

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

FINAL

THE GENERAL COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held at the Pavilion Bisley
on Saturday 20th February 2016 from 2.00pm

Present:

Chairman: Mr JGM Webster (Chairman)

Members: Mr HRM Bailie
Mr GV Barnard
Mr JPS Bloomfield
Mr AM Bullen
Mr M Charlton
Mr PR Coley
Mr DC Crispin
Mr HF Dunton
Mr S East
Mr DGF Evans
Sqn Ldr A Fox
Mr NJ Francis
Dr N Fyfe
Mr JM Kynoch
Mr DR Lamb
Mr GAE Larcombe
Mr M Maksimovic
Mr MF Martell
Mr TS McDowell
Mr JF Miller
Mr WCP Richards
Mr R Roberts
Mr P Ryder
Mr AJD Saunders
Mr I Shirra-Gibb
Mr D Stimpson
Sqn Ldr P Upham
Dr J Warburton (Vice Chairman)
Mr MP Watkins
Dr AP Wolpe
Mr D Young

In attendance: Mr A Mercer - Chief Executive
Mrs G Thatcher - Office Manager
Mrs A Gran - Trustee

Apologies for absence: Mr GK Alexander, Mrs ID Bennett, Mr T Bobbet, Col WGC Bowles, Mr CM Brooks, Wg Cdr DP Calvert, Dr A Cargill Thompson, Mr ARK Clayton, Maj. Gen IC Dale, Maj SB Fraser, Mr GMLN Gilpin, Mr J Harper-Smith, Mr JS Harris, Mr K Hocking, Wg Cdr CJ Hockley, Mr JA Horton, Mr P Hunter, Mr A Hunter, Mr TLW Kidner, Mr T Lehman, Mr D Lowe, Mr CC Mallett, Mr CN McEachran, Mr K Nash, Col. Brig. WJ O'Leary, Mrs K Robertson, Mr J Rossiter, Mr R Sayer, Brig J Smales, Wing Cdr M Symonds, Mr G Trembath, Mr PDC Turner, Mr MJ Wood

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman of General Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.

INDEX G420 to G432

G420 – APOLOGIES

Apologies were received.

G421 – MINUTES OF MEETING OF GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING – 4TH SEPTEMBER 2016

The Minutes of the General Council meeting of 4th September 2015 were received.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate account of the meeting and duly approved.

G422 – MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 4TH SEPTEMBER 2015

Harald Dunton asked whether any action had been taken to address the issue of attendance at General Council meetings, following an issue raised by the Vice Chairman during September's meeting. HD mentioned that the Regional Representatives would be given Terms of Reference, so would the same be provided for all representatives on General Council.

The Vice Chairman stated that he had not yet followed up on writing to the General Council members informing them of their obligations as a member of General Council. The Vice Chairman recorded that the reinstatement of meeting attendances in the Journal was a good step towards informing GC members of their attendance throughout the year.

No other matters were arising.

G423 – CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman informed the meeting that John Bloomfield (JSB) would be making a presentation on the results of tests undertaken by the Birmingham Proof House as part of the so-called Rule 150 enquiry. These tests form part of what is referred to in former GC meetings as Workstream 1. There are more tests to complete, but the Proof House has given permission for JSB to present their initial findings at this meeting.

JSB explained the range of trials completed by the Birmingham Proof House and presented the findings to the General Council members.

The conclusions from the initial tests showed that:

1. The average working pressure in a rifle which complies with Rule 150 does not exceed 4150 bar which is the maximum allowed by CIP when used with NRA specification issued ammunition.
2. No factory cartridge fired during the trials exceeded the maximum average pressure by more than 217 Bar (5%) - much less than the 622 Bar (15%) variance permitted by CIP for any single cartridge. This was also the same for every lot of NRA ammunition tested by the Birmingham Proof House in the last 15 years.
3. There is no spike in pressure when freebore becomes negative.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions:

Guy Larcombe asked what the different figures of 3650 bar and 4150 bar were.

