

BRITISH SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL**ANNUAL REPORT****2013**

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FOREWORD

It is, as always, a pleasure to have been asked by the Secretary to write a short foreword to the Annual Report. I am sad to have stood down as your Hon President, but I have been with the BSSC for rather a long while, and fresh faces are required. I am most grateful to you all for the support which I have received from Council over the years, and especially from David Penn. I have enjoyed my time with Council, and have learned much and made many friends. I am immensely grateful for the magnificent gift you presented me with at the Annual Luncheon.

I am very impressed by and most grateful to The Home Office for trying, after a period of relative inertia, to make real progress over certificate fees, the Guide to firearms law and the computerisation of the certification process.

I must however make clear my concern over the EU Commission's new-found concern over gun crime, based on an alleged link between legally-owned civilian firearms and crime. The successful reduction in gun crime in the UK is the result of much improved police intelligence, not legislation which impacts mainly on the law-abiding. The EU should take note of this.

Finally, it goes without saying that I believe the BSSC to be an excellent body in support of the shooting sports. I wish you well for the future, and I thank you for the past.

The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL
CHAIRMAN	The Lord Glentoran CBE
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones Tobias Ellwood MP
TREASURER	Bill Harriman
SECRETARY	David Penn

“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 SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Chris Miles
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION	Bill Harriman TD
COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE	Graham Downing
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Nick Fellows
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	John Batley
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Malcolm Plant
MUZZLE LOADERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	Ken Hocking
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Robin Pizer
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Ken Nash
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Alan Westlake
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Rob Adam
CO-OPTED MEMBER	Jim McAllister
HONORARY LEGAL ADVISER	Mark Scoggins

ABBREVIATIONS

ACPO:	Association of Chief Police Officers (England and Wales)
ACRO:	ACPO Criminal Records Office
AFEMS:	Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition
ATT:	Arms Trade Treaty
BASC:	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BMA:	British Medical Association
CA:	Countryside Alliance
CASA:	Coordinating Action on Small Arms (a UN organization)
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CUF:	Criminal Use of Firearms, an ACPO Secretariat
DG:	Directorate General
DUP:	Democratic Unionist Party
EU:	European Union
FELWG:	Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, an ACPO body
GP:	General Practitioner
GTA:	Gun Trade Association
HSE:	Health & Safety Executive
IEACS:	Institute Europeen des Armes de Chasse et de Sport
ISACS:	UN CASA's International Small Arms Control Standards
ITI:	International Tracing Instrument
NaBIS:	National Ballistics Intelligence Service
PACEC:	Public & Corporate Economic Consultants
TNIAG:	Themed National Independent Advisory Group
UN:	United Nations
WFSA:	World Forum on Shooting Activities

Overview of the year:

Sadly, the Association of Professional Clay Target Shooting Grounds decided not to renew its membership in 2013. The contributions to Council meetings of Ian Clifton and latterly his son Andrew will be much missed.

2013 was another year in which long-running issues (seven years in the case of the Firearms Forms working party) continued to move forward, although with a gratifying increase of pace in the case of the revision of the Home Office's very useful 'Firearms Law Guidance to the Police 2002' in the light of ever-changing legislation and of discussion on the increase of firearms fees. Discussion of the involvement of General Practitioners in the licensing process also continued. Also picking up speed was the Health & Safety Executive's Explosives Legislation Review. There was evidence of increasing political interest at European Union level in gun crime and at United Nations level the Arms Trade Treaty was finally adopted. New concerns included matters both ancient and modern, with increasing police concern alleging the criminal misuse of antique firearms and the advent of the 3D printable plastic firearm.

