



Whittlesey Rifle Club (WRC) – Statement to the Town Council



Whittlesey has had a rifle club in the town for well over 100 years.

The club and drill hall were used to help train people (including the home guard) during the first and second world wars. Fenland District Council built the new range in 1975 and the club took over running it in 1978, to become a community amateur sports club. We have been running successfully this way for nearly 50 years, all run voluntarily, built on the club's long and proud heritage of serving the town.

As a Ministry of Defence fully-certified 25-meter indoor sports target range, the club offers unique facilities for Fenland, Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. It would be very difficult to replicate it today as a new build. Multi-medal winning Paralympian, World Champion and World Record Breaker Matt Skelhon trained there from 2006 before famously winning gold at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. He is now the club's president. This is a huge achievement for both the club and the town, which we think deserves to be celebrated more.

WRC is a very inclusive social community hub with a growing membership (currently approaching 200 people). The club provides social contact and sporting opportunities for young people, families, elderly members, veterans groups and persons with disabilities (including some injured serving their country). The sport allows everyone to compete on equal terms and encourages positive interactions, generating a strong social capacity for this very diverse group of people.

Cambridgeshire County Council Youth & Community Work team have visited and fully endorsed the club and the services it provides, as have Phoenix Youth and Friends of the Manor, recognising it as an important, long-standing and unique community resource. Several local councillors have also visited and given their backing to the club. The club recently received a £500 grant from Cambridge County Council Community Reach Fund (CRF) for community led projects responding to local needs, a recognition of the positive impact that we have on the community.



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A number of parents have commented on the beneficial impact the club has had for their children, in some cases saying it has helped turn their child's life around towards becoming responsible young adults.

Volunteers at the club (with Fenland Council's permission) have renovated the entrance and front of the building. The building and roof are sound and the structure has no asbestos or other building material issues.

In 2024 we are supporting the Big Bash and the Armed Forces Day with family taster sessions (priority for veterans on Armed Forces Day). The club continues to run regular, free under 18's open days.

Safety and safety training are paramount and all club members and probationary members are fully police checked, irrespective of whether they hold a firearms licence.

Aside from the wide social interactions, the sport of target shooting brings many additional benefits. It is fun and challenging on an individual level but you can also compete as part of a team. It is a very inclusive sport with disciplines and equipment suitable for many levels of ability. This includes people with physical and/or visual impairments, often competing on equal terms with able-bodied people. For younger people the sport has many benefits, including:

- >It helps grow confidence by improving personal skills, such as self-discipline and control, co-ordination, focused concentration, patience, and self-awareness.
- >It promotes dedication and attention to detail which is needed to improve technique and to improve scores.
- >Anyone participating will learn about and apply safety rules whilst on the range.
- >It teaches people about the law and the consequences of breaking it.
- >It helps people learn to make decisions about their own behaviour and what is or is not acceptable to others.

