

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held in the NRA Pavilion, Bisley Camp
on Friday 9th June 2023 at 18.00

Present:

Chairman
Secretary General
Treasurer
Members

Mr D Lacey
Mr A Mercer
Mr A Reynolds
27 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) **Election of the President** The Chairman proposed on behalf of The Council that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales KG, KT, PC, ADC be 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.

- (3) **Election of Three New Vice-Presidents** The Chairman proposed on behalf of The Council that three new Vice-Presidents be elected.

Tim Kidner -	approved
Robert McVeigh -	approved
Derek Stimpson -	approved

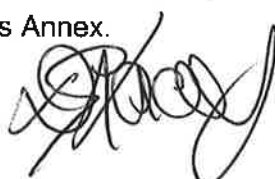
- b. **Appointment of the Auditors** The Chairman proposed on behalf of the Council the appointment of haysmacintyre LLP, Chartered Accountants, as Auditors.

The Resolution was approved.

SPEECH AND RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Attached as Annex.

Chairman



Annual General Meeting – 9th June 2023

Proceedings

Chairman:

Good evening everyone, it is 6pm and I would like to call the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the NRA to order, with thanks to everyone who has joined us. 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 help highlight the functions and responsibilities of the two organisations.

We have three standing resolutions to put before the meeting. That will be followed by a resolution to elect three new Vice-Presidents and then, in the usual way, speeches from me, the Treasurer and the Secretary General. There will then be answers to the written questions that we received in advance of the meeting, followed by an open forum for people to ask questions from the floor.

I propose the first resolution which is the election of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as the President of the Association.

All in favour? Any against?

I'm pleased to say the resolution has been passed unanimously. Thank you very much.

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 in your agenda and I now propose that all the existing Vice-Presidents be re-elected.

All in favour? Any against?

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

I now turn to the resolution to elect three new Vice-Presidents.

The first is Tim Kidner. Tim has been a driving force of fullbore shooting in Scotland for many years. Since 2008, he has been the principal organiser of the four major annual fullbore events in Scotland: the Scottish Target Rifle Championships, the Scottish Long-Range TR Championships and the National Rifle Club of Scotland Spring and Autumn Match Rifle Meetings.

Tim has been Chairman of the fullbore management group within Scottish Target Shooting since 2016, and prior to that was for many years Chairman of the Scottish Rifle Association until it was subsumed into the STS.

Tim served as Scottish Region Representative on General Council from 1993 until 2017, routinely making the 1100-mile round trip from his home in Aberdeen to attend meetings at Bisley.

He has given uncounted years' service in the management of both the Bon-Accord Rifle Club, a smallbore club in Aberdeen, and West Atholl Rifle Club who run Jubilee Range in Glen Tilt, now the national home of Scottish full-bore competition.

His personal shooting success includes 29 appearances for Scotland in the National Match, two of which as Captain, 19 appearances for Scotland in the Mackinnon, GB caps in TR, MR and F-class, Captain of the GB Team Woomera Match for Match Rifle in 2019 and Winner of the Grand Aggregate 2004.

I now propose that he is elected as a new Vice President.

All in favour? Any against?

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

The next candidate is Robert McVeigh.

Robert served the teaching profession of Northern Ireland for 37 years. He had a distinguished teaching career as well as serving in the Department for Education and as a School Governor.

His contribution to shooting is no less impressive. As Chef de Mission, he was responsible for all aspects relating to the delivery and performance of the Northern Ireland team at three Commonwealth Games. He was a director of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council from 1993 to 2007 and served as Chairman from 2007 to 2022.

He was Secretary General of the Shooting Federation of Northern Ireland from 1993 to 2006. During this time, the Government review of firearms legislation led to the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004. The Shooting Federation represented the target shooting fraternity with the Northern Ireland Office and liaised with the panel for decommissioning weapons in Northern Ireland as part of the Good Friday Agreement.

His personal successes in shooting include winning the Northern Ireland Open and Ulster Titles in Fullbore Rifle, 300m and Smallbore Rifle. He was a member of the team tour to Zimbabwe in 1983, followed by club, county and national representative shooting in Canada, New Zealand, Barbados, Trinidad, Australia, Malaysia, Guernsey and Jersey.

He is currently the Northern Ireland representative to ICFRA

All in favour of electing him as a new Vice President?

Any against?

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

The third and final candidate is Derek Stimpson.

Derek has a long association with the City of London working in the insurance industry from the mid-1960s, and was a member of Lloyds for a number of years. His career in the City of London lasted 45 years, largely as an underwriter, retiring from Assicurazioni Generali as Head of Reinsurance in London after 30 years with them.

He is a long-serving member of the Historical Breechloading Small-Arms Association and is currently its Chairman, as well as being a member of many other shooting organisations.

He is currently Vice-Chairman of the British Shooting Sports Council, a Member of the NRA General Council and Chairman of the South-East England Branch of the British Deer Society.

His other interests extend to being the Honorary Archivist and a Liveryman of The Worshipful Company of Gunmakers, and a Liveryman of the Turners Company and Company of Arts Scholars.

Derek has always had a strong interest in natural history and conservation as well as shooting. He's a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London and, when time permits, he combines all these activities with stalking and shooting in UK, Europe and Africa and writing for sporting magazines.

Finally, he's a collector of classic firearms, and has a particular interest in preserving this heritage for future generations as well as studying and researching it.

I now call for a vote on the election of Derek Stimpson as our third new Vice President.

All in favour? Any against?

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

Round of applause for Derek Stimpson, who was in attendance.

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

All in favour? Any against?

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

That now brings us to item 5, which is speeches by me, the Treasurer Andrew Reynolds, and by our Secretary-General, Andrew Mercer.

Chairman's Speech

Our Annual Report for 2022 has been published and outlines our financial position. It demonstrates that we have been able to recover from the financial challenges of Covid, although 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 continues to grow; it rose from 9,876 at the start of 2022 to 10,200 at the end of 2022 – a net increase of 344 members. This level of membership applications 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. 1,169 members completed a probationary training course in 2022. That's an increase from the last year and 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 managing that growth.

