

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

FINAL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the NRA Pavilion
on Friday 6th September 2019 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman Mr JG Webster
Vice Chairman Dr JD Warburton

Members: Mr GK Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Cdr NJW Benstead
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr N Brasier
Mr CM Brooks
Wg Cdr DP Calvert
Dr AMW Cargill Thompson
Mr PAE Charlton
Mr PR Coley
Mr DC Crispin
Mr AJCB de Launay
Mr CES Dickenson
Mr HF Dunton
Dr N Fyfe
Mr J Harris
Mr RS Kenchington
Mr JM Kynoch
Miss SS Lohmann
Mr D Lowe
Dr J Martin
Mr JF Miller
Mr A Reynolds - Treasurer
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr IR Thomson
Mr S Wallis

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Secretary to Meeting
Mrs A Gran - Trustee
Mr D Lacey - Trustee

Apologies for absence: Col WGC Bowles, Maj R Bruce, Mr M Charlton, Mr L Christy, Mr M Cotillard, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr DGF Evans, Mr E George, Mr J Harper-Smith, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr A Hunter, Mrs G Jarvis, Mr GAE Larcombe, Mr T Lehman, Mr J Longhurst, Mr A Loudon, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr MF Martel, Mr N McFarlane, Mr W Mott, Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mr B Ritchie, Mr R Roberts, Mrs K Robertson, Mr AJD Saunders, Mr R Sayer, Mr C Steele-Benny, Mr N St Aubyn, Mr NF Thomas, Mr MK Townsend, Mr G Trembath, Mr MP Watkins, Dr AP Wolpe, Mr MJ Wood

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G573 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as noted above.

G574 – ELECTION RESULTS & WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chairman informed the meeting of the results of the General Council elections. The F-Class Discipline Representative is Jonathan Longhurst. The elected Ordinary Members are Iain Thomson, Karen Robertson, Mik Maksimovic, Reg Roberts and Derek Lowe. Congratulations were extended to all the successful candidates.

The Chairman also welcomed Dr John Martin, Chairman of the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, as an ex-officio member, to his first meeting.

G575 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman requested that all members declare any conflict of interest at any relevant point of the meeting.

G576 – MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 14th JUNE 2019

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 14th June 2019 had been, circulated, approved and published.

G577 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 14th JUNE 2019

There were no matters arising.

G578 – REVIEW OF ACTIONS

G481 – AM confirmed we are still awaiting an update on mixed motive investment from the Charity Commission. **Action ongoing.**

G536a – AM informed the meeting that we have now received three applications from General Council members to form the Estates Working Group. The members are Nick Brasier, Paul Charlton and Iain Thomson. A number of applications have been received from the general membership and these will be put forward for consideration by General Council to complete the group. **Item ongoing.**

G536b – GT will send a further email to the GC members who have not yet responded with their Register of Property Interests document. **Action ongoing.**

G566a – AM informed the meeting that the contract of sale between the NRA and the NSRA dated 3 September 2002 included covenants that (1) restricted the use of the site for shooting bodies (2) gave the NRA option to purchase in the event of a sale for a period of 80 years; and (3) entitled the NRA to an uplift payment which expired on 25th July 2006.

Richard Kenchington (RK) raised his concern that Site 103 is such an eyesore and asked if there was anything the NRA could do to remove the building and maintain the levelled site. Could the NRA and NSRA not cooperate to achieve that purpose.

The Chairman agreed that the Trustees would wait for the report from the surveyors on the uplift claim against the NSRA before making any decision as the financial impact could have consequences, although the Trustees understand they have obligations to ensure all financial matters surrounding the freehold areas on camp are carefully considered.

Following further discussion about the asbestos content of the building and also the outstanding charge by a lien holder against the land, it was agreed that AM would write to the NSRA to express the NRA's concern for a potential asbestos contamination risk to the camp with a view to opening a channel for discussion about the future of Site 103.

G568a – AM tabled an update to the Three Year Strategic plan which will be discussed later in the meeting.
Item closed.

G579 – COUNCIL

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2019 were presented to the meeting.

A verbal report of the meetings held on 14th June 2019 and 9th/10th August was given to the meeting.

The main points of discussion have been dominated with the report and action plan received from the Charity Commission and the Trustees are working towards completing the required actions within the timescales provided. A number of the documents are being sent to the NRA's solicitors and auditors to ensure they meet with appropriate law and financial requirements.

The General Council members have received a number of draft papers including a summary of the Co-operation Agreement, Real Estate Policy and Lease Renewal Checklist for their information.

