

The British Shooting Sports Council

ANNUAL REPORT

2006

Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
The Council's Officers	3
Association Representatives	4
Abbreviations used in the text	5
Changes in Personnel	6
Home Office and Parliament	6
Scottish Parliament	9
The Police	11
Health & Safety Executive	12
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	13
European Firearms Issues	14
World Forum	16
National Shooting Week	18
Lead Working Group	19
Olympic Games	19
Auction houses	19
Defence Manufacturers Association Section 5 Group	20
Standing Conference on Countryside Sports	20
Carriage of firearms and ammunition by rail	21
UK Working Group on Arms	21
Section 7 historic firearms	21
Miscellaneous activities	22

FOREWORD

It is a privilege to write the foreword to an excellent Report setting out the very great amount of useful work carried out by and on behalf of the Council during the past twelve months. I hope that the Report will have a wide circulation among our constituent organisations and that they, in turn, will distribute it as widely as possible to their members.

We exist to “safeguard the lawful use of firearms” but we also have an obligation to ensure that, as far as is humanly possible, the lawful use is also the “safe” use. We take that obligation seriously in our own interest as well as that of the public at large. Recent events in South London provide evidence, if it were needed, that legislation-particularly of the “knee jerk” variety-is a poor tool with which to achieve the safety for which we work so hard.

Which is why it is good to read of the input we have had to the Advisory Group to the ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms Secretariat and of our close co-operation with the Home Office and the Police. This has been ably promoted by our Secretary in a busy and effective first year in office. Neither should we forget the valiant efforts of the Chairman, Lord Shrewsbury, in the House of Lords and elsewhere.

It has been a year in which the Council has given good value for money to the shooting world. Long may it continue.

Sir Patrick Lawrence
President

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Sir Patrick Lawrence CBE DL
VICE-PRESIDENTS	The Earl Peel (until September 2006) Brian Carter
CHAIRMAN	The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones MP Bill Wiggin MP
TREASURER	Graham Downing
SECRETARY	Patrick W Johnson BEM (until March) David Penn (from April)

*“The aims and objectives of the Council are to promote
And safeguard the lawful use of firearms and air weapons
For sporting and recreational purposes in the United Kingdom
amongst all sections of the community.”*

(Extract from the Constitution of the Council)

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL CLAY TARGET SHOOTING GROUNDS	Ian Clifton
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Christopher Miles
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION	Bill Harriman TD
COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE	Graham Downing
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Phil Boakes
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	John Batley
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Roger Hill
MUZZLE LOADERS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	Alan Overton
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Glynn Alger
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Geoff Doe
SHOOTING SPORTS TRUST	John Batley
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Richard Malbon
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Graham Gill

ABBREVIATIONS

ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers (England and Wales).
 AFEMS: The European Association of Sporting Ammunition Manufacturers.
 BASIC: British American Security Information Council.
 CIP: International Proof Commission.
 CLA: Country Land and Business Association.
 CUF: Criminal Use of Firearms, an ACPO Secretariat.
 DEFRA: Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.
 DMA: Defence Manufacturers Association.
 EU: European Union.
 FAC: Firearms Advisory Committee (not yet appointed).
 FELWG: Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, an ACPO body.
 GRIP: Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la Securite.
 HBSA: Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association.
 HSE: Health and Safety Executive.
 IAG: Independent Advisory Group.
 IANSA: International Action Network on Small Arms.
 ICOM: The International Council of Museums, a UNESCO body.
 ICOMAM: The International Committee of Museums of Arms and Military History, an International Council of Museums body.
 IMCO: The European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection.
 MEP: Member of the European Parliament.
 NFU: National Farmers' Union.
 NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation.
 NIAG: National Independent Advisory Group.
 POA: Programme of Action.
 SALW: Small Arms and Light Weapons.
 UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
 VCR Act: Violent Crime Reduction Bill 2006.

CHANGES

Vice-President

Following his appointment in July as Lord Chamberlain Designate to Her Majesty The Queen, our Vice President The Earl Peel was obliged to stand down. An active and most effective supporter of shooting, he will be greatly missed by the Council. He had also been Chairman of the Standing Conference on Countryside Sports. Lord Peel took up his new position in October.

Secretary

At the Council's Annual General Meeting on 30th March Pat Johnson retired as Secretary of the British Shooting Sports Council. Pat's detailed grasp of procedure, highly developed sense of the art of the possible, relish for the political process and ability to give firm guidance made him formidably well equipped for the role. His strong influence enabled the Council to work co-operatively and cohesively, and during his tenure he established the BSSC as a major influence on the international as well as the national stage through his much-appreciated efforts on behalf of the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities. His successor never ceases to be amazed at the ease with which Pat kept the Council's many concurrent activities in play.