Range use at Bisley continues to grow, and we experienced high demand throughout 2022. Meeting this 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 2022. Better co-ordination of range usage and stricter cancellation policies have all contributed to making sure that we enable as many people as possible to use as much of the range as possible each day and that ranges are allocated fairly. 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.

2022 was the first full year of operations by the NSC of Council Club and of 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.

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 the NSC and other range operators successfully manage lead on shooting ranges.

There is always work to be done on improving facilities at Bisley and completing long-running projects. During 2022 we upgraded the ballistic walls at Melville, Zero and Winans ranges, commenced the development of a new range office in the Pavilion, upgraded the areas around the Clock Tower and in December we re-acquired Site 103. During 2023, the NSC plans to develop an on-line range booking system and the NRA will continue the work of repairing the shell and the services of Site 103.

Plans for two new serviced caravan sites are progressing and we are reviewing timing for the commencement of the works.

As at today, we are cash positive, but this is a particularly high point in the seasonal fluctuations of our cashflow. We must continue to rebuild the financial reserves of the charity and 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 his staff for all their energy, enthusiasm and hard work over the past 18 months. I would also like to thank the members of General Council for their contributions throughout 2022.

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

Treasurer's Speech

Thank you David.

Good evening.

Turning to the consolidated NRA/NSC Group financial statements and the Income and Expenditure Account to start with, in the year to December 2022 total consolidated income rose 18% year on year to £8.8million producing a consolidated net surplus, including a £69,000 loss on restricted fund investments, of £160,000. This compares with a surplus of £846,000 in 2021.

The single largest driver for this significant year-on-year change in surplus was the increase in staff costs by about a quarter to £3.1M. This was the result of a combination of the comparative effect of furlough grants received during 2021 on the one hand, and wage increases and fewer unfilled vacancies during 2022 on the other. Although overall staff expenditure compares reasonably to pre-Covid on a like-for-like basis, it did highlight the sensitivity of the overall performance to inflationary factors.

Another post-Covid effect was the ability to catch up on some of the discretionary maintenance that had been previously delayed. The Group spent over £500,000 during 2022 on maintenance of the estate and ranges, which was about the same as the spend in the previous two years.

As mentioned before, the Group's revenue has historically had three main sources: range fees, membership subscriptions and estate income. However, the importance of the BSG business, which we acquired in August 2020, cannot be overstated - its divisional profit in 2022 exceeded that of the consolidated Group for the whole year. It is clear that BSG makes a very significant financial contribution to the Charity's ability to pursue its objectives such as holding marksmanship competitions and training.

Moving to the Group Balance Sheet, the group's net assets increased to £9.1million although the Charity's free reserves which considers our liquidity remain negative, as a significant proportion of the Group's assets are in the form of Fixed Assets such as Land and Buildings.

However, a market valuation of £10million for the estate, which we obtained in 2020, 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 has not been used since April 2021 and the 2022 year-end unrestricted cash balance, which is historically the peak point in the year, was a healthy £539,000.

However, it is worth bearing in mind that the year-end net current liability position also links into this cash position. The NRA receives its 2023 subscriptions during the last month of the year, which flatters the cash balance as this is primarily 2023 revenue.

This brings us on neatly to Cash Flow. Unfortunately, the improvement in the liquidity of the Group which we saw in 2021 faltered in 2022 with increased cash demands. The cause of this was multi-faceted: lower net cashflow generation from the higher operating costs I mentioned earlier; higher working capital requirements, particularly in ammunition stock given the question mark over possible supply issues; and pivotally, Capital Expenditure: Capex soared during 2022 to almost £1million, with about half spent on range and estate improvements and the rest on freehold and leasehold additions including the purchase of Site 103.

This was registered in one of the Trustees' monthly Key Performance Indicators, which the Chairman mentioned - the Acid Test Ratio – which measures the proportion of cash and readily monetisable assets to the level of current liabilities.

The Trustees have set a floor threshold at 1x cover, but this was in breach for 5 months of 2022.

Our expectation, however, is for the unrestricted net cash position to remain positive throughout 2023 and our base case forecasts provided to our Auditors, haysmacintyre, during the external audit are that we will also end 2023 with a net positive cash balance and will have made headway in curing the acid test ratio breach.

As a result, the primary financial aim for the Trustees in 2023 remains for us to restore fully our balance sheet resilience as described in our Reserves Policy, which sets out our target for unrestricted net cash of at least £250,000 and an Acid Test Ratio of at least 1x cover at all times.

Whilst I would hope that we can achieve this by the end of this financial year, the economic conditions in 2023 are not without their own challenges and we are certainly not immune from the effects of inflationary pressures on our cost base, in particular rising wages and increases in energy costs.

Nevertheless, our projections for the current year are that the Group will generate a modest surplus before changes in investments of around £100,000, which would represent about a 1% net margin on the Group's turnover.

This will allow for expenditure of around £750k on capital assets and maintenance and the continued support of the Group's charitable objectives.

Clearly, the thin margins we operate with mean we remain sensitive to any adverse events and economic headwinds that can affect our operations, but with the support of Andrew and his Finance team I feel we are in a very good place to navigate them.

Thank you very much.

Chairman: Thank you Andrew. I now call on the Secretary-General to present his report.

Secretary General's Speech

Thank you Chairman.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

After the Covid disrupted years of 2020 and 2021 I had expected a routine 2022 where we could concentrate on the basics. Plans were proceeding swimmingly until I received a call on the evening of 4th July alerting me of a fire in the range danger area.

The fire burnt out 1,600 acres of the RDA over the next six and a half weeks, during the hottest weather I have experienced in my 10 years with the NRA.

We were sadly forced to cancel some of the early Imperial meeting competitions to allow fire brigade and NRA staff access to deal with fires; range stoppages caused by the fire continued through to mid-August.