JSB confirmed that the 3650 bar figure was the maximum average working pressure of NRA issued ammunition when measured in a CIP chamber and barrel and the 4150 bar figure is the maximum average working pressure allowed for any other firearm using .308 ammunition.

David Crispin (DC) thanked JSB for the presentation and asked whether there were any figures available for possible temperature changes and under what conditions were the tests taken in terms of temperature.

JSB confirmed that temperature in the laboratory is usually around 21 degrees.

Peter Coley asked whether there were temperature changes in the barrels during testing.

JSB confirmed that as the tests were fired over a period of time, therefore the barrel temperatures probably wouldn't have changed that much.

DC added that temperatures can change quite dramatically at Bisley during the Imperial Meeting and whether we would see indications of issues with temperature changes.

JSB commented that temperatures can alter, but one cannot take every factor into account when making ammunition. The maximum average working pressure limit is followed by the ammunition manufacturers so typical temperature changes should be catered for in these limits.

Mik Maksimovic asked if the conclusion from the results of the tests is that the ammunition/rifle combination in use in Rule 150/NRA issued ammo competitions is safe and therefore we do not have a safety problem. JSB confirmed that this is the case.

Ian Shirra Gibb asked whether there was any significant difference with a barrel twist.

JSB confirmed there was no significant difference and believed the barrels tested had a 13 twist.

Derek Stimpson asked JSB to confirm that the barrels had started at minimal freebore and if any tests been undertaken at negative freebore.

JSB confirmed that tests had been run at negative freebore because GGG ammunition is longer the RUAG so automatically started at negative freebore in the first series of tests. JSB confirmed that the Birmingham Proof House tests had shown that there was no spike in pressure when tests were fired at negative freebore.

Harald Dunton asked whether the freebore is in the gift of the gunmaker. JSB confirmed that was correct. HD then asked where would we be going from here with regards to potential unfairness of different gunmakers output and ensuring that chamber dimensions of all competitors are fair.

JSB responded that there are still two other workstreams to be completed before we are able to answer that question. This presentation was to show the results of one of the workstreams which shows that what the NRA have been doing over the last 15 years has been perfectly safe.

HD asked for a reminder of the other two workstreams.

The Chairman confirmed that Workstream 2 was an opinion from Counsel whether anything illegal had taken place. Counsel had already opined that nothing had. Workstream 3 is an independent report by Alice Gran and David Lacey on how Rule 150 evolved and whether it was done correctly.

JSB added that once all those workstreams had been completed, the NRA will be working towards a new Memorandum for implementation. However, further trials will be undertaken by the Proof House before finalising any changes.

JSB also added that with regards to allegations of unfair competitiveness due to attaining greater velocity with negative freebore versus positive freebore, the Proof House tests show that any velocity difference is only about 50 feet per second. Any advantage is therefore negligible as such a velocity change gives an advantage of a mere 0.25 moa in a 10 minute wind at 1000 yards.

G424 – CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT

The Chief Executive presented his report to the members.

The main points raised were:

EU Proposals: AM attended a meeting at the Home Office to discuss specific proposals regarding semi-automatics. This will affect some Gallery Rifle firearms and Target Shotgun. AM believes we are having some good press regarding this subject and believes we will be able to make some material changes to the proposals, but it is very much a work in progress.

Property issues include the early release of the Pavilion lease which was unsuccessful. The current lease is due to expire in March 2017. There is a very large dilapidations schedule against the building. The payment of the quarterly rent was unsuccessful in January and having waiting the allotted 21 days, moves were made to forfeit the lease.

Other property issues include the contentious issue raised by some Bisley tenants that they own the buildings they rent. AM confirmed that law states that the buildings are annexed to the land and form part of the demise, therefore the landlord is entitled to charge rent on that building. At the end of the lease, the building resorts to the landlord. The tenant of the Artists Rifles Clubhouse has taken the NRA to arbitration and the arbitrator confirmed that the buildings belong to the NRA and therefore can be rentalised. This lease expired in 2011 and the NRA are now awaiting the decision of the tenant on how they want to move forward.