HOME OFFICE AND PARLIAMENT

Throughout a year which saw several changes at Ministerial and Secretary of State levels, the BSSC has continued its close contact with the Home Office on all aspects of legislation affecting the shooting sports. The BSSC's new Secretary had worked with the Home Office for many years before taking up his new post, so the transition was smooth. A successful meeting was held with Vernon Coaker, the Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, on 26th October, at which target shooting, particularly Olympic pistol shooting, proposed changes to the Deer Act, disruption of shooting by anti-field sports activists and expanding ammunition were discussed.

Review of Firearms Legislation

As predicted in the 2005 Annual Report, the Home Office Review had been overtaken, at least temporarily, by the passage of the Violent Crime Reduction Act, yet another in a long history of piecemeal reactive legislation. There has been no progress on the Review of which we are aware during 2006, but we are assured that it will be picked up again once work on the VCR Act has been completed.

Firearms Advisory Committee

The Council's profound disappointment at the Government's abolition of the Firearms Consultative Committee was matched by its concern that no action has been taken to appoint its proposed successor, the Firearms Advisory Committee, a product of the last Home Secretary but one. Its creation having first been postponed because of an impending general election, by 2006 it seems that consideration of the responses to the Review had been identified as a necessary precursor to the appointment of the FAC. The Council therefore no longer maintains its anticipation at a high level.

Violent Crime Reduction Act

This Act was given the Royal assent on 8th November and will come into force in stages from March 2007. Introduced as a Bill in 2005, when it was rightly characterised in the 2005 Annual Report as 'little more than knee-jerk reaction', this will be far more likely to impact on the law-abiding than on the law-breaker, and during 2006 has figured largely in the work of the BSSC, the Shooting Sports Trust and the Gun Trade Association, whose members will be particularly affected.

Its main impacts will be on those who collect or use realistic imitation firearms (where the design of the original firearm post-dates 1870) or blank firers or soft air guns, the importation, manufacture or sale of which will be banned if they are realistic imitation firearms (there will be some exemptions for soft-air skirmishing, re-enactment, and theatrical uses). Those already in private possession may be retained and used. The commercial sale of conventional air weapons will be restricted to registered firearms dealers (private sales will remain unaffected) and the age at which an air weapon may be purchased will be raised to 18. It is expected that the break date for antique air weapons (which may be sold by way of business as a curio or ornament without the vendor being a registered firearms dealer) will be 1939.

Considerable success in securing improvements to the Bill had been achieved by the Earl of Shrewsbury, who on one occasion divided the House (a rare event in the Lords) on the issue of mail order sales. Valuable contributions towards amelioration also came from the Earl Peel and from Baroness Anelay, who lead for the Conservatives on this issue. Thanks to Lord Shrewsbury's efforts, restrictions on the sale of primers have been restricted to those for metallic ammunition. Following the hard work not only of our Chairman but of John Batley and the GTA, who were named in the debate, the Government accepted that Clause 31 (proposed controls on the sale of reloading presses) was inherently flawed, and withdrew it. With regard to Clause 34 (Meaning of 'realistic imitation firearm'), Lord Shrewsbury's intention was to amend this Clause to make clear that the '1870' break date for separating antique and modern firearms applied only for the purposes of this Bill. There was concern that it would put at risk both the status and value of many antiques if used as a test outwith the Bill. While the Government would not

accede to the amendment, the Government Minister Lord Bassam did speak for the record that it would have no effect on the way antique firearms are defined in terms of the Firearms Act 1968, so Lord Shrewsbury withdrew his amendment.

The work of John Batley of the GTA and Colin Greenwood of the SST, particularly with drafting amendments and in subsequent discussions on the Regulations, has considerably contributed to the improvement in detail of this legislation.

Much remains to be negotiated for during the drafting of the Regulations, particularly with regard to the form of register and level of security to be specified for those dealing solely in air weapons, and there has been a series of meetings and discussions between the Home Office and BSSC. It has been agreed with the Home Office that 'possession' of an air weapon would take place at the point of physical transfer, thus allowing sales to be conducted remotely up to the point of handover. It is expected that Regulations will be finalised by the end of the first quarter of 2007. With regard to 'realistic imitation firearms', the toy industry will be hit badly. There is a continuing problem over the definition of 'primary colour'. In future blank firers must neither resemble a firearm nor be readily convertible.

Failed Private Members' Bill to ban 'samurai' swords

Private Members Bill number 217 had been tabled on 19th June 2006 to ban the sale, manufacture, hire, loan, or importation of sharpened samurai swords, and for connected purposes. It had been very badly drafted and was doomed to fail, but the 12 MPs who tabled it had presumably done so to encourage Home Office action during the new session of Parliament in the light of the Scottish Parliament's initiative with the Custodial Sentences & Weapons Bill, Scotland. There have been rumours that the Home Office will shortly undertake consultations about edged weapons. Such legislation could significantly affect collectors, re-enactors and the gun trade, some of whose members trade in collectors' arms and knives for use in field sports, so requires monitoring by the BSSC.

