

SCOTTISH TARGET SHOOTING: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RATIONALE FOR UNIFICATION OF ASSOCIATIONS¹

Introduction

The Scottish Target Shooting Federation ("STS") is the overall voice for target shooting in Scotland and comprises the Scottish Clay Target Association, Scottish Pistol Association, Scottish Rifle Association and Scottish Smallbore Rifle Association. Each of the four Associations runs its own affairs, but STS is the central link between the Associations and bodies such as sportscotland, the Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland, local authorities, government agencies and UK shooting organisations. STS is responsible for the selection of teams for the Commonwealth championships and for the nomination of athletes for the Commonwealth Games. STS's vision is that "*Scottish target shooting will be a thriving national sport for all*". STS aims to deliver this vision by "*leading, guiding and enabling the Scottish Target Shooting community to achieve higher levels of participation, development and excellence*".

Although STS is the overall governing body for target shooting in Scotland, the current organisational structures are not conducive to the proper fulfilment of that role by STS. During discussions between STS and the Associations, and with sportscotland, the potential benefits of unifying the four Associations into a single STS organisation have become apparent. This would create a single STS organisation that would look after the interests of all branches of the target shooting sports that are currently within the remit of the Associations. STS view unification as an exciting opportunity to reinvigorate the target shooting scene in Scotland, so that the target shooting can develop and grow.

Governing Body

To understand the case for unification, it is important to consider the role of a governing body of a sport. Traditionally, sports governing bodies are viewed as the guardians and custodians of their sports. A sports governing body should prepare and implement a vision and strategic plan for its sport at a national, regional and local level. It should promote the sport and encourage participation; manage the rules and regulations of the sport; administer officials of the sport; maintain links with the UK and international governing bodies; develop coaches and athletes; and organise and host competitions. Sportscotland's view is that for Scottish governing bodies to continue to play a major part in Scottish sport, they must have various attributes, including an appropriate legal structure; strong accountability; clear leadership of the sport; clear roles and expectations for board members, paid staff and volunteers; modern and efficient governance arrangements; a commitment to ethical standards; and diverse sources of revenue.

Despite limited resources, STS has aimed to act as a guardian and custodian of the sport. For example, STS recently participated in the Scottish Firearms Consultative Panel and responded to the Scottish Government's consultation on the licensing of airguns, Royal Mail's consultation on the carriage of firearms by post, and the Law Commission's proposals regarding unincorporated associations. STS has also prepared anti-doping, equality and child protection policies and administers certain officials involved in the sport, mainly at High Performance level. As currently structured, however, STS is unable to properly perform all of the functions of a true governing body, because the bulk of those functions are fulfilled by the Associations rather than STS. This applies especially to grassroots activities such as managing officials, developing coaches and shooters, and organising and hosting competitions. STS is not well-placed to promote the sport of target shooting, nor to encourage participation, because it lacks the resources to do so and is too remote from Scottish target shooters. Indeed, most target shooters in Scotland are unaware of the activities, and indeed the existence, of STS. In order to achieve STS's vision, the Associations would need to unify into a single, lean STS organisation to look after the interests of all branches of the target shooting sports in Scotland. The potential benefits of unification are set out below.

Potential Benefits of Unification

- (1) The current fragmented structure means that each of the Associations has to go back to its own Committee or Council for approval before anything can change. Unification would make it much easier and quicker to make **operational decisions**.

¹ This document is an Executive Summary of a more detailed paper prepared by the STS Council, which should be consulted by readers seeking more detailed information.