Future rents will be reviewed with regards to the number of members that are supported by the club, including affiliated members and also the amount of range hire.

Bullet Lodge has undergone extensive refurbishment undertaken by the NRA including insulation and new gas central heating. This has now gone out to tender and there is a large amount of interest being shown. Tenders are due by 4th March. Consideration will be given to the tenders in terms of supporting shooting, members and range hire.

European legislation now requires buildings to have a minimum EPC rating of less than E on all buildings which will cause some interesting undertakings over the coming years to ensure all buildings meet those requirements.

Work on various ranges to help increase the capacity is ongoing including Short Siberia and Melville ranges. Electronic targets have been fully installed and tested on Butt 19.

Membership renewals have gone well so far this year with increased numbers of applications being received by the department. Analysis shows the percentage of members shooting the various disciplines and more work will be undertaken to understand the changes to the disciplines and how they are supported at Bisley and in the regions.

AM met with Mark Garnier MP and the MoD regarding cadet shooting and believes that the resultant proposed change regarding the transportation of rifles and ammunition will assist cadet shooting.

AM confirmed that a report had been commissioned regarding NRA membership, clubs and regional ranges and the capacity away from Bisley which has thrown up some very interesting results. More will be shared with General Council as we work our way through the report.

Questions were requested.

Harald Dunton asked how much the new website was going to cost, as often a new site is out of date before it goes live. HD also asked whether there would be an area for informing RCOs of any changes and updates they may need.

AM confirmed that a new website has been commissioned and it was going to cost £23k. AM confirmed that there will always be updates required and it won't be perfect from the start. AM confirmed that the NRA do need to increase their contact with instructors and RCOs and this is being addressed.

David Crispin asked for clarification on the two main property issues. With regards to arbitration with the tenant of the Artists, is there any more to the story as it feels that only half the story has been mentioned. DC believes that the arbitrator said that the Artists own the building.

AM stated that was not what had been stated by the arbiter but the decision is confidential for both parties so cannot be discussed further at this time. AM has requested our solicitor to provide a brief which can be shared with the members.

DC then asked about the surrender of the Pavilion lease as he has had members approach him regarding the forfeiture of the lease at the end of January. DC has heard from Shaun Hopwood and is very disappointed if what he has said is true. DC doesn't believe that the NRA have acted in a very professional manner and it has also cost the organisation a lot of money.

AM responded that the tenant is facing a £170k - £200k dilapidations bill which was submitted to him last year and he has made no attempt to undertake any of that work. The lease comes to an end in 13 months' time. The tenant subsequently requested early surrender of the lease which was agreed and negotiated for an end date of 21st December 2015. There were three warranties levied against the early surrender which were to have vacant possession of the building; that the goods and chattels provided as part of the agreement were the tenants to offer and that no staff would remain in the employ of the Pavilion. Mr Hopwood chose not to sign the agreement and therefore early surrender was not granted. AM wrote to the tenant following 21st December and provided an invoice for the quarterly rent which was due on or before 1st January. It is now known that the money left Mr Hopwood's account on 21st December and was re-credited into his account on the same day. The money had still not been received by the NRA by 28th January and therefore bailiffs were sent in to forfeit the lease. The money was then received the next day and Mr Hopwood was allowed to re-enter the building and continue trading.

AM believes that the correct, legal processes were followed. AM confirmed that the NRA had received some payment towards costs; however there was only 30 minutes allocated in front of the judge and the judge needed more time to understand the lease between the Pavilion and the Pavilion Cottage before making a further judgement.

DC added that he, on behalf of ABCAT, is very disappointed with the actions taken by the NRA.