Westminster Fair

Following on the success of the 2005 event, designed to enable Members of Parliament and Peers to add to their sum of knowledge of the legitimate sporting use, and collecting, of firearms, a second Westminster Fair was held in the Terrace Pavilion on 27th November. We were very pleased to welcome again the ACPO Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, which put on a presentation about its work, and the Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association, which undertook a joint presentation with the Muzzle Loaders Association.

In 2005, the introductory theme had emphasising the sheer variety, scale and inclusiveness of the shooting sports. In view of the need to make legislators aware of the excellence of British shooters at the international level, fifteen international medal

winners, National Squad coaches and administrators attended this year's event. This not only enabled the BSSC to mark our sporting success, but also provided the means to highlight the need to enable potential British Olympic pistol shooters to train and compete in Britain if they are to be competitive in Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012. Over fifty MPs and Peers attended, as did Graham Widdecombe (Home Office Firearms Unit), Adrian Whiting (Acting Chair of ACPO FELWG), David Kenyon (British Deer Society), Oliver Harwood (CLA) and Barney Holbech (NFU). The opportunity was taken to announce the National Shooting Week, with speeches from Lord Shrewsbury, Martin Salter MP, the Labour spokesman for shooting, and Bill Wiggin MP. The event was clearly a success, and the very high standard of the Associations' presentations was remarked upon. Plans are already in hand for the 2007 Fair.

Parliamentary Reporting

The Council has benefited throughout the year from the excellent service provided by Rees & Freres, Parliamentary Agents, in keeping the Council promptly informed of firearms and shooting-related matters raised not only in the Westminster Parliament, but also in the Edinburgh Parliament.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Bill

This Bill introduces new measures to restrict the sale of 'non-domestic' knives and swords, and increases in maximum sentences for some existing offences. These proposals could have an adverse effect on legitimate dealers, some of whom are registered firearms dealers, in knives, swords and antique arms, if only by discouraging law-abiding customers.

This Bill would amend the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. It would introduce an annually renewable 'knife dealer's licence' for anyone carrying on business as a dealer in knives (other than those designed for domestic use, which includes DIY knives, or pocket knives, *sgian dubhs* and *kirpans* with a blade length of less than 3 inches), knife blades, swords and any other article which has a blade or which is sharply pointed and which is made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person. This would include arrows. The Scottish Ministers may, by order, modify this list. The sale of knives between private individuals would not require a knife licence. The manufacture, importation, sale, hire, lending or giving of swords by anyone would be banned, except in relation to antique swords (probably pre-1946) kept as curiosities or ornaments, or in the case of museums, or where the Minister has granted authorisations which may be subject to conditions. These would cover such activities as religion, culture (highland dancing, theatre, film, television, re-enactment and living history) and sport (fencing and those martial arts organised on a recognised sporting basis). An offence would be committed where a

person acquiring a sword provides false information, or if a sword was used for a purpose other than that for which it had been authorised.

The Knife Dealer's Licence would be subject to conditions, including conditions on record keeping, storage and display. Scottish Ministers would be given the power to specify minimum conditions which must be included in all licences, and which may be particular or general, and may differ in relation to different classes of article. Conditions would include a description of the type of sword or non-domestic knife sold; a record of the purchaser and restrictions on display to ensure that they are not visible from the street or entrance to the dealer's premises. In addition local authorities may specify storage, security and packaging requirements, and may specify the means by which purchaser identity should be established.

Scottish Ministers hope that the legislation will reduce violence and weapons carrying offences (there were over 3,400 in 2004-05, when, out of 137 homicides, 72 were committed with 'knives'), thereby reducing police, prosecution, court and health service expenditures. Knife crime is alleged to be 'much more common' in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK.

This Bill is not well-founded. By excluding domestic and DIY knives it illogically ignores the cheapest, most available and most widely criminally misused types of knives. It will impact most on legitimate users and small businesses. The extreme measures against swords appear to be driven more by political distaste and disapproval than by any evidence or frequency of misuse. The wide powers it is intended to give to local authorities with regard to both the conditions attached to the knife dealer's licence and the fees charged would be a recipe for inconsistency and unreasonableness.

Restriction on sale and usage of air guns (Scotland) Bill

On 18th December Tommy Sheridan MSP, founder of the Solidarity Group, lodged in the Scottish Parliament a consultation document on a proposal for a 'Member's Bill to restrict the sale and usage of air guns'. Effectively it would ban air weapons except for use in registered clubs (where the air weapons would also have to be stored) or for use by local authority- approved vermin controllers. Given the profound impact that this would have on the shooting sports in Scotland, and on the gun trade, the BSSC and Gun Trade Association took specialist legal advice, as firearms legislation is reserved to the Westminster Parliament. Having ascertained that the Sheridan Bill was doomed to fail, the BSSC declined to become involved in the consultation process mandated for a 'Members Bill'. The BSSC is, however, aware that air weapons remain a live political issue in Scotland, and could feature in the run-up to the May elections for the Scottish Parliament, so it will continue to monitor the matter.