DLA summarised the three documents. In 1998 the Charity Commission required the NRA to transfer its commercial activities into a separate company. The National Shooting Centre (NSC) was formed to carry out commercial activities. A subsequent review was carried out by the Charity Commission in 2005 and they required that separation be more properly documented and a short services agreement was entered into between the NRA and NSC. The new Cooperation Agreement summary sets out very clearly what the NRA does (charitable) and what the NSC does (non-charitable). The Lease Checklist will help the Trustees demonstrate they have appropriate oversight of the granting of new lease renewals.

DLA confirmed there would be an ongoing compliance exercise so the Trustees can demonstrate to the Charity Commission that they regularly review such documents as the Trustees Skills Audit.

The Trustees have completed a self-assessment Trustee Skills Audit, following a request by the Charity Commission, which allows the Trustees to assess gaps on the Board of Trustees. General Council members are responsible for the ratification of a large number of the Trustees, it is important that they understand how they can use the document to assist them in appointing the best candidates to fill any potential gaps in the board.

ACT suggested that other skills not currently listed, such as strategy and risk analysis/management, are important for the effective running of charities.

There is a vacancy for an elected member on the Board following Gary Alexander's departure and the skills audit should assist General Council members in putting forward candidates who may have the skills which are missing, eg. property management. There is also a co-option method to find Trustees who may have skills to assist the Board.

Applicants for any future vacancies on the Trustee board would be asked to complete a skills audit to assist the General Council members in their decision making process. The form would be amended to give a better definition of the categories of 'basic, competent, expert' when listing the skill level.

JPSB asked that point 8 on the Lease Checklist be updated to include the requirement that the tenant discharge all other responsibilities under the lease. AM agreed that was a good point made and the document would be amended to reflect that.

Following a question from RK, DLa confirmed that the NRA had a Secretary General and the NSC has a Group Chief Executive which are two separate functions within the organisations, but conducted by the same person (Andrew Mercer). The challenge for AM is to ensure he provides greater clarity between the two organisations.

RK then asked whether the Real Estate Checklist should reflect a greater obligation on the NRA to ensure the renewal of leases to tenants as he feels the obligations are very much on the tenant at present. The Chairman confirmed the document had been reviewed by Strutt & Parker, as professional advisers, and therefore is accepted by the NRA in its current form.

The Chairman thanked David Lacey (DLa) for all his hard work and diligence on the documentation for submission to the Charity Commission, as well as all the Trustees for their review and input.

No further questions were raised.

G580 – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the 25th May 2019 were presented to General Council.

It was agreed that the 2020 AGM would be held again during the Phoenix Weekend on Saturday 30th May 2020 at 6pm. The meeting would be advertised in the forthcoming NRA journals and on the website and social media.

Better communication to the members was requested to keep them informed of meeting dates and the release of minutes, including contact by email.

No further questions were raised.

G581 – BISLEY GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the 23rd July 2019 were presented to General Council.

PCh asked whether BSG's profit and loss accounts had been provided following their promise at the BGM. AM confirmed they have not yet been received.

RK asked whether the minutes of both the AGM and BGM could be summarised, rather than expect people to read through 40+ pages of text. The Chairman agreed the minutes could be summarised.

No further questions were raised.

G582 – FINANCE

The Treasurer gave a verbal report to the meeting.

The KPIs show that as at 31st July 2019, the net income shows a loss of £27k, although this has improved following the income from the Imperial Meeting. The cash balance is healthy at £394k, well above the agreed £250k minimum. The net current assets figure is -£358k.

The Trustee body has decided to monitor another KPI, an acid test ratio, given that a lot of the current net asset position incorporates deferred liabilities, to provide a better sight of the liquidity of the Association.

Current performance is slightly adrift of budget on the income, mainly due to no receipts in major contracts, and the delayed inauguration of the Pavilion. There has been a high receipt in rents and training. The 2019 Imperial Meeting shows an overall increase of 22% year on year. The year to end forecast is due in the coming weeks.

G583 – OPERATIONAL UPDATE

The Chief Executive presented his report to the meeting.

AM pointed out the item regarding the Designated Trustee appointment and contact details for the General Council members to note.

The Waldegrave caravan site has been extremely well received with 35 of the 39 pitches sold. The new owners consist of 15 who have upgraded from other sites, 3 previous hut owners and 17 new occupiers. The process has proved the funding model works. This will allow the NRA to look at the site as a whole and review the long term plans for future sites, giving members a greater certainty of their tenure on the site. AM confirmed that not all sites will be serviced as there is clearly a requirement for non-serviced pitches amongst the membership. The review will also include a programme for the update and improvement to ablution blocks.

AM commented that the Estates Working Group will be given the task of reviewing the sites and coming up with a plan for future developments.

AM informed the meeting that there is increasing scrutiny by the police firearms licencing teams on Home Office Approved Clubs as to their efficiencies on record keeping. A briefing note is being put together and will be sent out to all clubs by the NRA to assist them in ensuring their clubs meet the standards required by the firearms licencing teams.