I must record by grateful thanks and admiration for the efforts of the Fire and Rescue Service, NRA staff, target markers, volunteers and MoD colleagues who worked so hard fighting the fires and minimising the disruption over the range complex. There were many days when NRA staff fought fire morning, noon and night. Not once was a request for help rebuffed. Not once was a request for volunteers unanswered.

We now realise that managing fire needs greater resources and co-ordination. Fire breaks, water bowsers, RTVs and trained staff with proper PPE and equipment are essential to minimise disruption to shooting and damage to range infrastructure. Greater co-ordination is also needed to ensure effective deployment of fire crews and our own resources.

In addition to the fire, World events presented unexpected challenges in 2022 that continue into 2023. The war in Ukraine has disrupted our usual supply chains of ammunition and components, and caused energy costs to rise to extraordinary levels. The good news is that we have secured deliveries and hold ample stocks of the most popular lines of ammunition. The bad news is that we are now funding record stock holdings, restricting our ability to commission other projects.

Training Ukrainian forces on the MoD ranges is also severely restricting NRA civilian club access to military ranges; this problem is expected to continue well into next year.

Furthermore the NRA's bill for electricity alone in April this year was £54,000 compared to £19,000 in April last year. Inflation continues to pummel household budgets and the ability of members to pay for life essentials such as target shooting.

Looking further ahead 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.

Horrific murders in Plymouth and Epsom College by certificate holders inevitably produced calls for "something must be done". It is easy to focus on largely irrelevant initiatives such as requiring shotguns to be treated as Section 1 firearms. Proposals to restrict the amount of shotgun ammunition held on certificate, and variations to acquire additional shotguns would generate, in my view, wholly unnecessary administration. 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.

UK REACH's work to draft legislation banning lead in ammunition is progressing. We have worked hard to make the case that lead can be properly managed on rifle ranges; a visit by the HSE and Environmental Agency earlier this year proved very helpful to explain how lead is managed at Bisley and regional ranges. And I am particularly pleased to see today that we have Simon Favell from Thorpe Cloud, and Euan Campbell from Oundle Range who were with us on the day to demonstrate how they deal with their ranges, and that was enormously helpful.

However the prospects for retaining the use of lead shot for clay shooting are very poor. We have invested considerable resources working with other shooting organisations to ensure our responses and presentations are consistent and credible.

Firearms fees, unchanged since 2016, will also be increased significantly as a result of the current review. We have been engaged in robust discussions with the Home Office to ensure police cost recovery is fair and reasonable. It is in our interest to have a professional, efficient and properly resourced police firearms licensing sector, and it is reasonable for certificate holders and applicants to pay their fair share of the costs incurred.

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

Despite battling such vigorous head winds I remain optimistic.

NRA membership ended 2022 at 10,200 and continues to grow. Our ranges are busy. Participation in our competitions is holding up. And we are quietly, at long last, fettling up Site 103 at the gateway to Bisley Camp, acquired in December last year.

Thank you.

Chairman:

That takes us to answers to written questions.

We received four 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 read a synopsis.

The full text of the question will appear in the minutes¹.

The four questions come to us from Simon Rees.

1. *There are some scattered and limited regional facilities - even though affiliated to NRA these are all run independently with unique membership requirements. Could these somehow be more readily accessible to NRA members?*

My answer is it is up to local range operators to set the rules for access to their ranges. And that may well include the need to become a member of a club run by that local operator. But we would encourage all range operators to facilitate access to their ranges by as many users as the range can accommodate.

2. *Fully appreciating every range and club may have particular rules for specific reason, if a club is NRA affiliated should there be some acknowledgement of NRA awarded qualifications as a sign of competence? It seems bizarre that a remote club chair can give a SCC to a member to enable them to turn up and shoot unsupervised at Bisley but those same clubs normally do not recognise formal NRA issued SCC/RCO or /Instructor qualifications as a sign of competence.*

My answer is it is up to local range operators whether they recognise an NRA qualification or use their own system of assessing the competence of range users. We would encourage local range operators to recognise the NRA qualifications to enable them to facilitate access to local ranges.

3. *Could NRA consider some flexibility or cancellation policy for members having to make bookings from a distance?*

The answer to this is the cancellation policy is a matter for the NSC directors since the ranges are run by the NSC. The important thing is to communicate the cancellation policy effectively so that customers understand what it is and why the NSC has chosen to adopt it.

4. *Should there be a discounted membership fee for members distant from Bisley or other NRA facilities? It most certainly is not possible to enjoy Bisley when it is a 7+ hour round trip compared to being 45 minutes away.*

So the answer there is the primary purpose of the membership fee is to support the charitable activities of the charity. The NRA offers free membership to under-21s and discounted membership for people aged 21-25 and those over 65, as well as to people who live abroad. The Membership Committee will be reviewing the membership offering for 2024 and will have an opportunity to take this suggestion into account as part of that review.

That brings us to the end of the written questions.

Now there is an opportunity for questions from the floor. We have 60 minutes available until our next event.

¹ Full text of the questions asked by Simon Rees appear as Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Could I have a show of hands to see how many people would like to ask a questions?
Please put your hand up if you would like to ask a question.

Could I call on the first question please? If you could announce your name for the minutes, that would be helpful.

Robin Pizer:

Mr Chairman. My name is Robin Pizer, and I have a question on the accounts.

On page 10 of the accounts, paragraph 3.17, the last sentence states "a valuation of the estate was undertaken in 2020 and valued the estate at £10M".

This is a gross under-valuation. Whilst I was NRA Chairman, I was told by a member who is a property developer, that the land was worth about £1M per acre. Now, we had then about 83 acres of freehold, so the value 12 or more years ago was £83M. More recently, John Webster, in the Autumn of 2017, estimated the value at £100M.

So why only £10M and what about the other £90M? Has the NRA sold any of its freehold in the last 10 years. If so where and for how much?

