbings

And their comments, if you're expecting emails?

Chairman

That will help inform Council decision. I don't plan to publish correspondence. If people email me with their comments, they can do so on the basis that I won't be publishing their answers.

Neville Stebbings

I think it would be much better and more transparent if you found some way of allowing people to comment so that other people could see what their comments were. Perhaps you should invite comments on the Facebook page.

Chairman

People can respond on our Facebook page. Andrew, do we provide that interactive facility?

Andrew Mercer

Facebook can be fully interactive. I'm not entirely sure how you would make sure that people are going to interact with other people who actually attended or viewed this meeting. I suspect actually that, if I could Chairman, if I suggest that a synopsis of the responses that we receive can be published,

Chairman

For those who are watching, if you do email me or Andrew, please do so on the basis that what you say may be circulated more widely than the general membership. I think it's fair that we make that clear to people.

Mike Jenvey:

Just to say, as a comment, that there are 11 people watching it live at the moment. The trouble is with it on an open Facebook page, any of these people can be non-NRA members,

so you don't know your participation. Whereas if you've got ZOOM and it is sent out as an invite, who are NRA members, a) you get the guaranteed correct membership, and b) you can actively have comments and questions going through, with a chance to share or select and answer them. You can then have those as a record and it can be recorded and saved as well.

#### Chairman

This first step is to test the live stream, we look forward to getting comments. We will publish a synopsis of the comments with the minutes. There's a question for Council next time - do we spend a bit more money and go fully interactive for the number of people likely to participate?

#### Neville Stebbings

The only problem with your test is that based on the comment that's just been made, the comments you may get may well be from people who have nothing to do with the NRA.

#### Chairman

Georgina will be able to tell me if the person is an NRA member or not.

#### Neville Stebbings

It's a bit ropery isn't it, really? I think for a test, if it's supposed to be representative, it should have been perhaps better planned than just having a camera stuck in the corner of the room, streaming on the Facebook for anyone to look at.

However, let's draw this question to a close. I think it's disappointing that it hasn't been done in a more professional and considerate manner.

Second point. Earlier on you have mentioned several times that this is a charitable organisation working for the benefit of its charitable beneficiaries. You intimated that people have the opportunity to join as a way of donating to the charity. Is it the belief of the Trustees and the management of the NRA and the NSC, that people only join the NRA so that they can donate to the charity? Or do you think that they might actually expect something in return for their membership?

#### Chairman

This is a very important point for a number of reasons, particularly the compliance and regulatory perspectives.

Your membership fee is a donation to the charity. So that is why we have a membership scheme, as many charities do. It provides a mechanism for members to make donations. We are allowed to claim Gift Aid for the donations if the people making the donation qualify for it under the gift aid rules. Georgina and her team have been very good in getting more gift aid forms, which is basically extra money for us. HMRC rules allow us to provide a benefit to members so long as the value of that benefit does not exceed 25 percent of the donation. In other words, if a charity has a scheme under which members make a donation

of £100, the charity is allowed to provide up to £25 of value to encourage membership<sup>2</sup>. So, for example, a magazine, insurance, other services. But that must not be more than 25 percent of the value of the donation, otherwise it ceases to be a donation and becomes a fee for service. And that is not charitable, and HMRC doesn't like it, Charity Commission doesn't like it, and the paperwork - I don't even want to think about it!

On the value of the benefit provided, we are very careful to make sure it's never more than 25 percent of the amount of the donation. I'm going to turn to the Treasurer to make sure I've kind of got that right. (Treasurer agrees)

### Neville Stebbings

That's a very clear and concise answer, for which thank you. However, it raises another question – is there then a clear demarcation between the way that money that is taken in membership, which is the donation to the charity, has to be treated, compared to money that is taken in things like caravan rental, where you are paying for something other than membership of the charity. And is the NRA and NSC then doing sufficient to make sure that those people who are paying for club leases, caravan rental, range hiring, and all the rest of it, are getting the level of service to which they really think to which they really should be entitled for the amount of money which is being spent on those things. Is there a similar charitable restriction on that? Or does the charitable restriction only relate to the membership fee?

### Chairman

You've given me three categories that I'm going to work through.

The membership fee is a donation that goes to the NRA. The NRA uses it in pursuit of its charitable activities.

Rental income from leases of land and fees for licenses of land is income that goes to the charity as the landlord, which is used for charitable activities.

Range hire and ammunition, for example, are two very good examples of a commercial activity. The NRA does not sell ammunition and the NRA does not hire ranges. That is a commercial activity. The National Shooting Centre Limited does that, and then the profits that it makes are donated to the charity for use by the charity in its activities.

A simple example that I've used from time to time is as you enter camp, you drive along the road owned and maintained by the NRA. You go into the range office where you deal with an NSC member of staff. You pay the NSC for your box of ammunition and for your hour of range time. You then drive on the NRA road out to the range, operated by the NSC, do your shooting, and then go home. That is a rough example of how the bits all fit together.