RB asked for an explanation of AM's comment on the challenge of accounting for quantities of home loaded ammunition produced from components.

AM responded that the licensing police have found it difficult to account for the components and the amounts used when loading ammunition and whether the rounds are within legal specifications.

No further questions were raised.

G584 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

James Harris (JH) gave a verbal update on the Shooting Committee meeting held on Thursday 5th September.

The Team Captains handbook update is ongoing and the Committee expect a final draft for review at the meeting in February 2020.

The Disciplines Day is currently on hold pending the election of a new Membership Committee Chairman.

There were a number of incidents during the Imperial Meeting, including four incidents of firing before the order which will result in an amendment in the handbook to prevent that from happening in the future.

The Cadet Imperial meeting was very successful to the end that they are looking to create a Team Match to run alongside the National match held on the second Thursday.

The new Sporting Rifle competition events were extremely well received

The Gurkha Trust had sent the NRA a letter of thanks for the £2005 raised through the Gurkha Appeal which will go towards the welfare pension of two Gurkhas next year.

The GGG ammunition was discussed in depth during the meeting and John Bloomfield and Tom Rylands have conducted an investigation into the issues and JPSB will present the report to the meeting.

The Shooting and Training programme is in draft for 2020. In 2020, the early May Bank Holiday falls on the following Friday, instead of the usual Monday, so some competitions may be disrupted due to range space.

A new online competition and course booking systems is in development.

The Range Booking conference is due to take place in October and the date will be published and sent to the clubs.

The sub-committees are being reviewed by Shooting Committee and standing orders and procedures will be updated by February 2020.

Subject to approval by the Trustees, a new trophy is to be awarded for the Hopton for the top non-HME shooter, presented by the Welsh Rifle Association.

Some new crosses will be presented by Oxford and Cambridge Rifle Association for the Humphry (Oxford vs Cambridge Match in Match Rifle).

The Muzzle Loading World Championships have recently taken place at Bisley and were very successful. A letter of thanks from John Whittaker, Chairman of the Long Range World Championships Organising Committee was read out to the meeting.

The F-Class European Championships were taking place this week at Bisley.

JH thanked the NRA staff for a good Imperial Meeting.

The 2020 Handbook is due for review. Any suggestions or amendments should be emailed directly to Iain Robertson. A request that any submission from NRA members be made through General Council members only to keep the number of emails to a minimum.

JPSB gave a presentation to the meeting on the GGG ammunition issues during the Imperial Meeting.

The conclusion of the presentation was the cause of the problems was down to the primer used in the manufacturing process. The NRA met with GGG and have informed them of their findings.

AM remarked that the NSC sell c.1.5 million rounds of ammunition each year and the 155g 7.62 match ammunition is the biggest seller. The NSC also supply 250 thousand rounds to the NRA for the issued ammunition during the Imperial Meeting. The NSC is in discussion with GGG as there are a number of things to decide. The NSC need to have confidence that GGG recognise the problems, which they do, and that they can do something about it.

AM remarked that GGG were able to address the Sierra bullet problem in 2018, and this matter has caused GGG considerable distress as for the 2nd year running they have had problems with bought in components which were only evident with the ammunition was shot at Bisley.

The 2019 ammunition has been taken off sale. AM confirmed that rigorous testing has proved the 2019 ammunition is safe and grouped well. That view has been seconded by the Proof House and negotiations are ongoing with GGG regarding compensation. 2019 ammunition may be put back on sale with a disclaimer.

Ammunition needs to be procured for 2020 that is fit for purpose for both general supply and issued ammunition. We need to ensure rigorous testing is undertaken and be able to reassure next year's competitors that any ammunition purchased is fit for purpose. AM will keep the meeting updated as progress is made.

JPSB expressed his thanks to Tom Rylands for his gun-smith assistance, Fergus Flanagan for firing a large amount of primer cases, and Anton Aspin for his metallurgical expertise and providing drawings for making spare extractors.

The Chairman thanked JPSB for his thorough presentation and endorsed JPSB's thanks to Tom Rylands and added his thanks to JPSB for his work during the meeting to assist all the competitors who had a problem with their extractors.

CD endorsed the thanks to JPSB and Tom Rylands who both sacrificed their Imperial Meeting entries to assist competitors.

CD asked whether there was a plan in place to repair or replace broken extractors should any further issues occur if the 2019 ammunition is put back on sale. AM confirmed it would be sold with a disclaimer that places the responsibility of repair on the purchaser of the ammunition.

G585 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2019 were presented to the meeting.

A verbal report of the meeting held on 10th August was given to the meeting.

The main points of discussion were the difficulties facing University rifle clubs with the large increase in costs of becoming a Home Office Approved and the fees levied to change club official details on Firearm Certificates. The Membership Committee are looking at ways of helping universities maintain greater consistency of names on the certificates. They are also looking at providing financial assistance to start-up clubs.