The Chairman expressed his surprise that DC would represent Mr Hopwood in this way at a General Council meeting as General Council is the body that represents members of the NRA and Shaun Hopwood is not a member of the NRA, but a commercial tenant. The Chairman believes that the NRA should be firm in dealing with the NRA's largest commercial tenant in the interests of every single NRA member. The tenant had asked for early release from his lease but then failed to sign the agreed deal. Being aware of the bill for nearly £200k of dilapidations with which to date the tenant shows little appetite to deal, and having failed to receive the quarterly rent when due despite notification, the Chief Executive had acted entirely within the NRA's rights. The Chairman remarked that if the tenant does leave owing any outstanding monies, these will have to be covered by the Association and its members which would not be a suitable outcome for anyone.

John Kynoch asked for clarification whether the changes to EPC ratings would apply to Club Houses who actually own their club houses.

AM responded that there is a legal view which the NRA are following that every building tenanted on Bisley is owned by the NRA. It is a House of Lords judgement which is now set in law. It is causing the Trustees some debate.

Matt Charlton remarked that although it is a legal right, would it be moral for the NRA to enforce that right?

AM responded that if there was a club that was occupied by 200 members and there is a clear legal right for the NRA to charge rent and they chose not to, who "pays" for the rent that is foregone? It would be the remaining NRA members who are not members of that club. The NRA has a wider responsibility to the whole NRA membership. AM wants to make sure that the rent is fair for everyone.

Peter Coley added that he understands the NRA need to charge rent but could they not come up with a conditional exception for the club members who are shooters which is what the NRA is charged with supporting?

The Chairman responded that this would be an exception for the shooters of that club only and not all shooters. The system has to be fair for all shooters and not just those who are members of club houses. The Chairman added that the Trustees were seeking to be consistent in applying their philosophy that one group of members should not subsidise another group of members unless there were very good reasons for doing so. For example, the discounting of membership and other fees to young shooters is a good example of this, where the NRA membership as a whole is subsidising younger shooters by as much as an estimated £90,000 per annum.

Reg Roberts remarked that some club houses have a small number of members and if the NRA are going to start charging commercial rates and expecting maintenance to be undertaken, then clubs are going to fail.

AM confirmed that he wants to ensure a proper modern and realistic future for the clubs on Bisley. It is questionable whether clubs are actually run in a manner which enables them to provide a good service to their members, fund the upkeep of the building and pay the NRA a fair rent? The number of people coming to shoot at Bisley is growing rapidly and we need to ensure the Club houses are engaged with welcoming new members. Whether that includes removing some of the restricted covenants currently in place to allow non-members to be served by the clubs is something the NRA are looking into to help them provide more services to shooters.

Steve McDowell asked whether any consideration was currently being given to club houses who do provide a lot of support at Bisley such as range hire, training facilities etc.

AM confirmed that those will be taken into consideration for club renewals to ensure the NRA can support the clubs in a fair manner. Bullet Lodge could be used as an example to ensure that we can set parameters for future renewals.

There were no further questions raised.

G425 – FINANCE

The Chairman presented the Treasurer's finance report to the meeting in his absence.

The actual surplus to 31st December 2015 was £319k. The cash balance was £500k, and net current assets had increased over the year.

The Chairman confirmed that there has been a change to the format of stat accounts which will result in a surplus of only £269k being shown in the Annual Report. This is because general and designated unrestricted income and expenditure have been amalgamated.

Reg Roberts remarked that a fantastic job had been done to reach the surplus level and asked whether it was the intention of the Trustees to maintain this level which, at 5%, is exceptional.

The Chairman confirmed that the surplus of £269k has been achieved whilst the NRA has kept pace with its capital improvement programme. It has also "invested" in discounts for Under 25s including free membership for Under 21s and that as a contribution to that section of the membership is worth around £90k. The NRA is also spending resources on understanding and developing regional shooting as well as restricting any price rises for competitions and membership to the rate of inflation. The Trustees feel we still need to make sure that these investments can be made.

