

**REPORT BY BOB MERRICK
ON THE GNAS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE AND EGM
21st-22nd NOVEMBER 2009**

1.00 DAY ONE

1.01 The first morning was taken up with four workshops debating the role of counties and regions and the second day's feedback from these workshops highlighted the following conclusions.

1.01a The purpose and function of counties and regions is not clear and there is no clarity of understanding throughout the organization. However, they do provide support to GNAS and without them, there is a threat of a reduction in government funding.

1.01b Volunteers exist at all levels and admin training workshops for volunteers are available from some local councils.

1.01c The performance of counties and regions varies greatly. A region's greatest asset is its scale, its ability to raise funding and its depth of grass-roots support. However, grass-roots could survive without it, despite an apparent apathy amongst ordinary archers.

1.01d Most regions and counties would welcome guidance from GNAS. For example, the quality of coaching varies greatly between regions.

1.01e Better marketing and promotion of the sport is essential if it is to develop and expand. Make better use of the cash already in hand.

1.01f Members' requirements vary enormously from region to region and there is generally a demand for bigger and better facilities. In this regard, we should develop stronger links with other sports.

1.01g Better "signposting" is more effective than communication alone.

1.01h Most counties and regions only debate the past rather than direct the future.

1.02 The first afternoon encompassed the EGM and I can do no better than attach Chris Carroll's report as follows.

There was a very good attendance, including 80 Electors carrying more than 7000 proxy votes. So, much more interest than at any General Meeting I have attended over several decades.

Lynn Evans, Chairman of the Board of Directors, chaired the meeting and made the main presentation in regard to Resolution 1. She made an excellent job of the presentation, but when the questions started, it must have been obvious to her that she had a very sceptical audience. The issues raised were many of those that I included in my earlier analysis and when the vote came, there were 1,613 votes in favour, but 5,466 against and so the Resolution was lost. The key component of this result for me is that the three major committees of GNAS, i.e. the Operations Committee, the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Development and Marketing Committee, each retain their policy making role and their powers do not pass to individual directors.

Resolution 2 was subject to some very searching questions, particularly from disabled clubs having members with learning difficulties and eventually the Chairman asked for a show of hands on whether the Resolution should be withdrawn. The hand vote registered 59 Electors (from a total of 80 present) in favour of withdrawing the Resolution and so it was withdrawn with a promise that it would be re-written and re-presented at the next Annual General Meeting. I am doubtful of the legality of dealing with the matter in this way, but the Chairman consulted the GNAS Solicitor before moving on it, so I guess it is OK. I doubt the result will be challenged anyway.

There could not be the same clarity about the actions to be taken to move on the lost Resolution 1, but the Chairman assured the meeting that she and Board would continue to make their best efforts, taking full account of the comments made and the outcome of the meeting.

When questioned, the Solicitor admitted that the existing Articles effectively meet the requirements of the 2006 Companies Act.

The Chairman mentioned the need to meet the compliance requirements of the Audit Commission and Sport UK, but having read extracts from their papers I think it is perfectly possible to meet their needs within the existing Articles. The Board already has the power to create the necessary audit committee etc. and providing that it goes through this process in an open manner e.g. through the Finance and General Purposes Committee, with its deliberations properly minuted and visible to members, there should be no insurmountable problems.

Similarly it can set up an Appointments Committee without the bureaucratic structure proposed and which members can see as helpful rather than restrictive.

The important thing now is to be positive and helpful so as to get done the actions necessary to support the financial grants situation in the lead up to 2012, without committing ourselves to arrangements that will sink the organisation when the Games are over.

One of the highlights of the afternoon for me was to hear Kathy Fitzpatrick, the Direct England, speak as a member of the Board at the end of the proceedings and describe the outcome as "a lesson in democracy".

In closing this little report, can I say that I remain disappointed that the majority of clubs in the Society still did not take part in this event. 7000 votes sounds like a lot and it is certainly an improvement on past performance, but I guess it is still not much more than a quarter of the votes available. It makes it all the more important that I should offer my personal thanks to the clubs who did make the effort either to attend, or to complete and return proxy forms. Without the effort made by these clubs, there would not have been any "lesson in democracy".

2.00 DAY TWO

2.01 The second morning ran through the feedbacks from the previous day and went on to include presentations by Jon White of the Royal Yachting Association and Simon Kirkland, a sport development officer with the Birmingham City council.

2.01a Jon White discussed the similarities between sailing and archery suggested ways we could learn from how the RYA is organized. Emphasizing the need to cater for all ages and abilities.

2.01b Simon Kirkland concentrated on the need for any sport to deliver good governance and leadership.

2.01c David Reader, our own National Development Manager, discussed the depth and future of archery development. His main points were as follows.

2.01d Even if governing bodies were to be swept away, the sport would definitely carry on.

2.01e In April 2009 Sport England awarded its first major funding to archery amounting to £850k over a four year period (we requested £1.4 m). Cricket received £37m plus sponsorship.

2.01f A condition of this award is the preparation and implementation of a three year plan. This plan is currently on programme.

2.01g Sport England no longer places an emphasis on the reduction of obesity on sport. Their main aim is to encourage more participation. They have a ten year approach to planning, which is phased in such a way that achievements will attract more funding. Sport is currently attracting more funding than at any time in its history. Finance is to be spread equally between clubs, young people and capacity.

2.01h GNAS has about 1,100 affiliated clubs but not all will receive immediate support and size is not as crucial as the intent to develop.

2.01i The sport must become less complicated and its web sites must improve. GNAS plan to have workshops demonstrating to clubs how they can be more effective.

2.01j Archery is often in direct competition with other sports and we should provide coaching at schools in exchange for using their better facilities. I

2.01k Increased capacity is entirely dependent on having more coaches but existing coaching demand is not being met. Coaching training must be made more accessible and the system easier.

2.01k There is a need at county level for county development officers as well as regional and county co-ordinators.

2.01l Successful funding applications will be based on themes. For example:- rural activities, women, archery for the disabled, archery for the young etc.

2.01m The inclusion of clubs' current waiting lists would be a good way to justify investment in greater capacity.

2.02 At the end of the second morning, four workshops, composed of different delegates from day one, debated the role of a potential county or regional development officer/co-ordinator. Feedbacks from these workshops were as follows.

2.02a Some groups thought a development officer/co-ordinator representing a region is preferable to one representing a county because they are likely to be more impartial. They do not have to be archers and could be volunteers, part-time paid staff or post graduate students. Part time paid staff would be preferable to volunteers.

2.02b A task description and training programme would be essential, as would be access to funding.

2.02c Partnerships with schools and the County Sports Partnership would be very important.

- 2.02d Likewise the active participation of coaches and judges.
- 2.02e An effective web site with maps locating clubs would be absolutely essential.
- 2.02f Success would be gauged on the degree of access to clubs.
- 2.02g The EAF in its present constitution would have no part to play.
- 2.02h A development officer/co-ordinator should have the authority to set up a new club and assist archers in moving from one region to another.
- 2.02i GNAS should provide a national co-ordinated strategy.

The conference concluded with closing remarks from our president Tom Williamson.