ACPO and the British Medical Association:

During 2013 the long-standing issue of general practitioners' involvement in the firearms licensing process continued to be actively debated. This involvement, which was becoming more and more prevalent at force level following the Atherton shooting in County Durham, represented a major change in a certification process that was becoming increasingly intelligence-led. The nature of GP involvement, which was being implemented in different ways force to force, could also affect the cost of the licensing process, so impacted on the parallel discussions on firearms fees. Meetings were held on the 16th April, 20th August and 3rd December with Home Office, police, Information Commissioner's Office and British Medical Association representatives. These were concerned with technical and procedural aspects of the consultation process, including how to ensure a timely GP response; on the impact of computerization of the process of applying for certificates; on whether to consult GPs as part of the process for all applications for grant or renewal, since it was accepted that for the vast majority of applicants the risk was very small; and on the necessity, or otherwise, for providing specific prompts to the applicant on how to respond to the medical questions. The BMA and police have preferred a pre-grant response from GPs, while BSSC has advocated a post-grant enquiry which would not delay the licensing process. There also remain unresolved issues about which the BSSC has considerable concerns relating to the cost of licensing as reflected in the fees (reported on below), the tagging of medical records to 'flag up' certificate holders, data protection and human rights. Discussions will continue in 2014.

ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms Themed National Independent Advisory Group (TNIAG):

The Secretary attended meetings on the 15th January, 22nd May and 17th September. Discussion in January was mainly centred on the continuing role of the Group in response to changes in the 'Criminal Use of Firearms' portfolio, the 'Gangs' portfolio and NaBIS and also a change in Home Office emphasis from national plans to locally-determined priorities. In May the main agenda item related to current Government concern about gangs reflected in its 'Ending Gang Youth Violence' project. Overall there had been a significant drop in

firearms homicides, but an increase in gang shootings. Other subjects have included the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, misuse of legally-owned firearms and laser printer technology which appears to have reached the point whereby a viable firearm could be ‘printed’ and where great strides in metal 3D printing are being achieved in the Formula 1 racing industry and the US military (who now print spare parts in the field). In September the main agenda item concerned changes to ACPO portfolios with the advent of the new College of Policing, which would, among other things, be involved in the development of professional training and accreditation which could impact on firearms licensing. A briefing was received on the new National Crime Agency which came into operation in October. This Agency would have a focus on the criminal supply of firearms, now an EU issue on which Spain was taking the lead. The European Firearms Experts Group would be looking at antiques. Border screening for illegal importation of firearms remained a major issue. An assurance was given that, by and large, there is not a problem with the theft of firearms. There was discussion about deactivated firearms and possible EU moves to raise standards.

ACPO Firearms & Explosives Licensing Working Group and the Practitioners’ Group:

Meetings of the BSSC-administered Practitioners Group, at which representatives of ACPO FELWG, BSSC and the Home Office meet to discuss matters relating to firearms licensing, were held on the 14th February at BASC headquarters, Marford Mill and on the 5th September at the Farmers Club. At the February meeting Colin Greenwood, an outstanding authority on firearms and firearms law, was appointed as Firearms Adviser to the Group. Among subjects discussed were Section 5 prohibited weapon authorities, the revision of Home Office ‘Guidance’, ‘accompanied’ conditions for sporting rifle users, shared storage of Section 2 shotguns, the impact of changes in explosives controls, the collecting of munitions such as artillery ammunition and grenades, home visits at the time of firearm and shot gun certificate renewal, consistency of practice in the issue of Section 11(6) authorities for clay pigeon shooting events and the suitability of the Hornady .17 Hornet cartridge for fox control.

In September there was discussion on control of urban foxes, the proposed Legislative Reform Order, and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill, which was, *inter alia*, seeking to increase penalties for the illegal manufacture, importation and supply of prohibited weapons. Consideration was being given to adding a clause to close the ‘suspended sentence loophole’ whereby people given a suspended sentence would be subject to a prohibition on the possession of firearms and also to extend the prohibition on possession of firearms by convicted criminals to Section 58(2) antiques. There was also discussion of ‘Guidance’ revision, the surrender of prohibited weapons to dealers, and medical reporting. The development of a system of ACRO (ACPO Criminal Records Office) checks for resident foreign nationals seeking to join approved clubs or applying for certificates was announced. A Cheshire scheme for voluntary early surrender of shotgun certificates as a means of reducing the ‘bulge’ in certificate renewals was discussed. Proposals for the computerising of dealers’ records as required by EU Weapons Directive Article 4, were considered. The satisfactory outcome with regard to the use only when necessary of the ‘accompanied’ condition for neophyte deer stalkers was noted.

