

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

FINAL

THE GENERAL COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting held at the NRA Pavilion
on Saturday 22nd February from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman Mr JGM Webster

Members:

Mr GK Alexander
Mr HRM Bailie
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr CM Brooks
Dr AMW Cargill Thompson
Mr MJJ Charlton
Mr PAE Charlton
Mr PR Coley
Mr M Cotillard
Mr DC Crispin
Mr AJCB de Launay
Mr HF Dunton
Mr DGF Evans
Dr NCM Fyfe
Mr J Harris
Wg Cdr CJ Hockley
Mr RS Kenchington
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr GAE Larcombe
Miss SS Lohmann
Mr D Lowe
Dr J Martin
Brig. M Pountain
Mr A Reynolds - Treasurer
Mr B Ritchie
Mr RM Roberts
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Mr NF Thomas
Mr IR Thomson
Mr MK Townsend
Mr S Wallis
Dr JD Warburton
Dr AP Wolpe

In attendance:

Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Secretary to Meeting
Ms AN Gran - Trustee
Mr D Lacey - Trustee

Apologies for absence: Mr GV Barnard, Cdr NJW Benstead, Col WGC Bowles, Mr N Brasier, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Mr L Christy, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Mr CES Dickenson, Mr E George, Mr J Harper-Smith, Mr AD Hunter, Mrs GMP Jarvis, Lt Col. T Lehman, Mr J Longhurst, Mr M Maksimovic, Mr MF Martel, Mr J Martin, Mr W Mott, Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mrs KD Robertson, Mr AJD Saunders, Mr R Sayer, Mr C Steele-Benny, Mr N St Aubyn, Mr G Trembath, Mr MP Watkins, Mr MJ Wood

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G588 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as noted above.

The Chairman welcomed Brigadier Mark Pountain, Secretary General of CCRS to his first meeting.

G589 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

G590 – MINUTES OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 6th SEPTEMBER 2019

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 6th September 2019 had been, circulated, approved and published.

The Chairman asked Silke Lohmann (SL) if she wished to follow up on her email to GC of 28th September about these minutes. SL declined.

A request was made - and the meeting agreed - that 10 working days be given for review and approval of minutes.

G591 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 6th SEPTEMBER 2019

There were no matters arising.

ACT raised a point at the 6th September meeting regarding additional important skills such as strategy and risk analysis/management for new Trustees and wanted to record his disappointment that these hadn't been included in the papers on the Skills Matrix for this meeting.

AM remarked that the report circulated was the one that went to the Charity Commission and therefore covered the current skills base of the Trustee board. He agreed that both Strategy and Risk Analysis/Management skills are good ones to include in the matrix going forward. The content of the skills matrix will be reviewed annually by the Trustees.

G592 – REVIEW OF ACTIONS

G481a – AM confirmed we are still awaiting an update on mixed motive investment from the Charity Commission. **Action ongoing.**

G536a – Three members of General Council have been put forward to serve on the Estates Working Group – Nick Brasier, Paul Charlton and Iain Thomson. A ballot is being held later in this meeting for the Lay Members of the group. **Item closed.**

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

G566a – AM informed the meeting that a number of letters have been sent to the NSRA raising the asbestos issue on Site 103, as well as a number of other issues. Some of those issues have been resolved, and some remain outstanding. We have not yet had a response to the asbestos issue. AM will follow up on the asbestos issue with NSRA. **Item ongoing.**

G593 – FINANCE

The Treasurer presented his financial report to the meeting.

The report shows a surplus for the year. The significant variances in terms of income and expenditure include the late opening of the Pavilion café, the change in the major contract levels, and uplift in rent. The 150th Imperial Meeting had a positive impact on revenue, but a negative impact on expenses.

The KPIs reflect the natural seasonality whereby at the end of the year the charity finds itself in a very liquid position, even though this has been a year of significant cash outflow, predominantly through capital expenditure, which has been in excess of the strategic annual target.

The charity is currently in a very solvent and liquid position.

2020 will see a lower level of capital expenditure.

Richard Kenchington (RK) requested an explanation of the 'acid test'.

The acid test ratio equals cash + trade debtors/trade creditors.

Previously it took into account deferred revenue, which was felt to be not necessarily a fair reflection of immediately available cash. The acid test was seen as a better metric to demonstrate the true liquidity of the Association. It assists the charity in managing its liquidity through the year.

Alex Cargill Thompson (ACT) requested that a short explanation be given regarding the consolidated accounts to help people understand it better that the figures include both the NRA and the NSC.