Chairman:

Thank you Robert. Can I deal with the non-accounting bits and then turn to the Treasurer for the accounting bits.

Andrew, I think it is correct to say we haven't sold any freehold estate at any time.

Secretary General:

If we have, I haven't been paying attention Chairman!

Chairman:

No part of the freehold estate has been sold in the last 10 years.

And the purpose for the valuation, and I again will wait for the Treasurer to kick me, was in order to support the £1M overdraft facility. The estate is mortgaged in favour of Barclays Bank as security for the overdraft facility, and Barclays wanted to know they had sufficient cover in case we didn't pay the £1M overdraft.

And so from that perspective, whether it is worth £10M or £100M, Barclays were comfortable with the £10M, they could properly give us the overdraft of £1M. The evaluation was in that context, not in the valuation of doing anything else with it.

I will ask the Treasurer if he wishes to amplify.

Treasurer:

I think it's key that the purpose for which the valuation was obtained was for financing purposes, and that can be quite distinct from what you would expect to obtain in the market if you could sell it.

Clearly, evaluations over the estate are somewhat a moot issue because it is highly unlikely anyone else could obtain the estate, and actually run it in the same way that the current operation of the NRA and NSC run it.

So, I think it should be born in mind that clearly Barclays are highly likely to continue their overdraft facility on a 10% loan to value, and that should be the main takeaway. We are very sure that we will keep the current overdraft facility, which is important for us from a resilience perspective, rather than focusing on the valuation which was obtained purely for that financing arrangement.

Robin Pizer:

I do beg to differ. I think it is very foolish to publish a valuation for our land at £10M when it is clearly worth perhaps ten times that. If you are going to have a valuation, have it done properly. There are members of our association who can help you in this. They might have a vested interest, so just be careful who you approach.

Treasurer:

With respect, it was a proper valuation for financing purposes that was obtained from Knight Frank.

Robin Pizer:

They clearly didn't value it properly.

Treasurer:

They valued it with the purpose in mind, and the purpose in mind was not to sell it.

Robin Pizer:

That is not clear from any of the statements in the accounts.

Treasurer:

It is a factual statement. There is nothing inaccurate about the statement. The statement was that the valuation was obtained on the estate in order to support a £1M overdraft, ie the valuation that was obtained was for financing purposes.

Valuations often differ dependent on the purpose for which the valuation is obtained, and I'm not sure where £100M is being brought up from. I have never seen a valuation.

Robin Pizer:

I'm sure they do. In 2017, you may not be aware, there were discussions that we would have to leave Bisley and move down to the South West, and the suggestion at that stage, and I don't know where John Webster got his figure from, but it was that CNC, for instance, would perhaps buy the estate for £100M and we would then use that £100M to acquire land elsewhere.

Treasurer:

And I go back to the point that I made, that the valuation that has been obtained is to convince a bank on a financing arrangement. That is quite different from a lease holder or freeholder moving to the market and trying to sell.

Chairman:

But Dr Pizer makes a good point that if we were to sell the estate, which we are not going to, it would not be an appropriate valuation to use, and on that point I agree with you entirely.

Robin Pizer:

I think that really should be made much clearer, because otherwise there are going to be misunderstandings about why it is valued at such a low amount. Is there someone, is there a member, who wants to buy it at £10M?

Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to use this meeting, and publication of the minutes to clarify that. Thank you.

Robin Pizer:

I do have a couple of other questions, nothing to do with accounts.

One concerns you, Mr Chairman, in that you have built a large chalet on the Waldegrave caravan site.

But can all occupiers of caravan sites now replace their caravans by a similar chalet, and what extra rent is required?

Chairman:

For clarification, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this, you cannot put a chalet on the Bisley caravan site. It is only licensed for caravans, and so the only thing that I, or anybody else can put on a Bisley caravan site is a caravan.

That's a very important point, and this is a good opportunity to communicate it, that all people who have caravan sites can put caravans on them. What you can't do is put a building on it, and the planning regulations and rules are quite different between buildings and caravans.

Anybody can put a caravan on a caravan site.

Robin Pizer:

Well, I would dispute that you have built a caravan. You clearly have foundations there. It is, to my mind, it is a hut/chalet.

Chairman:

Let me clarify that as well. There aren't foundations because if there were it wouldn't be a caravan, and that would be in breach of the caravan site licence, and planning regulations. It does not have foundations. It rests on its own weight on a raft, in accordance with planning regulations.

But thank you again for giving me the opportunity to clarify that for anyone else who might be interested.

Robin Pizer:

Thank you for clarifying that to me.

And then I wish to comment about Queens Lodge, whose lease was renewed in 2014. It is in a shocking state of disrepair. Two of the rear windows facing Canada House are badly rotted and the whole building is long overdue for redecoration.

This state of disrepair has occurred slowly over many years, and the cost of putting things right now will be far higher than if the NRA had taken action sooner.

Why were the tenants of Queens Lodge not served with a dilapidation order several years ago which you are so quick to issue to other tenants? If you did serve a dilapidation order, why have you not carried out the redecoration and repairs and billed the tenant?

One of the tenants is John Webster. What is your rationale for this?

Chairman:

I'm conscious here of the potential unfairness in dealing with matters relating to particular individuals, in a question without notice, without any opportunity for them to speak. So I hope you will understand that I am limited to a general comment on dilapidations.

Many of our leases require tenants to pay dilapidations – that is, a payment by the tenant if they don't return the building in the condition that they got it. Our leases have various terms on this point and various leases have been developed over the years. Our policy is to enforce dilapidations so buildings are returned in the condition in which they were provided in accordance with the lease.

I don't know Andrew if you have any general comment on estate management?

Secretary General:

I think it is fair to say that we have a rolling programme of inspections of properties to ensure that people adhere to the repair and decorative covenants. It is fair to say that not all tenants are up to speed, and there are some legacy issues and some issues at Queens Lodge that we are working our way to resolve.