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<sup>2</sup> Post-meeting Clarification: The 25% cap on the value of benefits applies to the first £100 of donation. There is a 5% cap on the value of benefits in respect of any donation in excess of £100. The current Annual membership fee is £118.50 and so the value of benefits to members is currently capped at £25.92. For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-detailed-guidance-notes/chapter-3-gift-aid#chapter-318-benefits-received-by-donors-and-connected-persons>

## Treasurer

On the second point, on the other services that are contracted with the NRA, particularly on the leases, and we've often had this conversation about why aren't members treated more favourably. The Charity Commission have absolutely made it clear that the NRA cannot act for the benefit of its members, it has to act for the benefit of the public, and therefore the services which come under the NRA still have to be contracted on a market-value basis, they can't be discounted for members for example.

## Neville Stebbings

I would just like to respond to that before we go further on. I understand the point that you're making. However, my argument against that would be that, yes, alright, the profits may need to be used for the benefit of the charity, but as customers, you also need to ensure that they get a fair deal for the amount of money that they're spending, otherwise they'll walk away. If you don't have the money coming in from the customers, the people that rent the ranges, the people that pay the rent for caravan places and all the rest of it, if you lose that income, then the amount of money that you're going to be able to use for charitable purposes will diminish.

And there's a big question there about whether the NRA, NSC, or whoever's responsibility it is, is actually playing fair by the people who pay quite a lot of money into the system to have their caravan here. To be able to rent a lane on the range. I'm not sure that we get good value for money.

## Treasurer

I can say that we do analyse the business unit performance on a regular basis. I can say that, aside from the areas where I highlighted in my speech, where we do make a healthy profit, that profit is hard to come by. There is no rinsing the membership. Unfortunately, we are very much a hand to mouth organization. That is just demonstrable in the numbers and the General Council have sight of those numbers and the business units performing.

## Chairman

Just to follow up on a couple of things. Ammunition, for example, that's a very competitive environment. I think if the NSC tried to charge £2 per round, it would find sales would drop off dramatically and you wouldn't get very far. In terms of lease income, the Charity Commission has given us very clear guidance that leases must be set at market rent. We are not allowed to discount the rent, and the Charity Commission has been very clear on that. It is a competitive environment; people have other places they can put their caravans. I hope that what you pay to stay at Bisley will be considered value for money, and that people will continue to come to Bisley.

But you're absolutely right, if people started saying actually, that's too much and I'm not coming back, then that would be a factor to take into account in any pricing policy.

## Neville Stebbings

I think one final shot from me, and then I'm going to put the microphone down.

I don't think it's a question so much of how much you pay, it's a question of what you get for your money. There are other caravan sites not too far away that charge similar amounts of rent to put the caravan there, compared to Bisley. But you get a better experience because the services that are provided are so much better. And you could actually say, because you mentioned hand to mouth: my hand, your mouth.

Chairman

And that would certainly be useful information. If there are other caravan sites, site operators in the area that are charging the same as we are, but providing a lot more, that would be very useful information for us to have. I think at the moment that's not been our view.

Andrew Mercer

I think it's difficult to find comparables to Bisley in terms of the unserviced sites. I think there are far more comparables on the serviced elements, and it's fair to say I will contend that our serviced caravan pitches offer exceptionally good value to the people who have taken up leases.

Charles Dickinson

The NRA published a draft of the Estate's Development Plan for consultation six months ago. I would like to know what feedback was generated on that and how that has impacted the final estate development plan and when we might see that published, because it's not available on the NRA website.

Chairman

There were four responses and the report will be published later this month.

If there are no more questions, I'll thank everyone for coming along today. Thank you everybody watching on the live stream. Please do email us with your thoughts and reactions to this.

Thank you all very much for attending.

I look forward to seeing you out on the ranges.

The meeting closed at 18:56pm

## **Synopsis of Comments Received after the AGM in relation to Remote Attendance as at 16 June 2024**

### **Comments from Mike Jenvey**

*“...the technology clearly worked, with no reports of any IT issues such as room acoustics. However, the viewing figures were very disappointing; I saw 12-13 for the NRA AGM & only 3 for the NSC AGM - & of course, I was one of them.”*

*“There should be a separate email to members either one day ahead of the AGM date, or on the day, to remind them of the event & that a live feed is available. NRA website “publicity” / social media feeds will not capture all members.”*

*“a non-interactive live feed was a pointless exercise to join. Members could not ask questions as points / items were covered in the AGMs. This reduced the engagement process to zero & consequently did not enhance the democratic system at all. “*

*“...a Zoom meeting feed has the invitation sent out to the nominated group (members in this case) so access is controlled & privacy is confirmed. “*