THE POLICE

Proposed changes to the Police Service structure

The proposed reduction of the number of English and Welsh police forces from forty-three to about one third of that number did not materialise.

Practitioners' Meetings

On 13th July the Secretary chaired a meeting of the Practitioners' Meeting with representative of the ACPO Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group (FELWG) and the Home Office. Subjects on which satisfactory outcomes were achieved included: pre-certification training, with confirmation that neither the police nor the Home Office were seeking to move towards compulsory formal training for quarry shooters; humane despatch, with the clearing up of misunderstanding over the use of pistols for humane despatch of deer; Section 11(6) exemptions for clay target shooting, with the resolution of confusion over police record keeping requirements. Discussions were commenced or continued on the use of pistol calibre cartridges for fox shooting, obsolete calibres, difficulties experienced by travellers taking sporting firearms into South Africa, firearms forms and difficulties experienced by dealers and shooters within the EU. This last subject centred on requests from EU authorities for letters from UK police forces providing confirmatory information to do with firearm-related or UK shooter-related matters. The Secretary achieved a good resolution of one of these cases outside the meeting, and contributed to the resolution of another. It is anticipated that such enquiries will become more common within the EU, particularly as increasing numbers of UK citizens re-locate elsewhere.

At the meeting on 19th October, and through subsequent actions, a practicable outcome has been achieved regarding the conditioning of target shooters' certificates to cover the new range safety certification process. A sensible definition of antique air weapons has been agreed with ACPO and the Home Office. The conditioning of certificates for humane despatch was explored in the light of DEFRA's consultation on amendment of the Deer Act. 1991. Thanks to work by John Batley, we have persuaded the police to continue to accept Home Office 'Guidance' with regard to the return of firearms after repair not needing to be a 'face to face' transfer. Agreement was reached over the publication of ACPO FELWG's minutes (on the Dorset Police Website), but FELWG has declined to publish its agenda in advance. Discussions continue on dummy launchers, grenade cup dischargers, firearms amnesties and turnaround times on the grant, renewal and variation of certificates. With Adrian Whiting, an Assistant Chief Constable from Dorset Police, as Acting Chair, we are making good progress in co-operative decision making, and the value of the Practitioners Group is making itself increasingly clear. As a direct result of these Practitioners Meetings, a first meeting was held with ACPO representatives and Home Office staff on 24th November to discuss updating and simplifying firearms forms and on countersignatories and referees.

Following a very positive meeting with the Forensic Science Service in December, Bill Harriman of BASC and the Secretary are working on a proposed new approach to the

definition of ‘antique’ breech-loading metallic cartridge rifles for further discussion in 2007.

Firearms Licensing Conference

No conference was planned for 2006, but the BSSC made clear its wish to participate fully in the scheduled 2007 Conference, having been gravely disappointed at the restricted involvement that it had been allowed in 2005.

National Independent Advisory Group to the ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms Secretariat

The Secretary was invited to join what is the first national-level independent advisory group, although local IAGs are well-established in the gun crime field. An exploratory meeting was held in June, with the first full meeting in October. The IAG is to be made up mainly of representatives from organisations (many of them community organisations) already committed to combating gun crime, but also involving police and Home Office representatives. The purpose of a national level IAG would be to act as a sounding board and provide input to the Criminal Use of Firearms Secretariat. Chief Constable Keith Bristow of Warwickshire Police and Chair of CUF is keen to see representation of legitimate firearms users, partly for balance and partly to avoid possible courses of action that would have unintended consequences for legal users of firearms. BSSC is very much seen as a contributor to the solution, rather than any part of the problem. This NIAG could have a considerable influence on the ways in which gun crime is tackled by the police, with consequent benefits for the legitimate shooting community.

HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Storage of shooters’ powders

A revised draft on the storage of shooters’ powders was circulated by the HSE in April, but, owing to staff ill-health at the HSE, there has been little activity on this issue. In June, however, the Council did reiterate its satisfaction with the recently-introduced current guidance (in the form of the Approved Code of Practice), and its real doubt as to whether further guidance is necessary. A request was also made that the outstanding trials of the 1 kilo powder container be expedited, as a necessary precursor to any renewed consideration of the storage issue.

Fees Exemption Certificate

Fees charged under the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005 have been a major bone of contention, as they had been laid before Parliament without consultation. The BSSC had objected strongly to the original basis on which fees were calculated, so, for those keeping the smallest class of store, the problem was addressed by means of Exemption Certificate No. 1 of 2005, which was due to expire on 1 October 2006. Following representations from the BSSC, a new Exemption Certificate was issued for a further year.

Secure storage of shotgun cartridges at game fairs

Following problems that arose with Hampshire Police in regard to shotgun cartridge storage prior to the Game Fair, the Gun Trade Association and BSSC made representations to the HSE, and a very satisfactory resolution was negotiated, based on existing procedures.

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Deer management

Following consultation with the Countryside Alliance and BASC, the Secretary sent comments to the DEFRA Wildlife Management Team on two aspects of proposed changes to the 1991 Deer Act relating to deer management.

