

## Secretary General's Speech

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

Horrible 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.