Council and Committee meetings:

A meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee was held on the 21st February. Draft audited accounts were considered and referred to the Council and funding was approved for an additional media training day for Association representatives. These training days have proved of great help in ensuring that Association representatives can respond well to media questioning. It was agreed that it was time to review subscriptions, which had not been increased since 2009, and this was referred to an additional meeting to be held on the 23rd May, along with a recommendation for staged payments of subscriptions.

A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee was also held that day. Issues considered included certificate fees, revision of the Firearms Rules, proposals for the revision of the Council's constitution, the BSSC's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on air gun licensing, police consultation with GPs after the grant or renewal of certificates, the continuing use of non-statutory forms by some constabularies, Health & Safety Executive issues and the Royal Mail Consultation.

The Council's Annual General Meeting and a Council meeting were held on the 29th March. The Earl of Shrewsbury was re-elected as President, Lord Glentoran was re-elected as Chairman, Tobias Ellwood MP and Martyn Jones were re-elected as Vice-Chairmen, Bill Harriman was re-elected as Treasurer and Jim McAllister was co-opted onto the Council. The accounts for 2012, which showed a small surplus, were adopted. Brittle & Co. were re-appointed as auditors. It was agreed that membership of the Finance & General Purposes Committee would in future be open to all members of Council. At the Council meeting a revised version of the Council's constitution was adopted. The revisions were made to take into account the current membership structure and to reflect the Council's wish that only the subscription-paying Associations should have a vote (the Chairman's casting vote excepted, if necessary).

Also on the 28th March the Council held its Annual Luncheon at which Peter Wilson MBE gave a talk on the preparedness and commitment necessary to achieve an Olympic Gold Medal. Other Council guests included Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (Chair of the All Party Group for Shooting and Conservation), Peter Taylor (Chair, Practitioners Group), Richard Ali (the recently appointed CEO of BASC), John Swift (the outgoing CEO of BASC), Andrew Mercer (the new CEO of the NRA), Ian Coley MBE (Manager of the British Olympic Shooting Team) and Graham Widdecombe (Home Office).

A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee was held on the 23rd May. Among subjects considered were firearms fees, revision of the Firearms Rules, General Practitioner involvement in firearms licensing, Home Office 'Guidance', a Legislative Reform Order, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill, the Council's Forward Plan, the ACPO 'Solitaire' initiative, the UN Arms Trade Treaty, the EU Directive on Weapons Control and the proposed updating of the 2006 PACEC (Public & Corporate Economic Consultants) report. The PACEC report has been one of the most effective resources for demonstrating the social, environmental and economic benefits of shooting, but was badly in need of updating and expanding to give more coverage to target shooting, collecting and the gun trade.

On the same day an additional Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting was held to review subscriptions and consider the financial implications of the PACEC report.

On the 13th June a Council meeting was held to consider, *inter alia*, the PACEC updating project, General Practitioner involvement in licensing, the finalisation of the new firearms forms, the Forward Plan, the Arms Trade Treaty and the EU Directive.

Meetings of the Technical & Research and the Finance & General Purposes Committees took place on the 11th September.

The Technical & Research Committee discussions included firearms fees, the continuing work with the Home Office and ACPO in revising certificate application forms to simplify them and make them compatible with 'on line' application and management, Scottish devolution, general practitioner involvement in firearms licensing, the revision of the Home Office's 'Firearms Law Guidance to the Police', a proposed Legislative Reform Order, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill, approved rifle clubs criteria, the Health & Safety Executive's review of explosives regulations, progress on the Arms Trade Treaty, the EU Directive on Weapons Control and the revision of the PACEC report.

The F&GP Committee was primarily concerned with agreeing a draft budget for 2014 to be presented to Council on the 10th October. This budget included proposals for revised annual subscriptions.

The Council met on the 10th October. It considered the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on the 11th September and the draft budget for 2014. It was noted that the Council's forthcoming substantial contribution in 2014 to the cost of updating and expanding the PACEC report would require a deficit budget for that year. New annual subscription levels were approved and the budget was agreed.