The first of these covered the use of pistols for humane dispatch. Since any residual legal doubt that might remain about the use of pistols for humane dispatch of deer would be dispelled by DEFRA's proposed allowing of 'any reasonable means', BSSC suggested that it would be helpful to ensure that any changes to the 1991 Act at Section 6(4) would incorporate a specific and unequivocal approval of pistols alongside smoothbore guns and (as proposed) .22 rimfire rifles. The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 Section 3 does take account of the use of 'small firearms' (i.e. pistols) for humane dispatch, but its application to such a use of pistols for deer has been called into question.

The second related to proposals covering *inter alia* an easing of restrictions on the type of firearm that may be used to despatch humanely an injured deer. DEFRA's proposal, however, did not address whether this might be done despite any restrictive conditions that might at present be entered on the Firearm Certificate covering the most readily available firearm. These might limit the firearm's use to fox shooting or vermin destruction for instance, so a breach of the condition (an offence in law) would occur if the firearm were used for the wholly laudable purpose of the rapid humane despatch of a wounded deer. BSSC suggested that every firearm certificate holder possessing a low-powered rifle used for estate management, vermin destruction or similar purposes, or a shot pistol authorised for use in connection with shooting vermin, should be given the authority to use his firearm for the humane despatch of deer either automatically or on request without the need to prove good reason beforehand. The easing of restrictions is

after all intended to cover an unanticipated and almost certainly infrequent (for the individual certificate holder) use, and to have to prove 'good reason', perhaps on the basis of a prior request with which the individual could not legally comply as his available firearm did not at the time meet the criteria of the Deer Act and his firearm certificate was not appropriately conditioned, would largely nullify the real benefit of this proposed change.

EUROPEAN FIREARMS ISSUES

Amendment of the EC Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons.

In order for the EU to comply with the United Nation's anti-crime Vienna Protocol, some minimal changes to the 1991 Directive are required, covering marking and tracing of firearms, illegal manufacture, the period of time for which dealers' registers must be maintained, and deactivation standards, and none of these would much affect the UK.

During 2006 the EU continued to work towards these changes, but it became clear that real pressure was being exerted by some anti-gun Green Members of the European Parliament to open up the debate on the Directive with a view to making it significantly more restrictive. Their desired changes were contained in a draft Report prepared by Mrs Gisela Kallenbach, the 'Rapporteur' (Secretary, a very influential position) of the European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), which will be considering the changes as part of the process of amendment by the European Parliament.

Among changes being suggested by the Kallenbach Report were the removal of Categories C and D from the Directive (C is the Category for firearms that may be legally possessed by 'declaration' to the appropriate national authority, subject to national law, and D is the Category that allows possession of 'single shot long firearms with smooth bore barrels' without a license, again subject of course to national law), leaving only a 'prohibited' category and a 'subject to authorization' category which would also affect some dealers and might adversely affect our Shotgun Certificate, compulsory marking on import, the inclusion of firearms collectors within the Directive, a tight definition of antique arms and a compulsory national central firearms register. Indeed, the only beneficial element in Mrs Kallenbach's draft Report is her wish to see the European Firearms Pass as the sole valid travel document for firearms within the EU.

Mrs Kallenbach called a public mini-hearing on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons on 4th October at the European Parliament in Brussels at which short presentations were made by the selected experts. These were Dr Vito Genco, Secretary General of the European Association of Sporting Ammunition Manufacturers (AFEMS); Detective Chief Inspector Paul Savill, Head of Armed Crime Unit, Greater Manchester Police; Ilhan Berkol, Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la Securite (GRIP); Dr Heinz Gabriel, President of the Permanent International Commission

(CIP, the proof house body); Pekka Karhunen (Finnish Hunting Association) and Rebecca Peters (Director of IANSA).

The CIP is recognized at a national level within the EU, and since the 1991 Directive came into force the CIP proof houses have played an important role both in ensuring the proper marking of firearms within the EU and in assisting in the tracing of firearms used in crime. The recognition of the CIP by the EU is an important issue for European firearms and ammunition manufacturers, and hard lobbying continues to achieve this as part of any amendment to the 1991 Directive.

In order to raise awareness about the undesirable nature of some of the proposed revisions to the EU Directive on Weapons Control, the Secretary has been briefing pro-gun Experts invited to the public mini-hearing held on 4th October on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, has briefed at length all UK MEPs on IMCO and has had discussions with Malcolm Harbour MEP, of the pro-shooting Conservative group in the European Parliament, and with Graham Widdecombe at the Home Office. The Secretary has also briefed in detail Stephen Petroni the new Chairman of FESAC (the Foundation of European Societies of Arms Collectors) and Roger Cook, its Secretary, both of whom were invited to meet Mrs Kallenbach on 25th October; Guy Wilson, the President of ICOMAM (the International Committee of Museums of Arms and Military History), and David Williams of Bonhams. FESAC, ICOMAM (which is a Committee of ICOM, the International Council of Museums, a UNESCO body) and the European auction houses are key players, as, while many politicians may be anti-shooting, few are willing to be seen as anti-heritage or anti-trade. All three produced very useful input into IMCO.

