



CHAIRMANS REPORT – ESSU AGM 2009

Another successful year has been enjoyed on all fronts. I am glad to report that on both the participation and performance levels we remain in a strong and healthy position. It is pleasing to note an increase in membership, especially among the young, with our membership increasing from some 325 to over 400 in the last 2 years. The Team England National Squad (TENS) is now very well established and is more than playing its full part in national performance level structures. I am happy to say that the TENS Development squads for both the rifle and pistol disciplines are thriving. Much of mine and the Committees time have been taken up with the governance and auditing processes associated with managing the Sport England grant of £343,000 in preparation of our Team for the next years Commonwealth Games. Naturally we are very grateful for this SE investment and the Committee, along with the performance coaches, are mindful of the need to repay this faith with a good of medals in New Delhi. Finally, indicative of our progress in the performance arena has been the magnificent achievements of our shooters at the recent Commonwealth Youth Games in Delhi, more of which later.

1. **Commonwealth Games**. As you will be aware the Games programme will be drastically reduced after New Delhi from 38 events to just 17, with all pairs matches (except FB Rifle) and all non Olympic events being dropped from the shooting programme. Thus, this is our last opportunity to make a major impact on the England medal table as a sport, something all Home Countries will be striving to achieve in their own respect. Only then from a position of strength can we then begin the process of lobbying the Commonwealth Games Federation for a return to the status quo. Reports from India suggest that preparations are well in hand and the facilities are reported to be world class, so all bodes well for a successful shooting championship and memorable Games.
2. **Home Countries and Representative matches**. I thank all of our membership who have shot and represented England over the last year, where we have enjoyed some notable successes. Obviously names are too many to mention, but I am very grateful for such commitment from individuals and officials alike. It is all too easy to miss such contribution in the midst of such a plethora of performance level initiatives. But this commitment underpins all we do and must not be marginalised.
3. **TENS**. The Team England National Squad has continued its excellent progress with the emphasis very much on gaining international competition experience, rather than just home based training initiatives. Thankfully SE funding now means that we have been able to send TENS squad members to minor international matches and training sessions during the winter in Europe. These have proved most successful and we plan to continue this trend into 2010 itself. Besides attendance at these international events, warm weather and acclimatisation camps are proposed in Spain and Kuwait or Israel prior to the Games themselves in Delhi. As part of these preparations we will be sending a strong team to the CSFC test event in February. Naturally all of this would not be possible without SE funding, for which we are entirely thankful. I thank Martyn White, Ken Parr and Tom Redhead for all their hard work and industry on behalf of TENS. There is no doubt that the advent of TENS has been reflected with enhanced results on the international stage. With the significant cut in UKS funding for GB Pathway athletes; the shortfall and much of the responsibility for looking after aspiring young shooters has fallen to the Home Countries. We will do our utmost to fulfil this role on all of your behalves.
4. **Academy**. The Academy Squads, both in rifle and pistol, continue to underpin the main TENS initiative. Unfortunately the Head Coach for Rifle, Steve Downes, left the Academy in January to take up a new post in Kuwait as their national rifle coach. We wish him well and thank him for his undoubted skill and commitment over the past 4 years. Luckily Bob Dickie has agreed to fill the vacant position and we are fortunate indeed to have such an able replacement ready and willing to take on responsibility. Regular Assessment weekends have taken place to maintain and monitor progress and standards. However, in some ways the Academy has become a victim of its own success, with numbers increasing to well over 20 individuals. This is too many for the coaches to reasonably handle and the Academy risks compromising its mission and objectives. Therefore, I have asked Bob to rationalise membership and ensure that only true medal winning potential and life style commitment form the bedrock of admission. Pistol under Tom Rehead continues to thrive and all looks well for the future. The TENS Academy now forms part of a national athlete pathway and must reflect this new found responsibility. We are providing the basis from which talented youngsters are projected into the senior national squads. I thank the coaches for their diligence and commitment.

5. **Intershoot.** Some 40 of our members enjoyed an excellent deployment to Intershoot in The Hague in February. We won a total of 11 medals, not one of our better performances but creditable in mind of the development nature of the team and event. The competition remains of a high standard, but is not so high that it discourages the relative novice. Therefore we shall continue to support this event, allowing a broad spectrum of eligible members to attend. It is an excellent vehicle for all standards and a proving ground for juniors, relative novices and seasoned shooters alike. I thank Norah Hunter and Frank Balcombe for their continued efforts in organising our involvement with this most worthwhile event.

6. **TASS and SportsAid Funding.** Fortunately after much endeavour by both ESSU and ETSF, the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) which had been withdrawn to shooting, has been reintroduced and 5 of our young shooters are enjoying its benefits. In addition SportsAid continues to be a valuable and genuine assistance to those aspiring to make our squads. Each award is worth between £500 and £1,000 to an individual and we have some 12 allocated grants made available to us by SE. SportsAid is of great value to our young and aspiring athletes aged between 13 and 18.

7. **Commonwealth Youth Games 2008.** A small team deployed to these Games in October of last year in Pune under the leadership of Ken Parr. We enjoyed some excellent results with James Huckle, 3 gold, and Sheree Cox, 1 gold and 1 bronze, in the forefront of the Teams success. This is an important result and demonstrates that we have both talent and the process in place to allow this potential to be realised.

8. **Summary.** I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the Committee members for their invaluable time and support over the past year on your behalves. In particular I would like to express gratitude to Frank Balcombe, Norah Hunter and Martyn White for all their continued efforts. This has been a good year of consolidation and I wish the England team squads on all your behalves the best of fortune in their efforts toward the 2010 Commonwealth Games.