Reg Roberts asked whether £50k-80k could be 'knocked off' the bottom line to ensure clubs can afford the commercial rents being levied.

The Chairman responded that by reducing club rents only supports the members of those clubs. The other NRA members cannot be expected to support them any more than they already do and the NRA as an organisation cannot expect them to do so. The Trustees' duty is to ALL NRA members.

Peter Coley asked whether any of the surplus would be used for updating the roads at Bisley.

AM confirmed that further works were being planned for Hobson's Way and other areas on Bisley camp.

No further questions were raised.

G426 – MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Mik Maksimovic gave a verbal report of the meeting held earlier today, 20th February 2016.

Discussion was held surrounding how the future membership can be supported with facilities both at Bisley and in the regions.

The Committee will be working with the Management team to understand how we can support the membership moving forward.

Any suggestions will be welcome to assist with the increase in membership and their use of the ranges.

Matt Charlton asked whether the NRA promote any of the club houses for membership at the end of training.

MM confirmed that the NRA Instructors do promote the fact that there are clubs on site to join during probationary and training course. MM does believe that more can be done by both the NRA and the clubs themselves.

AM added that any promotion should be sent to Katia Malcaus Cooper to share on the NRA's social media.

G427 – SHOOTING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2015 had been circulated. There were no questions.

The Shooting Committee Chairman gave a verbal report of the meeting held on 21st January 2016.

The January meeting involved the agreement of changes to the Bible and Imperial Meeting for 2016. There have been some minor changes and the F Class meeting has been amended allowing less shoots per day following a point raised at the BGM last year.

A Cadet Imperial was put forward as a suggestion by Peter Turner which has been agreed to run alongside the Imperial Meeting for cadets only. It will be run on Butt 19 and will be staffed by military CTR with issued ammunition. We are currently awaiting approval from Cadet Branch. The cost is expected to be c.£50 per entry with a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 72 cadets. The NRA will be providing the targetry free of charge.

Martin Watkins asked whether there would be the possibility of increasing the numbers and booking more range space if proved popular.

JSB confirmed that it would be difficult to extend the meeting considering the other competitions being undertaken at the same time.

Derek Stimpson asked whether this event was being held to help with the attrition rate being seen in Target Rifle.

JSB confirmed it would certainly help to support young Target Rifle shooters.

Following an issue raised by Chris Law at the BGM last year regarding misses at long range, JSB has undertaken an analysis, looking initially at Queens III which showed a total of 9 misses, 3 at 900 yards and 6 at 1000 yards. Of the 3 900 yards misses, 2 were on target and one was a rifle malfunction. Of the remaining 6 at 1000 yards, one member had received two extra targets on his target, two others admitted they had also hit the wrong target which leaves two. One was a Canadian whom we have been unable to contact. The last round was on the target next to the Queen's winner who had finished four shots earlier, and it is believed that the shooter hit the wrong target. Therefore it is not believed to be a systemic problem as raised by Chris Law.

JSB also confirmed that Peter Cottrell will be undertaking tests on corex to ensure there are no issues with that target facing.

Questions were requested.

David Crispin asked whether the butt numbers on Stickledown are being replaced as some are missing.

AM confirmed that they are due to be replaced. JSB added that getting the 10 x 10 boards on the top of the mantlet is quite difficult.

Bill Richards asked whether there was the possibility of putting the butt numbers in front of the mantlet. JSB agreed this could be considered.

G428 – COUNCIL

The minutes of the meetings held on 22nd August, 2nd October and 12th December had been circulated.

The Chairman confirmed that the majority of what was discussed during the meeting of 5th February 2016 has already been raised in this meeting, as well as in the Chief Executive's Report and requested any questions.

Harald Dunton asked for clarification of the current status of Wimbledon House.