At the time of writing, the timescales for consideration of the draft Report remain unclear, but at least the danger of its being hurriedly pushed through IMCO has passed. In parallel to this draft report there is a draft Opinion by a Socialist MEP, Alexander Alvaro, which is to be submitted to the EU Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. This is robust on the validity of the European Firearms Pass as the sole valid travel document for firearms within the EU. It does, however, seek to reduce the four categories to two. It may be that the reduction of categories will be seen as 'common ground' between Alvaro and Kallenbach, so attractive politically, and so must be fought hard.

WORLD FORUM

UN Conference to Review Progress in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 26 June-7 July 2006.

Following a meeting at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office to discuss issues in advance of the UN Review Conference (which provided assurance that there would be no surprises on our side, and that the FCO was looking for focus on the illicit trade aspect, and was seeking a better regulated market and a stronger Programme of Action as a Conference outcome) the Secretary attended the Conference from 27-30 June, the main period of Non-Governmental Organisations activity, as part of the World Forum team.

The desired outcome of the Conference was to be a paper, reached by consensus, laying down agreed changes to the 2001 Programme Of Action (POA) on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). It soon became clear that this was going to be very difficult to achieve. The UN, EU, UK and several other states were looking for focus on illicit trade and specific measures to counter it. The United States had particular 'red line' concerns: the supply of SALW to 'non-state actors' (i.e. freedom fighters), the exclusion of ammunition from the POA and, crucially, over limiting the continuation of SALW talks. Several states were concerned to avoid more restrictive end-user procedures which might have inhibited their trade.

World Forum's strategy focussed on illegal trafficking, keeping civilian firearms distinct from military small arms, on pressing for the UN to recognise formally the position of legitimate firearms owners and users, on the benefits of sport hunting to developing nations, and on dealing with specifics such as the failures of the Canadian registration system and Brazilian gun ban referendum and problems likely to arise over brokering.

The agenda of IANSA and its supporters among the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) included achieving direct NGO involvement in the UN process (as had happened with landmines), refusing to recognise any difference between civilian firearms and military small arms, civilian ownership of firearms, the inclusion of ammunition in the POA, and state provision of support to shooting victims.

One outcome with long-term value for the pro-shooting interest resulted from the American National Rifle Association's write-in campaign which accused the Conference of planning to draft a global treaty to ban ownership of firearms. Not only did this provoke a UN publication 'Setting The Record Straight THE UN AND SMALL ARMS', but also a statement from Kofi Annan in his address to the Conference on 26 July stating *'Let me also note that this Review Conference is not negotiating a "global gun ban", nor do we wish to deny law-abiding citizens their right to bear arms in accordance with their national laws. Our energy, our emphasis, and our anger is directed against illegal weapons, not legal ones.'*

The Conference ended in failure. Delegates gave up on their attempt to agree on an "outcome document". Although there was widespread support for a call to hold a similar conference in five years, the United States opposed the proposal. Despite the failure,

many of the issues central to the conference will be re-raised in the UN disarmament committee, where consensus is not needed for agreement, with a view to an Arms Trade Treaty that would encompass many of the global principles supported by non-governmental organisations. From the point of view of World Forum and the pro-legitimate civilian shooting interest, the outcome was not good. We had hoped that a measured, focussed outcome document concentrating on controlling the illicit trade in military small arms could have been achieved, with sensible progress on brokering and perhaps even some recognition of legitimate civilian possession and use. These important issues will have to be addressed all over again in *fora* less procedurally friendly to us (see below). The 2001 Programme Of Action remains in effect.

Proposed United Nations Arms Trade Treaty

The UK and six other countries have sent a letter to all Governments proposing a UN Group of Experts to consider a global Arms Trade Treaty that would establish common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. This would be legally binding, and cover all conventional arms, not just small arms and light weapons.

The Secretary attended a meeting at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on 14th September at which the proposed ATT was announced by Dr Kim Howells, the Foreign Minister, and a second meeting at the FCO to discuss concerns, in company with John Batley of the Gun Trade Association and representatives of the Defence Manufacturers Association. The GTA and BSSC stressed the need to take account of legitimate civilian interests when considering the trade in arms, a position re-emphasised in later correspondence between our Chairman Lord Shrewsbury and Dr Howells. The Secretary was involved in preparing the World Forum's submission to the UN First Committee later in October.

Points stressed to the FCO about the proposed ATT were: The substantial legitimate international trade in firearms for civilian purposes (the EU is probably the second largest producer of civilian firearms); the need for the ATT to focus on military small arms; the need not to place unnecessary difficulty in the way of sportsmen and women travelling internationally with their personal firearms; and the desirability of avoiding unnecessary control over the movement of antique firearms which are generally accepted as posing no threat to society.