EU Directive on weapons control:

Within the EU, Cecilia Malmstrom, Commissioner for Home Affairs, launched a 'Fight Against Arms Trafficking' in the wake of shootings in Toulouse, Montaubon and Sweden and of a reported 5000 firearms deaths in the EU in 2011. Focus was also put on 'heavy firearms', which is understood to refer to illegally imported military rifle capable of fully-automatic fire. A 'Task Force Firearms' was launched in January 2013 and a report and plan of action is expected before the 2014 EU elections. This initiative is very concerning, since some link is suggested between legally-owned civilian firearms and crime.

The European Commission had launched an on-line consultation designed to garner support for further restrictive weapons legislation within the EU. BSSC worked alongside its European colleagues to encourage shooting and arms collecting Associations and individual shooters and collectors to respond to the consultation. About 80,000 responses were received, mostly supporting the shooting sports and the BSSC is most grateful to all those who took part. Also announced was the creation of an EU Expert Group on Illicit Trafficking in Firearms to Safeguard the EU's Internal Security to provide a forum for discussion on measures to combat such illicit trafficking. Members include Mauro Silvis, European Secretary of the World Forum on Shooting Activity, representing IEACS (Institut Europeen des Armes de Chasse et de Sport), Thierry Jacobs of FN/Browning representing AFEMS. (Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition). Academic experts are Professor Ernesto Savona (Director, Transcrime Institute, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan) and Sarah Parker, a UK national working as a Senior Researcher for the Swiss

Small Arms Survey Research Institute and the author of Small Arms Survey 2011 States of Security Chapter 9 'Balancing Act: Regulation of Civilian Firearms Possession'. Europol and SaferWorld both have representatives and there are 'public authorities representatives' from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK.

The paper 'Firearms and the internal security of the EU' published by the EC Commission for Home Affairs contained numerous errors and work began by BSSC on a substantial rebuttal paper, completed in January 2014. The auditors Ernst & Young were commissioned by DG Home to draw up an impact assessment on "possible changes in the EU legislative framework". This would be concerned with deactivated firearms, replicas and 'alarm weapons' (i.e. blank firers).

Firearms fees:

ACPO having produced a fees paper in November 2011 the issue has continued as a major concern for the BSSC, which formed a working group to prepare further documentation on this important and complex issue. The Council accepted that a fees increase was necessary as the rates for certificates had not increased since 2001. The police had been seeking an interim 'cost of living plus' increase in return for greater efficiency (based on 'eCommerce', i.e. further computerisation, including on-line applications). Council offered to agree to an increase in line with inflation, but without the 'plus', in return for a more general improvement in efficiency, not solely in eCommerce terms. In the longer term, the police were seeking 'full cost recovery', a concept which the BSSC does not accept and was vigorously opposing, since it was in breach of Treasury Guidelines. Following a Home Office meeting on the 28th June there was some significant progress. An in-depth analysis carried out by the Gun Trade Association demonstrated that the mathematical basis of ACPO's fees calculations had been flawed. At the BSSC and Gun Trade Association's meeting with Damian Green, the Home Office Minister, on the 14th August agreement was reached on the creation of a working group on fees, for which the Council been pressing. We were assured that, if efficiencies were not achieved, the Home Office would not seek a further fees increase in 2015. BASC also had had a meeting with the Minister and stressed the likely political fall-out from an above-inflation fees increase. The Home Office took a fresh look at the nature of the problem and the risk involved. It was subsequently announced that the interim fee Order would not be laid in October. A letter from the Home Office confirmed that the working group would test the benefits of the eCommerce initiative and 'all other elements of the cost of a license, in order to determine what the full cost recovery might be.' An amendment to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill then going through Parliament, requiring that the police be consulted before any firearms fee increase, was defeated.

On the 7th October Mike Eveleigh (BASC) and the Secretary attended a meeting to consider the progress of 'eCommerce', the wide-ranging project to put 'on line' as many police functions as possible, of which firearms licensing is but one. On the 8th October the first quarterly meeting of the Firearms Fees Working Group was held. This group's task is to take a detailed look into the work of firearms licensing offices to determine precisely which activities should be included in the calculation of firearms fees. The Home Office has accepted that fees would not be set to cover the whole costs of the licensing office, which would include enforcement matters such as appeals or refusals, but rather to cover the cost of issuing the certificates. The term 'full cost recovery' has now been dropped. Very importantly, the Home Office made it clear that there would be no interim increase while the Working Party was deliberating. The Working Party is expected to take into account any

report produced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary during the year 2014-15. The second Working Group meeting was held on the 3rd December and was mainly concerned with progress on the eCommerce project and on flow charts for licensing processes, which were to be studied in detail by a sub-group in the New Year.