Robin Pizer:

All I will add is this is not the first time this has been raised with the NRA. Others have raised it earlier. You seem to be treating a particular tenant, who happens to have been a Trustee and Chairman of the Association at the time, very differently to many of your other tenants, and this doesn't look right at all.

It is appalling. You should treat all tenants the same, however important that tenant individually may be.

John Webster:

May I speak in my defence?

Chairman:

May I get through the questions and then give you a right to reply, if you wish to do that?

I stress the importance that in a question without notice, I'm not expressing any comment on any particular individual, nor would it be proper for me to do so.

Can we move onto the next question?

John Webster:

Yes, of course.

Chairman:

Can I call the next question please?

David Mumford:

I don't understand why having a competence to shoot certificate, you know what I mean, I can't bring my friend up and give him a shoot under close one-to-one supervision. I don't see why I have to wait for a Guest Day.

Chairman:

Can I just clarify, is this friend an NRA Member? (No)

And do they have an FAC? (No)

And so, Andrew, I think you will tell me that is indeed the answer?

Secretary General:

That's it. In terms of legally giving somebody possession of a firearm.

David Mumford:

Ah, he has to have an FAC.

Chairman:

Otherwise, he would be in unlawful possession of a firearm, because he has no FAC, and he is not an NRA member, and you would have placed him in unlawful possession by handing it to him.

I would welcome any input that other people may have.

Richard Stebbings:

I think you may have misunderstood the question, or misheard, he said giving them one to one supervision, so if under his direction a friend could shoot with him.

Chairman:

But if they are not an NRA member, they wouldn't be covered under the NRA insurance.

Richard Stebbings:

But if they were a member of his club, he can shoot without an FAC.

David Mumford:

Is there no way that they can pay a guest fee?

Chairman:

The law doesn't allow us to do 'green fees' like a golf club allowing a non-member to pay some money and play. If you and your friend were both members of an NRA affiliated club, or you were both members of the NRA, that would be alright.

This again is an important opportunity to communicate an important point, because people think well wouldn't it be great if I could bring my son and let him have a go, or I could bring my next door neighbour and get them into shooting.

Unfortunately, with a shotgun you can, so bring them clay shooting, but you can't do it with a rifle.

David Mumford:

But I thought we could get more members, but if this is a government rule?

Chairman:

I would love everybody to be able to bring their friends and family and all have a great day out but that is not the case.

David Mumford:

Thank you very much.

Andrew Morley:

I'm a member and Captain of Wandsworth Rifle Club and also Old Lancing Rifle Club.

As a captain of these clubs, I wanted just to make it clear and try and push back a bit against the target allocation policy regarding fallback targets and the impact it is having on club operations.

To be precise, there is a lot being said about the operation of the targets and I just wanted to talk about one very specific aspect of it. The two clubs that I represent are clubs that take school leavers and develop them into competent, international shots, and Old Lancing currently has an Under 21 member in the Palma team.

Wandsworth is another club who take members from a variety of different sources, not necessarily the old sports, and is mainly smallbore shooters, shooters who started late in life, and we bring them on quite successfully to the extent where our Chairman, who skippered the tour to Canada last year, has sufficient confidence in his own shooters within his club to select several of them for his team, and they went on to win two important international matches.

So you are getting an idea now that these clubs are effectively the bedrock of where TR shooting is developed and brought on to county and international level.

Now the impact of the restrictions on fallback bookings is decimating our sport, and wreaking havoc on our regular programmes. We would have several training bookings during the season and these have been severely curtailed and we are now in a situation where we are physically unable to attend on the days that we used to be able to attend, or even anywhere near them, because there just isn't fallback bookings.

Falling back is the bedrock of TR shooting. We are not going to just take practice target at one range, maybe sit and have a picnic, and shoot at that one target all day, because we need to actually go through the process of falling back 300, 500, 600 or 500 and 600, or 300 and 600 whatever.

We have had to resort to some single range shooting, but we've lost the falling back. Only yesterday the Surrey Rifle Club had to shoot their Astor concurrently with the total match, so again that was another measured booking we've lost for Wandsworth.

Not only that, Wandsworth would usually field two teams, but were only able to field one at best because there hasn't been sufficient range capacity.

So now the Chairman has got an insight of the impact this is having on the potential curtailing of us being able to bring on competent TR shots, is he willing to help us in providing some priority and helping his range staff create more falling back bookings please.

Thank you very much.

Chairman:

Thank you.

I'll start with some general NRA related observations, before turning over to Andrew, putting on his Chief Executive of NSC hat, as this would be an NSC matter.

I suspect what Andrew will say is that the problem with falling back is the amount of range space that it uses. I don't know all the ins and outs of that, but that is the reality of it as I understand it.

If everybody shot at 300, if everybody shot at 600, we could create a lot more capacity. And in a way we are a victim of our own success, and I did find myself cheerfully saying to one member 'isn't it great that we've got over 10,200 members' and he looked at me and said 'no, actually it would be great if we only had 2000 members, because then things could go back to the way they were'.

And that really gave me an insight that it's fine for me to say isn't it great we have so many people shooting, because it is, but my understanding is that as soon as you have falling back targets, you have to block off range space for safety angles and safety is important.

There is going to be this tension unless we move to single distance shooting, between allowing people to do all that they want, and getting as many people as possible on the range.

Andrew, do you want to add anything?

Chief Executive:

I think there is pressure on the ranges, ranges are getting busier, membership is growing and the demand for ranges is growing steadily. I think to fit in everybody, and give everyone what they want is impossible. To give everybody what they've always been used to having is becoming very difficult.

I think the challenge that the Range Office staff face, is not "are they going to disappoint people", it is a question of who they are going to disappoint. So we find the overarching edict of the range staff is that they have to 'pack, stack and rack' in order to maximise the number of people and give them the opportunity to shoot on our ranges at any one time.