The 61st Session of the UN First Committee met and discussed arms issues between 26th and 31st October. There were two outcomes of importance. The first was that, following the failure of the UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms & light weapons in July 2006, this aspect of the UN's work has been resurrected, concentrating on marking and tracing and with a mandate to report in 2008. The second was the approval, by 139 votes to 1 (the USA), with 24 abstentions, to setting up a Group of Government Experts to report in 2008 on the feasibility and scope of a binding international Arms Trade Treaty to establish uniform worldwide standards for conventional arms. While small arms will

represent only a part of that process, it is deemed a very important aspect. UN Ambassador Kariyawasam, who had chaired the abortive July conference, stressed the need to address the ‘unresolved issue of civilian possession of small arms’.

The World Forum addressed the newly created Government Group of Experts (GGE) on 27th November, specifically on the subject of ‘brokering’, a matter of great importance to the civilian gun trade, since, for instance, the EU definition would include all RFDs as presumed ‘brokers’. Although unable to attend as part of the World Forum Team, because of the overlap with the BSSC’s Westminster Fair, the Secretary had input into early presentation drafts. Also of concern is the First Committee’s approval of the development of controls over conventional ammunition. This was in the original proposals on the illicit trade in SALW, but was removed in 2005. It could have a profound effect on civilian manufacture and trade if onerous marking and tracing requirements are imposed. World Forum’s aim is to ensure that all the practical achievements made during previous SALW workshops are not lost, including the work done on defining antique firearms and protecting the position of high quality sporting arms, which should not be subject to the proposed strictures on the trade in military small arms and light weapons.

World Forum Executive Committee Meeting, Berlin, 28-29 September

The Secretary attended the meetings of the Legislative, Statistics & Research, Environment and Image Sub-Committees, and the Executive Committee. Major concerns were the aforementioned ATT, proposed controls over ammunition, the revision of the 1991 EU Directive on Weapons Control, the development of the WFSA website (on which the Secretary contributed a paper co-authored with Professor Gary Mauser of the Simon Fraser University, British Columbia), planning for the General Assembly in 2007 and future environmental symposia. Noise and lead continue to be major issues.

Since these meetings, the Secretary has been closely involved in preparing the minutes of the Image and Environment Sub-Committees and in drawing up further proposals for the World Forum’s website for submission to the Executive Committee in March.

NATIONAL SHOOTING WEEK 2007

The dates for this BSSC event, which has been given strong backing by Martin Salter MP, the Government spokesman on shooting, are to be 26 May-3 June 2007, thus incorporating two weekends to maximise opportunities for participation. It will provide an unparalleled opportunity to enable people to try shooting for the first time, to provide a participation strategy for the sport as laid out in the Labour Party’s Charter for Shooting, and for the BSSC to promote respect and understanding for legal firearms, air weapons and our sport. This is an opportunity absolutely not to be missed for our sport to improve

public perception and recruit keen new participants. The concentration will be on clay shooting on CPSA regulated grounds, or those of an equivalent standard, and on air rifle, air pistol and target rifle shooting. The NSW website (www.nationalshootingweek.co.uk) will provide contacts for both shotgun and rifle disciplines. Venues are being organised in England, Scotland and Wales. The Council is most grateful to the Countryside Alliance, and in particular Rob Gray, for their considerable organisational efforts.

LEAD WORKING GROUP

While no further meeting of the Group has taken place in 2006, the Secretary has been in discussion with both World Forum and BASC about a possible further symposium on issues of lead contamination and noise attenuation during 2007.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Following the BSSC's work in 2005 with Martin Salter MP on the preparation of a submission to Richard Caborn, the Sports Minister, on the requirements if pistol shooting was to take place at the London Olympics. The lead on discussions with the Minister for Sport and the Home Office is now being taken by Phil Boakes, Chairman of the Great Britain Target Shooting Federation, with the intention of having a programme in place for the 2008 Olympics. The Secretary has been in discussion with concerned members of the House of Lords, the Chairman of the NRA, Greenwich Council and various shooting organisations and shooters, with the intention of avoiding initiatives incompatible with the GBTSF's ongoing negotiations.

AUCTION HOUSES

The Secretary has been involved in continuing discussions with the major arms auction houses, led by Bonhams, on problems, first raised with the GTA, relating to auction house business involving firearms subject to certification. The Secretary has also briefed the auction houses on potential problems that might arise from proposed amendments to the EU Directive on Weapons Control aimed at prohibiting 'acquisition through means of distance communication'.

DEFENCE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

SECTION 5 GROUP

The Secretary continues to sit on this Group, which during 2006 has been mainly concerned with the possible outcomes of the UN Conference on the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons (with a particular concern about ‘brokering’, which threatens to hamper the legitimate arms trade with a plethora of overlapping jurisdictions), with the proposed UN Arms Trade Treaty, which the DMA supports as a defence for the legitimate defence arms trade, with the definition of component parts (a perennial issue which the Home Office needs to grasp, and on which it had long since received sound advice from the Firearms Consultative Committee), and with the difficulties caused for legitimate trade by the inconsistencies between UK law and the plethora of international and regional legislation. The Secretary and John Batley attended the meeting between the DMA and the Whitehall Small Arms & Light Weapons Committee on 21st September, to ensure that there was full awareness of the need to accommodate trade in, and international movement of, civilian firearms and antique weapons.