Firearms in Scotland:

The Scottish Government's consultation on air weapons closed on the 15th March 2013. The BSSC had submitted a substantial response. The number of responses is understood to have been 1,136, of which 87% were opposed to licensing of air weapons, which is impressive. The responses were published on the Scottish Government's website. In July Kenny MacAskill, the Justice Secretary, confirmed the Government's intention to legislate. On the 5th September came the first significant public questioning of the proportionality of the proposed legislation from the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents. Chief Superintendent David O'Connor, president of ASPSP, was reported to have said: "Air weapons are very popular in Scotland. Most are used responsibly by law abiding people. Any legislation brought forward will be challenging from a cost and enforcement point of view. It is important that any air weapon licensing legislation is subject to robust scrutiny at the Scottish Parliament on grounds of proportionality, affordability and feasibility in terms of practical implementation." At the time of writing it is understood that a licensing Bill may not be tabled until 2016. The BSSC will continue to support Scottish shooting organisations in keeping up pressure against the Bill, especially since the most recent statistics on crimes and offences involving firearms in Scotland showed that there had been a further decline in air weapon offences to the lowest point in 38 years.

Health & Safety Executive:

As part of its wide-ranging and on-going review of and consultation on explosives legislation and Regulations, the Health & Safety Executive has been looking at two issues: whether it would be better to have a single ACoP (Approved Code of Practice) for the entire body of legislation and Regulations, or to have separate ACoPs to cover different aspects, and also the means by which the HSE would in future communicate with the explosives industry. This is the first stage of a long consultation process affecting all aspects of explosives controls. The HSE has an excellent record for its positive attitude and for prompt addressing and resolution of problems where the shooting community is concerned. As part of its wide-ranging and on-going review of and consultation on explosives legislation and Regulations, the HSE held an informal meeting with the BSSC, BASC, the GTA and the MLAGB on the 24th June, prior to formal consultations later in the year. Subjects covered were the definition of 'small arms' with regard to explosives legislation, the definitions of percussion caps and smokeless powder, licensing arrangements for registered firearms dealers and for game fairs, record keeping (not applicable to the private user), reporting loss, issues relating to the sale, transport and storage of shooters' powders and the possible replacement of the ACoP (Approved Code Of Practice) by new guidance. Formal consultations were then begun with all parts of the explosives sector. The BSSC's HSE working group met on the 18th September to complete an on-line response to the 27 page consultation document. A second meeting of the HSE explosives sub-sector working groups representing leisure shooters and retailers of shooting supplies including ammunition, including on this occasion police and re-enactors, was held on the 15th October. The HSE has been working with fourteen sub-sector groups to assist the latter in preparing their own guidance documents that are clear, proportionate and in harmony with HSE's own Guidance. This is seen as a top-down process with the HSE's broad Key Principles being used as a basis for sub-sector guidance, with both in place, if

possible, by July 2014, since supporting guidance has to be in place three months before the 1st October 2014, when the new Explosives Regulations will come into force. HSE has identified aspects of the Approved Code of Practice to the Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations that are common throughout the sector. Some areas for the shooters' subsector are already satisfactory, for instance security, but more needed to be done on storage and use. As a result of this meeting the HSE circulated in late December drafts relating to storage and retail sale of explosives as a basis on which to construct sub-sector guidance.

Home Office Guide on Firearms Licensing Law October 2013:

The first stage of re-drafting the Home Office publication 'Firearms Law Guidance to the Police 2002' was completed by October and was one of the most important areas of Council activity during the year. Under political pressure in recent months to finish what hitherto had been a long drawn out exercise, The new 'Guide on Firearms Licensing Law October 2013' represents a marked improvement, much of this as a result of considerable input from the shooting organisations, often to very tight deadlines. Those involved deserve the thanks of the shooting community. As a 'live' on line document, the 'Guide' will be much easier to amend in future and the Home Office has drawn up a list of points for future consideration. Such changes will not be piecemeal: they would be addressed by a publicised, dated 'release'. The Home Office had resisted making the old 'Guidance and the new Guide statutory in any form, but it is ACPO's intention that police forces will comply with 'Guidance' in future and those that do not will be requested to explain their reasons.