A number of members are leaving the NRA to join Scottish Target Shooting who are looking to take on the role of NGB in Scotland. Consideration needs to be given to regional members and the benefits they have from being members of the NRA, as many members never travel to shoot at Bisley. Accessibility to training must also be reviewed for regional members.

RK asked if it was the intention of the NRA to issue certification cards for a 4 year period, rather than 1 year. AM confirmed that the NRA will continue to provide 1 year cards to affiliated clubs. GT confirmed that club renewal paperwork will be sent out at the end of September and all clubs will be provided with an individual list of members who have been provided with an SCC for clubs to update. We hope the administration should be less onerous for 2020 renewals.

PCh asked for an update on the Young Shooters Fund. AM confirmed the Committee are working on a plan to rejuvenate the fund. AM will update the General Council at the next meeting.

No further questions were raised.

G586 – APPROVAL OF DATES FOR 2020

The following dates were approved for the General Council meetings in 2020:

Saturday 22 nd February 2020	2.00pm	NRA Pavilion
Friday 12 th June 2020	3.00pm	NRA Pavilion
Friday 11 th September 2020	2.00pm	NRA Pavilion

G587 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

The result of the election for the Palma Team Captain 2023 was announced to the meeting. Dr Jeremy Langley was the successful candidate. Congratulations were extended to Dr Langley.

AM updated the meeting on the 2018-2020 Strategic Review. A paper was circulated which highlighted the items that have been achieved or completed. 50% of the objectives have been achieved to date. The review will be updated to reflect the separation of objectives which fall under the NRA and those which fall under the NSC.

HD recorded his appreciation to the NRA for their swift response and positive response to the sale of West Raynham Range. It was disappointing it was taken off the market at the last minute.

Charles Brooks (CB) remarked that the successor for the Vice President of General Council would normally be appointed at this meeting. There is also an elected vacancy on Council which should be appointed.

AM remarked that the Charity Commission skills audit has delayed the appointing of an elected member to Council. The Chairman added that the Council board is still quorate and therefore consideration can be given to the skills required on the board before a replacement is sought.

Nominations will be sought for the February 2020 meeting.

The Chairman added that this would be his last full meeting as Chairman, as the new Chairman would be officially put in post at the Council meeting in February 2020. Canvassing for a new Chairman has commenced and the Trustees will discuss candidates at their next meeting and present their proposal to General Council.

The Chairman asked for any nominations from the General Council members for the position of Vice Chairman to be put forward for consideration. The position of Chairman will be advertised to the NRA membership through the website and social media platforms.

CD remarked that there is a procedure for the appointment of GB and NRA team captains which involves the Target Rifle Discipline Rep and the TR Sub-Committee if in place. In the absence of a sub-committee CD believes the responsibility for those aspects of the sub-committee should devolve onto the representative. JH stated that as the policy relates to a shooting matter and is set down by the Council, the matter be discussed at the next Council meeting in October.

CD wanted to express his discontent at being disenfranchised from the election process of GB TR Captains as the published process is not being followed correctly.

CD remarked that communication from the NRA is poor and asked that members are communicated through email as there are a large number of members who do not read the website or receive the Journal. His understanding is that GDPR allows an organisation to contact those who have entered into a contract as a member through email or other means until the member opts out of such contact. Steve Wallis (SW) remarked that this is a topic for discussion at the next Membership Committee.

A further request to the membership for communication preferences will be included in the 2020 renewal paperwork.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 17.45pm



Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Saturday 22nd February 2019

2.00pm

NRA Pavilion

REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Action Point & Date	Ownerships	Action Required
G481a – 8 th September 2017 <i>Updated 6th September 2019</i>	AM	AM confirmed we are still awaiting an update on mixed motive investment from the Charity Commission. Action ongoing.
G536a – 7 th September 2018 <i>Updated 6th September 2019</i>	ALL	AM informed the meeting that we have now received three applications from General Council members to form the Estates Working Group. The members are Nick Brasier, Paul Charlton and Iain Thomson. A number of applications have been received from the general membership and these will be put forward for consideration by General Council to complete the group. Item ongoing.
G536b – 7 th September 2018 <i>Updated 6th September 2019</i>	GT	GT will send a further email to the GC members who have not yet responded with their Register of Property Interests document. Action ongoing.
G566a – 14 th June 2019 <i>Updated 6th September 2019</i>	AM	AM will write to the NSRA to express the NRA's concern for a potential asbestos contamination risk to the camp with a view to opening a channel for discussion about the future of Site 103. Item ongoing.
G568a – 14 th June 2019 <i>Updated 6th September 2019</i>	AM	G568a – AM tabled an update to the Three Year Strategic plan which will be discussed later in the meeting. Item closed.