STANDING CONFERENCE ON COUNTRYSIDE SPORTS

On 4th May 2006 the Secretary attended the Conference’s 56th Meeting. Subjects covered included the hunting situation in Europe, avian flu, the ‘Value of Shooting to the Rural Economy’ project, and philosophical, political and veterinary aspects of wildlife management. This was a most worthwhile day, from which was gleaned much information which proved very useful in discussions at the UN Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons

The Secretary also attended the 57th meeting on 9th November. The meeting covered a sensible resolution on tail docking (Animal Welfare Act), likely tighter regulation affecting game birds, the Violent Crime Reduction Act, the proposed abolition of the Game Licence, the proposed permitting of Sunday shooting, and the change of policy by the National Trust in favour of the use of hounds for animal welfare reasons. On the EU front, the news on positive discussions between hunters and conservationists was encouraging. There was also a presentation on the PACEC report which provides so much valuable data on the extent and value of sporting shooting in the UK. The second part of the meeting was on the theme of the management of the Water Framework Directive and countryside. This conference continues to demonstrate its value in bringing together in a non-confrontational forum field sports bodies and other important countryside organisations, and in increasing mutual understanding.

CARRIAGE OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION BY RAIL

Last year's annual report raised the problem of carriage of ammunition by rail. Mike Wells of the Sportsman's Association has been leading on this important issue on behalf of BSSC. He has reported that, of the 31 independent rail companies, all had their own policies and only Scotrail would routinely allow both firearms and ammunition to be carried. Virgin, Gatwick Express, Stansted Express and Southern would routinely carry firearms only, although most would entertain a written application for ammunition (for instance if hand loads were required). This represents a major problem for shooters, and instances of serious problems for individuals had already occurred. Analogous problems exist with airlines and ferry companies. This matter will be pursued, and an approach to the Department of Transport is under consideration.

UK WORKING GROUP ON ARMS

This is part of an international coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations working to achieve responsibility and transparency in the international arms trade, and to reduce the demand for weapons in conflict-prone regions. Its members are Amnesty International, BASIC, Christian Aid, International Alert, Oxfam and Saferworld. It is a constituent of IANSA (the International Action Network on Small Arms), the UK Director of which, Rebecca Peters, takes a strong personal line against civilian possession of small arms. In advance of the UN Conference on the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons it was decided to approach the UK Working Group to see if there was some possibility of avoiding ultimately fruitless confrontation on legitimate civilian possession and use of firearms at the UN. Graham Downing, Jim McAllister and the Secretary met Roy Isbister of Saferworld on 9 May. Both sides explained their positions and BSSC offered to arrange a symposium to enable interested parties to get together, and raised the possibility of a jointly-organised event. Subsequently, we were advised that about half the members of the UK Working Group had indicating willingness in principle to attend a meeting. The failure of the UN Conference, in part owing to 'ultimately fruitless confrontation on legitimate civilian possession and use of firearms' and the initiation of the process towards a UN Arms Trade Treaty have put any further dialogue with the UK Working Group on Arms on hold until the UN's intentions become clearer.

SECTION 7 HISTORIC FIREARMS

On 16th May the Secretary attended a successful meeting with ACC Adrian White, Acting Chair of ACPO's Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group and Dr Michael Seed, Convenor of the Section 7(2) Designated Sites Forum (on which the Secretary sits) to discuss matters of concern over the way in which the Designated Sites are operated. The meeting was suggested by the Home Office because of misunderstandings on all sides as to the purpose and function of Section 7 of the 1997 Act which deals with the preservation and shooting of historic pistols.

Following on from this meeting, a presentation was given by Dr Seed and the Secretary to the ACPO Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group meeting on 14th July. This provided an explanation of the working of Section 7(3) Designated sites and an explanation of how the scheme had developed, particularly as a resource for research on historic pistols. Data on numbers of Section 7(3) holders and pistols provided reassurance to the police that the scheme was being operated in the spirit of the 1997 (Amendment) Act.

On 19th September the Secretary attended a meeting of the Section 7 Designated Sites Managers' Forum at the Bedford site, where discussions centred on the maintenance of safety standards, Section 5 authorities and on the transport of 7(3) pistols when required. The Secretary has since given advice to a group hoping to set up a new designated site.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

Further evidence has been noted of anti-firearms activity at county level: in Norfolk, protests were made at the county's high level of legal gun ownership (67,000), although, as a local newspaper robustly pointed out, it also has the lowest gun crime. The Secretary provided the paper with a quote indicating that there is no link between legal firearms ownership and levels of armed crime.

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