- (2) Each Association has its own Committee / Council / office bearers to manage its affairs - but there are relatively few individual members of each Association, so the administration required to run four Associations plus STS is disproportionate to the number of members. If the Associations were to unify into STS, **less administration** would be required. This would reduce dependence on heavily committed volunteers and free them up to deliver benefits to the wider membership, e.g. in terms of coaching.
- (3) Apart from the SCTA, neither STS nor any of the other Associations are set up as a limited company. Accordingly, they are unincorporated associations which can involve the office bearers in personal liability. It would be preferable to have a **better legal structure**, probably a company limited by guarantee, as has been done by numerous other sports. Even a company limited by guarantee has certain formalities to deal with - and it would be easier for those formalities to be dealt with centrally by a unified STS rather than all four Associations plus STS having to do so.
- (4) As currently structured, each Association needs its own **procedures and policies** such as an Equality Policy, Disciplinary Policy etc, which need to be drafted and updated. These tasks could be undertaken by STS - instead of four separate Associations plus STS having to draft and update their own policies.
- (5) The Associations' ability to really make a difference at grassroots level and to grow the sport is seriously limited by their lack of resources. Owing to over-reliance on an ever-diminishing number of volunteers, a lack of new entrants and an ageing shooting population, target shooting in Scotland is on a downward spiral. The Associations are finding it increasingly difficult to promote their sport and to bring in new recruits to the sport. The same applies to many of their clubs, some of which have had to send potential new shooters elsewhere because they lack the resources to provide proper induction and training. Unification could **increase resources provide economies of scale**, and allow **pathways for beginners, competitors and coaches** to be developed.
- (6) The current funding structure of the Associations is inadequate to support the recruitment, training and development of new entrants to the sport. The Associations have very limited funding, comprising affiliation fees from only a fraction of all target shooting clubs and individual shooters in Scotland. Since individuals do not affiliate directly to a governing body, but are simply members of affiliated clubs, neither STS nor the Associations have direct visibility of membership trends, or how and where to recruit future shooters. Other Scottish sports require individual participants to affiliate directly to their governing bodies, as paying, individual members. Their subscription payments provide essential financial resources to the governing bodies which allow them to put in place vital infrastructure e.g. standardised, easily accessed procedures for new entrants, clear pathways for individual members to progress in their sport, a central point for Disclosure Scotland checks etc, and centralised administrative records. If the Associations were to unify into STS and promote a system of direct, individual affiliation to STS, Scottish target shooting as a whole would benefit from having **a governing body that could really make a difference at club level**, e.g. the provision of trainers and coaches to clubs by holding training events for multiple clubs, or administrative assistance when applying for grants and financial assistance for new club facilities.
- (7) If individual shooters affiliated directly to STS, they should be able to shoot any of the disciplines covered by STS, subject to compliance with the relevant legislation – effectively a kind of **passport to all shooting disciplines**. Championships could be more easily combined with championships for other disciplines. Following unification into STS, the former Associations could form discipline-specific committees, to run competitions for each discipline.
- (8) Anyone who affiliates directly to their governing body would usually wish the governing body to provide **insurance**. The economics and practicalities of providing insurance mean that a substantial number of members is required. SCTA currently procures insurance directly for the benefit of its individual members, and it should be possible for this to be widened to cover all four disciplines under STS.
- (9) In addition to High Performance investment, sportscotland provides development investment for certain sports, to promote the development of sport at club level. Sportscotland has indicated that **development investment could be made available to target shooting**, provided that the governance arrangements are improved and brought into line with other sports bodies – notably unification of the Associations into STS. In this regard, sportscotland has now provided funding for a post for a professional person to guide

STS forward at a strategic level, which is a major opportunity to drive forward the sport of target shooting in Scotland - especially in the run-up to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, when sports of all types are in the spotlight.

- (10) One of the key issues confronting Scottish target shooting is the lack of a proper national shooting centre. This is now being progressed by STS with sportscotland and the Scottish Government. In order to provide investment, the decision-makers need to be confident that a well-governed national body is in place and that the sport itself is sufficiently healthy to generate a **continuing flow** of users of such a facility.
- (11) The limited resources of the Associations affect their ability to deal external matters. Unification of the Associations into STS would provide **increased resources to deal with external threats** such as noise complaints arising from target shooting. The greater membership of a unified STS would also provide more "clout", e.g. in dealing with UK bodies such as British Shooting.
- (12) A properly resourced STS would be better placed than individual Associations to organise publicity material such as marketing brochures, and to deal with **public relations matters**. The four Associations and STS each have their own website. If properly resourced, STS could provide a **single web portal for target shooting in Scotland**, which could provide full details of what is involved in each discipline and links e.g. to book a visit to a training facility.
- (13) In the event of Scottish independence, bodies such as the NRA and NSRA might cease to be relevant to target shooters in Scotland. Scottish target shooting would then need a **specifically Scottish national governing body**.

Points to be addressed in relation to Unification

- (14) Wherever organisational change is proposed, some resistance will always be encountered. It is natural that not everyone will be immediately comfortable with unification, especially since the Associations are not new bodies but have a substantial history. The STS Council members hope, however, that all those involved in target shooting in Scotland will recognise that as matters currently stand, target shooting in Scotland is in a state of decline. The unification of the Associations into STS is a real opportunity to provide strong leadership for the sport as a whole, with the potential to reverse the downward trend.
- (15) Each of the four Associations currently operates under its own constitution and holds assets such as trophies. Unification into STS, which might have as a consequence the dissolution of some or all of the existing Associations, would need to be approved by each Association under its constitution. An appropriate solution would need to be found as to how to deal with assets and trophies, having proper regard and respect to their history and origins. In STS's view, the needs and priorities of the sport of target shooting are what should drive the organisational structure of the Scottish target shooting world. The legal and administrative hurdles to unification are all capable of being overcome.
- (16) The financial position of each of the Associations is different and it will be important to ensure that none of the Associations view unification as a retrograde step. Equally, though, this factor incentivises STS to ensure that unification would deliver meaningful benefits to target shooters across all disciplines.
- (17) STS recognise that many target shooters, apart from High Performance participants, are simply unaware of the existence of STS, and in some cases may have little or no involvement with the Associations. STS recognise that many target shooters engage in their sport on a very informal basis (although safety is always paramount even at informal club events). For those target shooters who are more interested in the social side of target shooting, e.g. spending a day outdoors with their friends at their club, the potential availability of pathways for personal improvement etc may be of limited interest. It is likely that those shooters' primary focus will be on the cost of membership, i.e. will they be better off or worse off following unification? This links back to the need for tangible benefits such as the availability of insurance and the national shooting centre, as well as wider matters such as acting as a guardian of the sport at a national level (including in relation to legislative proposals). STS are confident that with suitable resources and a clear mandate from the Associations, these challenges can be overcome to the substantial benefit of the Scottish target shooting community.