AM confirmed that Wimbledon House is the Training unit. The requirement for training is increasing quickly and the training team will be relocated to Exhibition Hut. AM confirmed that he had met with the conservation officers and gained agreement for Exhibition Hut to be developed into a training facility. There is a commercial tenant interested in taking tenancy of Wimbledon House. This is due to take place by May 2016.

Harald Dunton asked how the invitations to join the Regional Working Party had been organised as only one member had applied to date.

AM confirmed that we would review and confirm how the process had been advertised.

G429 – ELECTION TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

For information under Rule 7(g)(iii) – Elected Members of the General Council who retire in 2016 who have been invited to declare if they wish to stand for re-election (* not standing).

Five Ordinary Members

Lt Col ARK Clayton*
M Maksimovic
WCP Richards (SB)*
RM Roberts
Mrs KD Robertson

Three Regional Members

G Trembath – Northern
Dr JD Warburton (GM, GC, SB2) – Yorkshire
HF Dunton - Eastern

Three Shooting Discipline Members

Vacant – F Class
S East – Target Rifle
Dr P Wolpe – Muzzle Loading

G430 – CASUAL VACANCY TO THE GENERAL COUNCIL

As per the Second Schedule, Rule 7(g)(xi), a casual vacancy has arisen for the position of F-Class Discipline Representative.

A nomination for David Kent had been received.

General Council accepted and approved the nomination.

G431 – RESULTS OF TEAM CAPTAIN ELECTIONS

The Chairman announced that Jonathan Avetoomyan had been elected as the Gallery Rifle GB Captain for 2016. Tours are scheduled for Ireland in July and Germany in November.

The results of Team Captain elections were announced:

Kolapore Captain 2016	Reg Roberts was confirmed as the Kolapore Captain 2016
GB Palma Captain 2019	David Calvert was confirmed as the GB Palma Captain 2019
Under 25 Captain 2016	Holly McCullough was confirmed as the Under 25 Captain 2016

The Chairman extended his congratulations and best wishes to all captains.

G432 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Guy Trembath previously circulated a question regarding the election of Team Captains, especially when there are more than one election due to take place at the same time with the same candidate putting himself forward.

The Chairman responded that the elections in question were undertaken for different captains for different teams in different years and it doesn't matter if a candidate is selected for one or all captaincies. There are different criteria for different matches and the Chairman believes that all members of General Council would consider those criteria when voting.

The Chairman will write to Guy Trembath.

Harald Dunton asked for an update on EU proposals to ban lead ammunition or self-loading firearms.

The Chairman wanted it noted that the Chief Executive has started to build some good relationships with ministers and other groups which will help the NRA in expressing their views on some of these issues and he should be commended for doing that.

AM confirmed that a report drafted by DEFRA regarding the ban on lead shot has been issued and put out for peer review. The report is awaiting response. It is a potential issue and the report is hostile for shooting in the UK. We hope it will be 'kicked into the long grass'.

Neil Francis asked whether a process can be put in place to address any snags, tweaks and feedback on Melville range to ensure a smooth running of competitions and events.

AM confirmed that would be organised.

David Crispin asked whether issue surrounding range available for 1200 yard shoots has been addressed.

JSB confirmed that a further 7 dates had been made available for 1200 yard shooting, including Bank Holiday afternoons.

John Kynoch asked that if shooting was taking place at 1200 yards on a Bank Holiday weekend, could other ranges be booked by other clubs.

AM confirmed that they could.

David Crispin asked whether the charge of £50 per 1½ hours was correct for the use of electronic targets and asked for the justification in charging that amount.

AM confirmed that was correct for the high season rate. The price had been reached following a £40k investment and a long testing process which showed 70,000 rounds of ammunition being shot at the targets in that time. The NRA need to moderate the attrition on those targets to ensure they last.

No further questions were raised.

The meeting closed at 16.30pm

Chairman



DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 17 th June 2016	3.00pm	Bisley Pavilion
Followed by the AGM	6.00pm	Bisley Pavilion