Within that context, we have to nuance it, because we need to make sure that smaller disciplines like 300m have a chance, people who want to shoot long range at 1200 yards have an opportunity, and there are a number of shooting activities on both Century and Stickledown range that, through their nature, reduce range capacity.

And so each year we go through the process of reviewing how that year has run before we provide allocations for the next year.

It is interesting that when I talk to the Range Office staff, the demand for fallbacks is there, and when I look at the capacity, I'm not aware that the capacity is being fully utilised, what ranges we make available and what targets we make available and I'm not aware that they are 100% booked all the time.

And whether we are very successful and profitable with resources, which I know we haven't been publicising the range capacity we have, and I think the big challenge that we've got causes enormous frustration from the membership, and enormous frustration from the staff, is that we haven't got clear visibility to target availability with a proper online system, and that is something that we are hoping to rectify.

Chairman:

On a personal note, can I encourage everyone to experience Bisley year-round – I've had some wonderful shoots in January and February – you get some really lovely days here. October, November, December, I think Andrew you'll tell me that if I want a falling back target in October or November you can do me a much better deal?

Chief Executive:

If you come on Tuesday, I'll even pull the target for you myself!

Chairman:

So that is another point. If you can shoot mid-week, I know a lot of people can't, but if you can shoot mid-week, again, a lot of flexibility. But for weekends, don't forget Bisley is open 11.5 months of the year – make the most of it.

If we have finished that question, can I ask Mike Jenvey to step forward?

Mike Jenvey:

Thank you Chairman.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mine is more of an observation than a question. The announcement yesterday that came out with regard to the possible development of Site 5. It only came out yesterday, so in terms of anybody wanting to write a written question today, it is totally outside the timescale.

And I suspect this was known beforehand, and something as important like this, please, should come out before so that written questions can be asked by the members, because basically if they are not here, then they can't do anything about it.

Secretary General:

We wrote to 79 individuals.

Mike Jenvey:

I'm saying in terms of having the access for all the membership to make a written question to come here if they wanted to say something about that, they can't because the email was only sent out yesterday to a limited audience, and because the notification date for written questions is 1st June, they can't make a submission here at all.

Secretary General:

This is the Annual General Meeting of the membership of the NRA. The email went to 79 people who it was specifically addressed to.

Mike Jenvey:

That should have been to all membership as an important development to give everybody the opportunity to make a comment. That's how I would see it.

Chairman:

And your question?

Mike Jenvey:

The question is, on the basis as you said Mr Chairman, we were very pleased to announce 10,200 members, you've got approximately 10,174 who are not here, which means they can't participate.

So, please can I recommend an online facility for future AGMs and major meetings.

Phil Northam:

Absolutely! We are absolutely behind the times on this. We really, really need to catch up. Spend some money on the IT soon.

Chairman:

And just on that point, in terms of the IT, you make a good point. There is a cost which the Trustees would have to justify for this important meeting, but I am conscious of the various demands. Do we buy some IT equipment for the AGM, or do we buy an electronic target?

Phil Northam:

It is a trivial cost. Please spend the money!

Chairman:

If it is a trivial cost, and you've got the details, please send them to me.

Phil Northam:

We have people who can do it, and people who have offered to do it before and they've never been taken up! I mean 30 people out of 10,000, it's ridiculous!

Chairman:

I am personally not aware of offers being made. If you can send those offers to me that would be fantastic, and I'll be very grateful. And if members know anybody in the IT business, who might like to donate the equipment to help support the cause, that would be received even more gratefully.

Phil Northam:

We'll send them to you.

Mike Jenvey:

The equipment wouldn't just be for events held at Bisley, you could then also say you can do a conference event and any members who can't attend in person can attend online.

Chairman:

Thank you – a good suggestion, particularly if you've got low cost ways of doing it. That is really useful to have, so thank you for that.

Any further questions?

Phil Northam:

Secretary of the North Herts Rifles.

On the previous question about fallbacks, the 300m club is on its knees. We're about to lose it. Many of the members are making arrangements to go and shoot elsewhere because they achieve so few days on that range. Butt 10 is empty 99% of the time. Even in Winter when the other half of the shed could be used for sheltered shooting, covered shooting, it is not available. Butt 11 and 12 next to it are the pre-defined fallback butts, and this is where people are frustrated that they are unable to get fallbacks within that butt, not because of the impact of it on safety traces to the rest of Century range, but because it impinges a safety restriction on BSG.

Many members say to me, BSG, we bought it to be able to make better decisions for range availability for rifle shooting, but they are now saying to me BSG makes too much money and we are turning into yet another clay facility at the expense of rifle shooting.

We need to get the compromises right. So my plea, my question is can we please re-evaluate the compromises of 300m and fallbacks, also with an active BSG contribution to the organisation.

Chairman:

Thank you Phil. Just an observation before I let the Treasurer come in. It's important to recognise that the money generated by BSG flows to the NSC, and ultimately to the NRA, so it provides money that can be used for ranges, and other investments, and for the benefit of the charity.

Treasurer:

I don't have much more to add to that. It's just that we should see BSG for the benefits that it brings. I get the tension on range access, and I know that's something Andrew (Mercer) considers in depth.

And I tried to make it clear in my speech, we shouldn't undermine the benefits that BSG provide. And I do recall the criticism over the amount that the NRA spent on acquiring it, but it is a brilliant asset for us, and it enables the rest of the shooting, not that there is overt subsidy, but let's put it this way, I think without, we would need to have to have a huge reassessment of how much shooting would cost on camp.

We were talking today about affording all disciplines access to the ranges, not something we are immune from, we recognise it, but it's a brilliant asset and I think we are lucky to have it.

Chairman:

Andrew – anything from an NSC perspective?

Chief Executive:

No, I think it's already been touched on. The tensions between who gets what, the answer to that is never perfect, and there will always be someone who is disappointed. The reality is that we do not run the ranges for the maximum profit, because if we did, they would be even more people disappointed. So what we have to try and do is satisfy the demands of as many members as possible, with as much range capacity as possible, knowing full well that could compromise our ability to earn money, but we do that as thoughtfully and sensibly as possible. We are keen to support all disciplines, but there are difficult decisions which we need to take and that is the strategy we have placed on our shoulders.