Iain Thomson (IT) asked if the acid test included ammunition. AR confirmed it only reflects cash and trade debtors.

There were no further questions raised.

G594 – SECRETARY GENERAL'S OPERATIONAL UPDATE

The Secretary General presented his report to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted:

The noise complaint raised around 18 months ago has not gone away. The local Environmental Health Officers are now more attentive to complaints being raised by residential neighbours. The NRA are having to react to these complaints and need to be very attentive to them. The NRA will be inviting two local parishes to an open evening at Bisley camp to try and explain who the NRA are and what we do.

David Crispin (DC) believes better communication should be undertaken with these parish councils so that they are clear that any shooting after 5.30pm does not come from Bisley, but from other ranges such as Pirbright.

Significant moves have been seen in Europe to ban all lead in all ammunition. AM is concerned that the game shooting community are about to publish a declaration stating that they are seeking a voluntary ban on lead in all shotgun ammunition used to shoot live quarry. That is being driven by the desire to maintain the market for shot game.

AM is concerned that when the declaration is published in the next few weeks, there is a risk that the difference between using non-lead shotgun ammunition for game shooting and using a copper-jacketed bullet to be shot into a stop butt isn't going to be easily understood. There are plans to ensure that the

NRA's case is well understood with FAQs attached to that show that rifle shooting is conducted within a controlled environment.

AM has had conversations with the MoD regarding range design and safety, because switching to non-leaded ammunition possibly changes ricochet characteristics and potential accuracy.

Membership has seen a steady increase over the last 12 months including an increase in the number of affiliated clubs, schools and associations.

There has been a good increase in the effort invested in assisting regional clubs and range operators on issues they are finding in terms of noise and range safety issues. There is an increasing demand on NRA and NSC resources to provide technical expertise and ensuring regional ranges are demonstrably safe and can be certified as such.

The NRA is producing their own version of the MOD's JSP403 which will be shared with the regional clubs and range operators and will be circulated in the coming months, as JSP403 involves a large number of things which are not appropriate to civilian ranges.

There are around 300 private ranges in the UK operated by affiliated organisations, ranging from small indoor smallbore ranges, to large outdoor ranges. Ensuring consistency and set standards across all ranges is very important.

John Kynoch asked for AM's understanding of the Gun Trade's position on the ban of lead ammunition. AM believes the gun trade are considered in their view and impact it will have on the trade.

Bryden Ritchie (BR) asked whether the number of affiliated club members could be added to the membership numbers to help reflect how many have SCCs.

AM confirmed that could be included in future reports. There are currently c.14,500 affiliated members with SCCs.

IT asked where the majority of members live in relation to Bisley. AM responded that the majority live within 1.5 to 2 hours of Bisley. There are a greater number of regional members joining the NRA from regional affiliated clubs.

IT asked why a club had been charged for damage to an electronic target. AM remarked that the club had acknowledged that their zero'ing had not been accurate.

G595 – NOTES FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NSC

The Chief Executive presented his report to the meeting.

The range use analysis for 2018 and 2019 was presented. It shows an increase in the use of electronic targets on both Century and Stickledown ranges. The report shows an increase in use by affiliated clubs and their members.

ACT asked whether the metric for range usage was based on the number of target sessions or cash. AM confirmed it was measured by cash income.

RK asked if widening the Short Siberia range would be beneficial to provide more targets, as it is such a heavily used range.

AM responded that it is likely that the Short Siberia range is the one receiving the most complaints regarding noise from local residents. Consideration may be given in the future to building and providing an indoor range to provide better facilities which can be used more intensively.

G596 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Shooting Committee gave an oral update on the meeting held 16th January 2020.

The majority of the meeting was taken up with amendments to the 2020 Bisley Handbook.

The main points to highlight are there have been no significant changes to the conditions of competitions. There has been a change to the procedure of firing in advance of message one and General Council were asked to read the relevant paragraph in the Handbook.

The Range Regulations have been removed from the Handbook and will now be published and updated online by NSC.

The Disciplinary Code has been removed from the Handbook and will now be published and updated online, so an up to date version is always available.

The obligations of membership have been inserted, which ensures we remain compliant with various points of legislation as a Home Office Approved club. Members were asked to read and be aware of those.

Various documents are being reviewed including the Terms of Reference and Team Captain Selection policy, both of which hope to be presented to General Council in June.

The Committee are considering introducing some standing orders for Shooting Committee to govern how they run their meetings.

Various reports from Disciplinary Reps were noted, most notably from 300M as Seonaid McIntosh, one of their most successful shooters, is now ranked World No. 1. The meeting expressed its congratulations on this excellent achievement.

