

## **National Shooting Week 2008**

The second National Shooting Week took place between 3 – 11 May, 2008. The aim of this initiative was to make people of all ages across the UK aware of the importance of target shooting as a sport and to provide opportunities to try it out for themselves. It was organised and funded by the Countryside Alliance on behalf of the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) with the active participation of the target shooting member organisations. Media coverage of the growth in gun crime and illegal guns has sometimes overshadowed the fact that shooting is an Olympic sport at which the UK excels, at the 2006 Commonwealth Games shooting accounted for 23 of the UK's 116 medals and a crack team will travel to Beijing this summer. Before and during the week, millions learned through the media that shooting is one of the most inclusive Olympic and Paralympic sports, where gender, age and disability are no barriers to success. The week was deliberately organised to coincide with the bank holiday weekend and particularly the successful NRA open day.

### **Participation**

Over the course of National Shooting Week some 200 open days took place at shooting clubs and grounds in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, giving newcomers to the sport the chance to try shooting for the first time in a safe and friendly environment. Almost 100 air rifle/smallbore clubs and clay shooting clubs were involved. We also linked up with the British Paralympic Association to lay on a couple of special days in Cheshire and Bedfordshire to encourage disabled people in those areas to try the sport. As a result, several thousand participants tried shooting for the first time, with more than 1,000 at the NRA open day.

### **Media coverage**

Almost as important is the fact that millions more learned that the shooting community is friendly and accessible via excellent and widespread media coverage. The Countryside Alliance, working with Online Broadcasting who specialise in securing coverage for niche sporting events, organised filming of Olympic/Paralympic shooters and the Sports Minister. Our media-monitoring demonstrated that at least 22 million people read or heard about National Shooting Week. Involved were Reuters News Agency, British Satellite News, which goes to 500 broadcasters in the UK and around the world, and Independent Radio News (which distributes stories to the majority of independent local radio stations all over the UK) took broadcast material. BBC News and Sky requested library film for archive to provide reference footage for stories related to shooting and the 2008 Olympic Games. National Shooting Week received good coverage through a number of regional TV outlets including BBC Points West and ITV West, plus Radio 4's Today programme, Radio 5 Live Breakfast, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio Cymru, LBC and a number of live interviews on local radio. 12.35 million listeners/viewers heard interviews about National Shooting Week, either by BSSC representatives or Olympic shooters. A further 9.7 million read about National Shooting Week in their newspaper or magazine of choice, including The Guardian newspaper, GQ magazine for men and Diva magazine, which all ran positive pieces.

### **Political support**

From the outset, the week secured cross-party political support from Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. The Minister for Sport Gerry Sutcliffe MP attended the launch event for National Shooting Week at the National Shooting Centre at Bisley. The local MP, Humfrey Malins, journalists, police and Home Office officials were also present. At the launch, the minister met shooters heading to Beijing for the Olympic Games and representatives from the disabled shooting community and the Paralympic coaching team. Speaking at Bisley, he said: "I think National Shooting Week is a great testament to the sport because of what it does in Olympic year and as we run up to London Olympics 2012. It is an opportunity for the sport to show itself to the wider community in the UK, about how good it is for everybody to take part. With the UK teams doing so well winning medals in so many competitions right across the world shooting is high on our list of sports we want to support. So National Shooting Week gives an opportunity for all the misconceptions about shooting to be put to one side but it also gives people an opportunity to understand that this really is a sport that can be for everybody." The launch event also provided a good opportunity for the new BSSC chairman Lord Glentoran, himself an Olympic gold medallist, to address the audience over lunch. Several MPs also attended local NSW events.