Chairman:

Thank you Andrew.

And is there any further questions?

Richard Stebbings:

Chairman of BYSA and also City of Newcastle Rifle Club.

This is going to sound initially like an accounting question, but it's not.

I was looking at the group accounts for the last full year, which ended December 2022. The NRA's overhead rate is currently 56.75%. The industry average across all industries is 35% and for the leisure sector it is also 35%.

That's a difference of slightly over £2M. The Treasurer does, in my opinion, a very good job of measuring our past performance against our current performance. What I want to know is what are we doing to review our efficiency of our own operations, and are we benchmarking our performance against any similar organisations?

Chairman:

Thank you Richard.

It won't surprise you to know that one's going straight to the Treasurer!

Treasurer:

Andrew (Mercer) and me have had a conversation over ensuring efficiency. I think what was interesting was that if you go back to a pre-BSG, our actual wage costs for example are on a par with where they were.

So a lot of the increase that we've seen is just getting back to that full operation. There was obviously a lot less work going on, unfilled vacancies, through the Covid period. But again, worth bearing in mind, that in that year we made almost no net operational profit. Very thin margins.

I've raised the point about efficiency, but I think, and I'll let Andrew expand on it, I don't think there is anywhere obvious where we can cut. In the maintenance staff, in the range staff, it is not as if we feel flush with staff. From a finance point perspective, I struggle massively and have done for the past 4 years, in obtaining any resourcing to be able to do project analysis, forward looking planning.

A lot is said for example, in General Council about why is this analysis not here. We don't have the staff for it, and we would love, and I have been championing for a Financial Director, to be able to have it. We cannot afford it.

The idea that we are not efficient, is one that I think can be shot down quite easily, but Andrew...

Secretary General:

We've grown turnover significantly, we've grown our expenditure on maintenance significantly. I think it's fair to say that the camp I inherited when I started 10 years ago, was in a complete mess. And there are still areas of a complete mess, and it is going take a decade or two to remedy that, if it ever can be.

There has been a legacy over decades of significant under-investment in the infrastructure on camp, and what we have been trying to do is invest as much money as we can muster on building up and developing premium resources, that all who come to Bisley can enjoy. And that costs money, and a lot of that work is being done by directly employed staff.

So I think are there inefficiencies embedded in the organisation that I run? Yes. Are they significant? In my view, No.

What we need to do is be continually attentive to the resources and efficiencies, but also have an honest conversation with ourselves, and also the membership, about pricing, because it is plainly obvious to me that rifle shooting is provided far too cheaply at Bisley.

I think the services we deliver are delivered far too cheaply. When we look at the margins that we make on a £10M business, of £100k surplus, that surplus barely covers the cost of replacing the assets that are wearing out, so I think we have a problem.

There are significant parts of what we do that is costing the NRA a significant amount of money. Key of which is competitions. Competitions run at a significant cost to the NRA.

Now I'm not saying we should put up the prices of membership, we should put up the prices of competitions, we should put up the prices of range hire, but I think we need to have an honest conversation as to what we have and where do we spend it. And I think a lot of the choices that we are expending are masked in the various areas of the estate.

When you think that, as I said in my speech, that our electricity bill has gone from £19k to £54k in the month of April along, and our insurance costs historically were just over £100k, and are over £300k this year. So that's a massive overhead increase that we have had to sustain in the short term, whilst continuing to deliver the services we have.

There is an exercise that we will do with the Trustees, because we realise that where we are at the moment, what we did last year, and what we've done this year is not sustainable. And I think what we've realised is that we are perhaps misleading ourselves by saying that every year there has been an exceptional item, one year it was BSG, then we had the fires, and we bought Site 103. But I think the one thing that we realise is that the only thing about exceptional items, is that they are unexceptional because there will always be one to deal with.

So what we need to do is to take step back from our current operations and our costs and our capacities, and think is this going to suit us for the next 5 years, and I think the answer to that is no. So we need to do some major remodel to build greater financial resilience, and I think we are going to need to look very carefully at the pricing of services that we deliver across the board, and also make sure that along with that we are realistic and attentive to the efficiencies of the charity.

Chairman:

Thank you Andrew.

Richard Stebbings:

May I just have a follow up to that question please?

I don't disagree with what anybody said there. But you have sort of answered and not answered the question. My question was are we benchmarking our performance against any other similar organisations to try and achieve what you are describing.

Are we looking outside of what we do to who else does things better than we are and try and implement what they are doing in our own processes?

Treasurer:

I don't think there is an easy entity that we can point at that is a good, ideal benchmark to the NRA, both in terms of the operations or size.

There are charities, and I've looked at very recently, but they are multiples in terms of size. But still there are takeaway points, some of which I have raised today, and we will have a think about it.

We have ongoing discussions with haysmacintyre, our auditors. They are not just here for the audit. We do have lengthy conversations and there is nothing immediately that they point to that they've asked us to consider from a strategic perspective.

I have ongoing catch-ups with the ICAW and hear about what other charities are feeling. Yesterday, they were talking about the cost of giving crisis. There are common themes, but I don't think there is anything where it is very easy to say, OK this is the model, this is where we can compare the NRA and NSC to, and are we doing worse than any of them in any regard.

We are aware that margins are thin. I keep saying this, and I think people get the wrong impression because of the seasonality in the accounts, that we are sloshing around in cash and don't know what to do with it. That is only a symptom of what happens every December when we get everyone's membership subs in.

We are thin in liquidity, we are thin in margins, and have been. We are just very good at understanding what we have in terms of maintenance and capex, which is our discretionary aspects of keeping everything going.