The next review was scheduled for spring 2014 since some areas of major concern were not addressed or not satisfactorily resolved. These included approved club criteria and the process relating to changes in Club Secretary; import and export; conditions relating to target shooting with Section 1 shotguns and surrender of firearms. Another area for review that arose during the year concerned the very occasional use of antique firearms in crime, about which a preliminary meeting was held with the Home Office, NaBIS, the Border Force and the police. In addition to the BSSC the Arms & Armour Society, Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association, the Heritage Arms Study Group, BASC, GTA and MLAGB representatives were all represented. Discussions remain ongoing, but the Home Office and police did not wish to seek licensing of antique weapons and the focus was on measures to discourage criminal misuse.

Home Office Firearms Rules:

The Home Office Firearms Forms Working Group, which has now been in existence for seven years and of which Mike Eveleigh (BASC), Colin Greenwood (GTA) and the Secretary are members, has been working on simplified forms for applications for grant and renewal of Firearm Certificates and Shot Gun Certificates and a simple one-page variation form. These measures are intended radically to improve accuracy and efficiency and will be the basis for the firearms licensing fees increase being sought by ACPO. The proposal to introduce Optical Character Recognition has been dropped, 'on line' application procedures are to be adopted as soon as possible and the drafts have been submitted to professional forms designers. Considerable work took place in early April as the Statutory Instrument for the new forms was to be signed in July. Responses were submitted, addressing those errors and inconsistencies contained within the latest drafts. They are now much improved. The new forms would not come into use before the end of the year, however, since the National

Firearms Licensing Management System's software required modification. The intention was to roll out a pilot scheme for eCommerce, including on line applications for the grant, renewal and variation of certificates in March 2014, to be followed by a full-scale roll-out in August or September 2014. For those unwilling or unable to apply on line, a paper-based applications system would continue to be available.

House of Commons adjournment debate:

During the 3rd September adjournment debate on firearms controls, the focus was on domestic violence and Firearms Licensing Office staff training. This debate was initiated by Grahame Morris, MP for Easington, the constituency in which the Atherton shootings took place. The shooting sports were well supported by Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Con. The Cotswolds), Bill Wiggin (Con. North Herefordshire), Karl McCartney (Con. Lincoln), Gareth Johnson (Con. Dartford) and Jim Shannon (DUP, Strangford). Letters of thanks were sent to those Members of Parliament who had supported shooting during the debate.

PACEC:

The 2006 PACEC (Public & Corporate Economic Consultants) report on 'The Economic and Environmental Impact of Sporting Shooting' has proved to be of the greatest value in providing hard information on these aspects and also on the social benefits of shooting. It is widely accepted and has enabled a robust defence of our sport as a protector of the countryside, provider of wholesome food, generator of wealth and creator of employment. It is, however, beginning to be in need of updating. Richard Ali (the Chief Executive of BASC) chaired a meeting on the 11th June to discuss its revision and expansion. Representatives were there from the Countryside Alliance, Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, Gun Trade Association, National Rifle Association, National Small-bore Rifle Association, Country Land and Business Association, National Gamekeepers Organisation, Game Conservancy, Game Farmers' Association, Moorland Association, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Scottish Land and Estates and Public and Corporate Economic Consultants. There was general agreement on the desirability of updating, refining and expanding the report to encompass target shooting, the gun trade and gun collecting. Conservation, habitat and environmental outcomes and social benefits such as employment, fostering of labour market skills and tourism, contributions to innovation and technology, and general well-being and contributions to rural life would also be stressed. The intention was to have a new edition available in advance of the Scottish independence referendum and the 2014 party conferences, which would be the last ones before the 2015 election. BSSC offered substantial financial support in principle, subject to satisfaction with the detailed proposals. During the last quarter the BSSC contributed to the drafting of the various questionnaires and in 2014 BSSC will continue to provide financial support for this very important study.