Charles Brooks (CB) asked for an updating on the ammunition for 2020. AM, as Chief Executive of the NSC, confirmed that the ammunition for 2020 had been ordered from GGG. A test batch had been received and was being tested this weekend. A full report will be published once testing is completed.

SL asked whether there was a back-up plan should the GGG ammo not be acceptable.

AM confirmed there is a back-up plan should any issues be found with the 2020 batch of GGG ammo, however this would have an impact on the cost and could affect entry fees.

The 2019 GGG match ammunition had been put back on sale and was selling well. Advice had been sought from the Proof House to ensure it complied with CIP regulations. The NSC is selling this at a discounted price.

JSPB remarked that the issue with the 2019 ammo was the stretching of the cases.

IT asked whether GGG had not been aware of the stretching of cases when testing the batch.

JSPB remarked that GGG only became aware of it after the NRA had informed them of their findings. The problem had not ever been seen before and therefore no-one had checked for it. There was no obvious sign of the cases stretching when testing the ammunition.

BR asked for members to be emailed when any updates have been made to the Range Regulations or Disciplinary Code so people are made aware.

ACT asked that any change or update to either document be published as a news item.

No further questions were raised. James Harris, having thanked the Chairman for his hard work during his chairmanship of the NRA, left the meeting.

G597 – COUNCIL

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 19th October 2019 and 7th December 2019 were presented to the meeting.

No questions were raised.

The Chairman presented a briefing note on the NRA and its Charitable Purposes following the Charity Commission report.

The Charity Commission's report was based on section 15.2 of the Charities Act which function is to encourage and facilitate the better administration of the Charity.

The NRA is a charity. The Charity Commission do not believe target shooting conforms to the charitable purpose of promoting health as a sport.

The NRA's objectives as a charity include defence of the realm. In 2011 the Charity Commission listed a number of Charitable purposes. This includes the promotion of the efficiency of the Armed Forces.

The NRA believes that traditionally defence of the realm includes civilian shooting as civilians could be called up in times of crisis. The Charity Commission do not believe the NRA can continue to rely on this point.

Continuing that stance would result in a direct confrontation with the Charity Commission which is not something the NRA wishes to do if, as a charity, it can continue to demonstrate that it promotes the efficiency of the Armed Forces.

In order to do that, The NRA can promote competition shooting which involves past and present members of the Armed Forces, and the Emergency Services etc, and current cadets.

The NRA must be able to demonstrate their degree of involvement. Therefore, new methods of capturing such information will be included on all competition entry forms so that the NRA can demonstrate this requirement.

DLA added that not only does the information have to be collected by the NRA, it also has to be verified and that will have to be done carefully and considerately. For example, spot checks could be conducted on the firing points to validate the information.

The booking of targets by ex-military personnel to come and shoot as individuals at Bisley is not considered a charitable activity and would therefore be booked through the NSC.

Regular reports will be made to the Charity Commission of the attendance percentage of required personnel.

The NRA, as the charity, is the owner and manager of the property at Bisley Camp. The Real Estate Policy has been updated to reflect that. The Disciplinary Code has been updated to show greater separation between the NRA and NSC and greater clarity between Disciplinary Procedures and Range Regulations.

The Chairman expressed his sincere thanks to David Lacey and Alice Gran for all their time and input into the briefing note. The Chairman added that DLA has saved the association a considerable amount of money having drafted all of the documentation to show the separation between the NRA and the NSC. He expressed the Council's thanks.

The main benefits of remaining a charity are that it allows the NRA to claim Gift Aid on membership subscriptions and to claim business rate relief on freehold property.

SW observed the difficulty of being able to verify status as Armed Forces or cadets or emergency services on the day, and whether a database of the existing membership could be created with that information for verification ahead of competitions.

A general query asked whether the NRA were aware of what percentage of shooters who meet the military requirement is acceptable by the Charity Commission.

The Chairman replied that the NRA are unaware of the acceptable percentage. The Imperial Meeting could have over 50% of military/cadet involvement. Such information needs to be collated for the other competitions over the coming months.

Consideration will be given to whether practice for NRA competitions could be included as part of the information capture for the Charity Commission. Recreational shooting would and could not be included.

If little or no qualifying participation in a particular competition can be demonstrated, that competition will be considered non-charitable and will be moved into the NSC.

Chris Hockley (CH) remarked that bookings on the ranges made by ATSC or RAFTRC and other military based clubs could be counted into the overall percentage as they are using the NRA facilities and resources.