You shouldn't just think about when you talk about operational margins, it isn't all about one side of the equation. You have to think about the revenue side as well, and this is the bit that we think the focus needs to be on, because there isn't anywhere obvious that we can cut costs on, without the shooters feeling it.

We are very conscious of not getting back to a point where the estate is in a state of disrepair. We don't want that.

Richard Stebbings:

So in summary, there is benchmarking of sorts going on with various other organisations.

Treasurer:

But there is no obvious comparator and that is the answer.

Richard Stebbings:

So a summary saying this is what the market is generally doing, so there is a cost of giving crisis, sent to the members, would be useful so it gives context to the overall accounts.

Chairman:

Thank you for that. And if people do have any suggestions about where we should be spending less money, that would be helpful, so we are spending money on the things that people value.

It would be remiss of me not to remind you of the opportunity, should you be revising your will, to remember the NRA with the hope of course that we do not see the money for a very long time indeed.

Phil Northam:

You should probably point out that if you make a bequest in a will of 10% of your assets after IHT, you reduce your IHT taxation level from 40% to 36%, so possibly a little paper on how and why it's good to make bequests to charities, such as the NRA,

Chairman:

Thank you for that.

Andrew Morley:

If that is the end of the questions, can we ask John Webster to respond to the earlier point?

Chairman:

I was going to come to that. Are there any further questions?

I would remind the meeting this is an opportunity to ask questions of the NRA, of the Trustees here: that is me, the Treasurer and Secretary General. There is no obligation for any other person to answer any question, or to say anything, or provide any information as part of this meeting process.

That is an important point to make. However, since John (Webster) has been named in a question, I will give him the opportunity, if he wishes, but I want to make it clear that does not set any kind of expectation that any other person is ever required to speak by being named in a question.

I hope you don't mind my making that point, but it is an important one.

With that said, John do you wish to say anything?

John Webster:

It might just be helpful, I don't have the facts to hand.

Member of any number of clubs, and yes a tenant of Queens Lodge.

Five of us live in Queens Lodge. We have had a dilapidation survey done when we renewed our lease. The dilapidations survey said that the inside was in a pretty good state, but the outside was not.

An inspection appeared to uncover a leak and the leak has been fixed, but in the process of fixing the leak, it was discovered that the walls of the building may actually be moving, and in some cases, cracking.

So not one but two structural surveys have been done, by two separate entities, and footings have been dug to find out how deep they go. I'm not a structural engineer, I don't fully understand it.

The second of those surveys was delayed slightly, because a swarm of bees decided to nest on the roof, and we had to get them curated away.

I understand that it has been frustratingly long, it has been frustratingly long for us as tenants, to get to a state where we can actually confidently say that we can do the dilapidations without actually having then the building fall down around us.

We are still in that place, and we are trying to sort it out. But it is not for a lack of effort or willingness on our part as tenants, or certainly effort by the NRA and its staff to bottom out what is causing the building, if anything, to move, and is it still moving.

Those conclusions have yet to be reached. I hope that's helpful.

Chairman:

Thank you John.

That then brings us to the close of the meeting at 19.15pm.

I would like to thank everyone for coming along and contributing.

There will be, at 19.30pm, the Annual General Meeting of the National Shooting Centre. There is no business to be conducted at that meeting. It is held as part of NSC's outreach to its stakeholders, but I invite everyone to attend.

If you know anyone who might be interested, please let them know it will be starting as planned.

With that, thank you all very much, and good evening.

The meeting closed at 19:15pm

APPENDIX 1

From: Simon Rees <simon.mrpc@gmail.com>
Sent: 08 May 2023 22:35
To: Nicholas Couldrey <Nicholas.Couldrey@nra.org.uk>
Subject: Members remote from Bisley - AGM point

Hi Nic,

I hope you are well. You may remember we met when I was Chair of Marlow RPC and when we also looked at Wendover. We moved from Bucks a few years ago and now spend our time split between homes in Swansea and France and I shoot in both places.

When at Marlow I was lucky to be close to and shoot at Bisley very often. I had hoped to keep shooting regularly at Bisley but the reality is it is just so far away from Swansea, about 3.5 hours each way it has almost made Bisley inaccessible. It is not just the distance, it is the prospect of bad weather, possible traffic delays etc., all adding uncertainty and making it a game changer. I remember NRA/you trying to develop regional resources - but I never really appreciated how difficult, if not impossible it is to enjoy Bisley from the sticks.

As a recent member of Swansea RPC I have been able to shoot full-bore as a guest at Carreg (a great facility but 100m max), and had thought about Barry (but that of course has closed). I think there is a facility at Caerphilly. All these other clubs require membership/probationary periods etc. for a limited facility that is still not particularly close. Nothing compares to Bisley and the NRA facilities, training and consistency! I also think it is very important to try and encourage as many shooters as possible to join NRA and importantly adopt and follow NRA procedures as best practice.

So, with the recent email from NRA asking for feedback for the AGM before making comment I wanted to check the situation with you in respect of any developments in progress (I seem to remember there was a possible ex MOD range in S.Wales NRA was looking at).

My thinking is:-

1. There are some scattered and limited regional facilities - even though affiliated to NRA these are all run independently with unique membership requirements. Could these somehow be more readily accessible to NRA members?
2. Fully appreciating every range and club may have particular rules for specific reason, if a club is NRA affiliated should there be some acknowledgement of NRA awarded qualifications as a sign of competence? It seems bizarre that a remote club chair can give a SCC to a member to enable them to turn up and shoot unsupervised at Bisley but those same clubs normally do not recognise formal NRA issued SCC / RCO / Instructor qualifications as a sign of competence.
3. Could NRA consider some flexibility or cancellation policy for members having to make bookings from distance?
4. Should there be a discounted membership fee for members distant from Bisley or other NRA facility? It most certainly is not possible to enjoy NRA/Bisley when it is a 7+ hour round trip of being 45 minutes away.

I would appreciate your comments so I can consider submitting some feedback to AGM.

Kind regards

Simon Rees - MRPC