Royal Mail:

On the 23rd January the Secretary met Royal Mail representatives to discuss the implications of substantial and robust responses to its recent consultation on the carriage of firearms. The meeting was one of a number with major stakeholders. The recent consultation had been part of a wider investigation of the carriage of dangerous goods. While the Royal Mail had not been, and did not wish to become, a 'carrier' for Section 5 materiel and while cartridges would remain 'dangerous goods' which cannot be sent by post, Royal Mail had modified its

stance following consideration of the c. 3,000 responses to the consultation. It had already decided that it would continue to carry by post low-powered air weapons (including their components and ammunition), non-pressure bearing components for other firearms, replicas, imitation firearms, antiques and deactivated firearms. Royal Mail continues to have concerns over the sending of Section 1 firearms or pressure bearing components by post and there was discussion about the components issue. Royal Mail is considering a second round of consultations.

World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) and the UN Arms Trade Treaty:

World Forum held a series of meetings between the 5th and 7th March. Major issues were the Arms Trade Treaty, the impact of the school shooting at Sandy Hook and lead in ammunition which last remains an active concern in Germany, Italy, Sweden, the UK and the USA. A major conference was held in Germany on lead in rifle ammunition during the week of the 18th March, five German *lander* having already mandated lead-free bullets for hunting. These bans had subsequently to be withdrawn at the insistence of the Federal Government, following the national election, however.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office held a further meeting on the 13th March, primarily to discuss heritage and museum interests in relation to the Arms Trade Treaty, the latter having been acknowledged as an issue at UN level. The BSSC, Gun Trade Association MLAGB and heritage organisations confirmed their pursuit of exceptions for civilian firearms, antiques, temporary exports and museum interests and requested that these be borne in mind during the discussions in New York.

The final UN ATT Conference took place between the 18th and 28th March. The stance of the FCO and indeed the EU and many EU states was that there must be no exceptions to the Treaty, but there were signs of change, not least in that, as indicated above, museum interests had been recognised as an issue and the Chair of the Conference, Ambassador Woolcott, had indicated sympathy for travelling hunters. The two week conference was lively, with China, Russia, Egypt and the USA continuing to have difficulties with various aspects of the draft Treaty. World Forum and shooting and heritage interests made presentations, to the drafting of which the Secretary contributed. No consensus was reached by the delegates, so the Conference failed, but a number of states including the UK took the final version of the Treaty Draft, dated the 27th March, to the UN General Assembly, where it was passed on the 2nd April by a majority of 154 to 3 (Iran, North Korea and Syria) with 23 abstentions. The treaty must now be signed and ratified by member states and was open for signature from June 2013. It will officially enter into force 90 days after the 50th country ratifies it. The Treaty is not explicit insofar as it affects civilian firearms, antiques, temporary exports and museums.

A meeting was held at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on the 29th April to discuss the impact of the Treaty. The FCO's view was that the ATT was now 'strong' with regard to discouraging serious misuse of arms while making it clear that the ATT was not about adding to the burdens of the individual shooter. Even those countries well-disposed to civilian interests (Canada, Italy, the USA and the UK) had had no appetite for specific exemptions for civilian or antique arms which it was feared might become 'loopholes'. With regard to the text relating to small arms, Article 5(3) states 'For the category covered under Article 2(1)(h),

national definitions shall not cover less than the descriptions used in relevant United Nations instruments at the time of entry into force of this Treaty' Although official confirmation has yet to be forthcoming this suggested that the UN Vienna Firearms Protocol would apply. This Protocol was already being incorporated into EU law, so British shooters and the gun trade should be no worse off as a result of the Arms Trade Treaty and there was provision for the international movement of privately-owned firearms. It seemed as if the Vienna Protocol definition of antique firearm would apply for international commerce.