CB asked whether future range bookings made under the NRA or NSC will have different pricing structures.

The Chairman responded that there could be a VAT issue for NSC bookings.

Regarding the statement that the NRA could not, as a charity, benefit its members, ACT asked whether that could be rephrased to explain that the NRA cannot benefit members individually beyond what it does for the public good.

DLa remarked that the NRA as a charity exists to serve the public good, not its membership. Thought needs to be given as to whether the membership are paying their fees to support the charity or whether they are paid as the Home Office Approved Club or National Governing Body and be structured accordingly.

BR remarked that the point made that the NRA does not exist to service its members is a very sad position to be in. The NRA needs to re-engage with all its members, clubs and the military.

The Trustees will look to seek advice from other charities as to how their membership donations are treated, such as the National Trust.

ACT believes everyone is in agreement and that the situation needs to be communicated to all members, affiliated clubs, etc. ACT remarked that he remembered the membership fee being decreased when the NRA and NSC were separated previously, to reflect the fact that membership conferred no material benefit (as all shooters would pay the NSC the appropriate commercial rate for any range use). The way the two organisations were separated before will be reviewed and considered.

ACT also asked for clarification on the position of Under 25s and students with regards to the Charity Commission's criterion of Education being a charitable purpose. He commented that some Match Rifle events, run as informal competitions, can have up to 15-25% student entry, and see more experienced shooters provide extensive coaching and other support to student competitors.

SL asked whether the NRA have a certain percentage of targets which are allocated to members who practice or have competitions with service or ex-service personnel.

The Chairman remarked that could be considered.

Derek Stimpson (DS) remarked that stating things as a positive is always better than a negative, so if you say that the NRA and its members exist or co-exist to serve the public good, is a positive statement, rather than a negative.

Andrew Reynolds (AR) remarked that there are key phrases in the Charity Commission's documentation and the NRA needs to ensure it is reflected in its public documentation.

RK remarked that the advantages of remaining a charity include Gift Aid, business rates relief and VAT. RK wanted to know whether there were a lot of advantages of not being a charity, including reduced administration.

The Chairman remarked that the NRA as a charity holds freehold property and could not give up its charitable status without transferring these freehold property assets to another suitable charity.

Mark Pountain (MP) offered any assistance that CCRS could provide to help provide evidence of cadet participation in NRA competitions.

The Chairman thanked MP for his offer.

JSPB remarked that clubs should look at business rate relief for their club houses, which is 80%, and that a discretionary 20% is also considered, which means some clubs could achieve 100% business rate relief for their club houses.

The Chairman added that the NRA and NSC would hold separate AGMs, with the NSC's taking place immediate after the NRA's. This year's AGM is due to take place on Saturday 30th May 2020.

No further questions were raised.

G598 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Under Rule 7 (g) (iii) the following Elected Members of the General Council who retire in 2020 have declared if they wish to stand for re-election:

Five Ordinary Members

JPS Bloomfield
NRJ Brasier
Wg Cdr (Retd) DP Calvert MBE
DC Crispin
SS Lohmann

Three Regional Members

HRM Bailie – Northern Ireland
GV Barnard – East Midlands *
BD Ritchie - Scotland

Four Shooting Discipline Members

Dr AMW Cargill Thompson – Match Rifle
ED George – Gallery Rifle & Pistol
I Shirra-Gibb – 300 Metres
N Macfarlane – Historic & Classic Arms

(* not standing)

G599 – ELECTIONS

Following the notification from the Secretary General to all General Council members of 30th October 2019 which outlined the procedure prescribed on the Second Schedule the results of the following elections were announced to the meeting.

David Lacey elected as NRA Chairman.

Charles Brooks elected as Vice Chairman to General Council.

Reg Roberts elected as Trustee on to Council.

Tom Putt, Andrew Nebel, Robert Bruce elected as co-opted Trustees to Council, taking up post immediately. Julia Hilger-Ellis elected as co-opted Trustee to Council, taking up post in September 2020 upon the retirement of Alice Gran.

Dr James Marsden elected as North Western Regional Representative of General Council.

Ms Alice Gran elected as Greater London & South East Regional Representative of General Council.

Richard Bailie, Paul Charlton and Richard Kenchington elected as Lay Members of the Disciplinary Committee.

Congratulations were extended to all successful candidates.

G600 – TEAM CAPTAIN ELECTIONS

The results of the following team captain elections were announced to the meeting.

GB Under 25 Team Captain 2020	-	Daniel Clark
GB Australia Match Team Captain 2021	-	Jane Messer
GB Veterans Australia Match Team Captain 2021	-	Nick Hinchliffe
GB Veterans Team to WLRC 2023	-	Charles Brooks

Congratulations were extended to all successful candidates.

G601 – APPROVAL OF ESTATES WORKING GROUP

The results of the following elections were announced to the meeting.

Lay Member – Club House/Tenant Philip Dodd
Lay Member – Caravan/Licensee Christopher Fopp

Congratulations were extended to both successful candidates.

G602 – OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Peter Coley (PC) raised a question about the caravan inspection email which was circulated recently. Why was the NRA insisting on the use of axle stands as opposed to concrete blocks, when the National Caravan Council's code of practice allows both?

AM responded that axle stands was chosen following industry advice as best practice having consulted experts in the industry. AM was unaware of the NCC's code of practice and asked that any further points should be directed to him.

JSPB offered to investigate caravan support options and provide a report for the benefit of General Council members.

Richard Bailie asked why the NRA's caravan licence agreement had been changed and now included a paragraph that members' buggies are not allowed to be kept on site when the caravan is not occupied.

AM responded that there are a number of buggies kept on site all winter which stops the grounds team from being able to cut the grass or spray for weeds and makes the site look untidy.

RB asked what alternative has been proposed for members who have buggies.

AM will take that under advisement and respond accordingly as to whether any buggy storage rental option could be offered to members.

CB commented that the caravan notice which came out from the NRA which included the current conditions of annual rental and which stated they may have been amended. CB believes that is not user friendly and any changes should be highlighted.

AM thanked CB for a point well made.

RB and CB declared an interest.

SL asked whether there was any news on the Commonwealth Games.

CH remarked that he had spoken with Martin Watkins and understands that information will be forthcoming by the end of February 2020. AM added that India had offered to host the Commonwealth Games Shooting Programme and that offer is subject to the Commonwealth Games Federation decision. Voting is due to take place towards the end of February. PCh remarked that was for shooting and archery.

The Chairman confirmed that this was his last meeting as Chairman of the Association. The Chairman thanked the members of General Council for the many kind messages over the last few weeks.

The Chairman also thanked all the Trustees that have been part of his Chairmanship term (6 years). It has been very much a team effort. The Chairman highlighted some of the Trustees for their particular contributions:

David Evans, who has been a Trustee for 10 years and was a constant throughout JW's time as Trustee and Chairman, as Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee, and as Vice Chairman of Council for the majority of JW's term. DE was an oasis of calm and thoughtfulness in some stressful times.

Derek Lowe, who took on the role of Treasurer during a challenging and bleak time financially, and whose contribution was very instrumental in guiding the Association to the health and surpluses it now enjoyed.

Richard Bailie, who took on the challenge of guiding the Trustees through the implementation of a Real Estate Policy that is now fair to everyone and which complies with Charity Law.

John Bloomfield who was a constant on General Council and a Trustee for many years and during that time was a consistently reliable resource on technical matters.

The new Chairman, David Lacey. Not long after being co-opted, DLa was thrust into the Rule 150 debate, and together with Alice Gran, they produced an extremely helpful report on the matter. DLa has gone on to produce a lot of clear thinking on a number of issues, particularly those arising from the Charity Commission action plan. His personal contribution has saved the organisation a lot of time and money in the last 6 months. The Chairman extended his congratulations and best wishes for the future.

JW also thanked the NRA staff. The Trustees set policy, but the NRA staff implement it. This is not always an easy task, but has been accomplished through a number of significant contributions by NRA staff, particularly Andrew Mercer.

The outgoing Chairman received a round of applause.

DLa proposed a vote of thanks, as Vice Chairman to Council, to the outgoing Chairman for his work over the last 6 years. JW has undertaken an enormous amount of work with a calmness, despite the challenges, and has made a huge contribution to the Association, and through his leadership of Council has set an extremely high bar.

The meeting agreed and expressed their thanks with a round of applause.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm



Chairman

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 12th June 2020 3.00pm 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 22nd February 2020</i>	ALL	AM informed the meeting that three members of General Council members have been put forward to the Estates Working Group - Nick Brasier, Paul Charlton and Iain Thomson. Ballots are being held for the Lay Members. Item closed.
G536b – 7 th September 2018 <i>Updated 22nd February 2020</i>	GT	GT has sent a further email to the GC members who have not yet responded with their Register of Property Interests document. Action closed.
G566a – 14 th June 2019 <i>Updated 22nd February 2020</i>	AM	AM has written to the NSRA to express the NRA's concern for a potential asbestos contamination risk to the camp and is waiting for a response. Item ongoing.