During May the FCO began enquiries with other Ministries to establish the impact of the ATT. One authoritative publication by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, written with the co-operation of the Swiss and New Zealand Governments, had confirmed that the paragraph in the preamble regarding the legitimate trade and lawful ownership and use of certain conventional arms for recreational, cultural, historical and sporting activities had recognised that the treaty was not intended to interfere with such trade, ownership or use. It also recognised that the two most relevant existing UN instruments referring to small arms were the Vienna Firearms Protocol and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI). The main difference between these two is that the former embraced some 'less lethal' weapons. The FCO and Control Arms held a reception on the 15th May to mark the successful outcome of the UN Treaty negotiations. Ken Hocking (MLAGB) and the Secretary attended. The Minister Alistair Burt had stated that the treaty was 'strong and meaningful' and that more than expected had been achieved. Kate Allen, Director of Amnesty International, considered that the treaty was a solid foundation on which to build and was the floor, not the ceiling. It would be strengthened as it developed. Anna MacDonald, Oxfam's Head of Arms Control, talked about the launch of Control Arms ten years ago and the amount of effort that had gone into lobbying, with workshops and seminars in over 100 countries. Our work is clearly not yet over.

The Secretary General of the UN issued his biennial report on arms control on the 22nd August. Although much was concerned with illicit trafficking in conflict zones and strategies for the more effective enforcement of arms embargoes and prevention of 'diversion' from Government stockpiles, there are points that touch on civilian firearms interests. The Secretary General does not approve of private maritime security companies, which he saw as encouraging arms proliferation, and any measures relating to them could affect UK commercial interests. The UN is also working to assist in the development of domestic legislation to control small arms. While this is highly unlikely to affect UK legislation, it may encourage harsher licensing regimes in other countries and thus damage legitimate civilian shooting interests worldwide. An emphasis on transit and transshipment controls to reduce diversion of small arms into the illegal market could affect adversely the legitimate international trade in civilian firearms. A debate on small arms issues took place in the General Assembly First Committee during the week of the 21st October and WFSA made a statement regretting the way in which the UN ignored civilian firearms issues and the expertise of the firearms industry. As of the 16th December 115 nations had signed the ATT and nine have ratified, but 50 have to ratify it before it becomes law. Russia continued to refuse to sign, citing the treaty's failure to close the door on the illegal transfer of arms to 'certain unauthorised non-state subjects'.

World Forum has reported that surveys in the USA and Italy have shown an increase in public acceptance of hunting. There are active debates in Germany and Italy on the use of lead ammunition for hunting. Work on UN CASA's ISACS (International Small Arms Control Standards) 'module finalization' is expected to re-commencing shortly.

Other matters:

The Queen's Speech: This included an intention to legislate on increased penalties for the illegal manufacture, distribution or possession for distribution of prohibited weapons or ammunition as part of an Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill. The first reading in the Commons took place on the 9th May and the Bill became an Act in 2014. There remained judicial discretion in sentencing in exceptional circumstances.

National Gamekeepers' Organisation conference: This very well-run event was attended by firearms licensing officers from nearly every police force. Representatives of many shooting organisations attended, including the BSSC.

The keynote address was given by Chief Constable Andy Marsh, Chair of the ACPO Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group. His three objectives were 'Public safety, excellent service and value'. In the UK 1 in 80 people were certificate holders. The vast majority were law-abiding. He accepted that the licensing system lacked consistency in application and was not always timely, but there has been progress with regard to certificate conditions, mentoring, Guidance and the creation of a strategic group of senior officers.

Issues covered included certificate fees and certificate life; calibre suitability for different quarry; the assessment of applicant suitability; monitoring for domestic violence and the high level of domestic abuse generally; the value of land inspection; the level of knowledge of landowners about land suitability; the use of conditions other than those in 'Guidance'; national level training for licensing officers; the encouragement of conformity to Guidance; the use of the 'Any other lawful quarry' condition, cutting waiting lists for grant and renewal, more efficient licensing processes, increasing acceptance of computerisation in the licensing process (the police see this as key to improving efficiency and cutting costs), medical fitness and the increasing use of police intelligence reports to 'flag up' immediately any certificate holder who had come to the attention of the police.

Law Commission: The Commission announced that it was considering a review of firearms legislation as part of its twelfth programme of work and the BSSC had registered its interest, should such a review take place.

College of Policing: This newly-formed organisation was considering an 'Accredited Professional Practice' for firearms licensing alongside improved training for firearms licensing office staff, both proposals long advocated by the shooting organisations. It was published in 2014.

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