

BRITISH SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

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Cover picture courtesy of the National Rifle Association.

FOREWORD

In 2015 I gazed into my crystal ball and predicted much hard work in the offing with regard to the proposed EU new Firearms Directive: this turned out to be all too true, and with the added complication of 'Brexit'. Thanks in no small part to the considerable efforts of Vicky Ford MEP, who ably steered the draft Directive through the EU Parliamentary process, UK shooters came off better than anticipated, albeit with a still-unresolved situation with regard to the trade in deactivated firearms.

Regrettably, although not surprisingly, the Government has decided not to take up the recommendation of the Law Commission that firearms law be 'codified', i.e. completely rewritten. The BSSC had strongly supported this proposal. It was some compensation that the Government did include in the Policing and Crime Bill some specific changes to the Firearms Acts relating to the borrowing of rifles and shotguns on private premises, the reversion of expanding rifle ammunition from prohibited to Section 1 status and the extension of certificate life if necessary during the renewal process. These had been advocated by the BSSC and will simplify and improve the lot of the shooter and the police. We are most grateful to Brandon Lewis, Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, for guiding these successfully through the Parliamentary process.

The Lord Glentoran CBE

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	The Lord Glentoran CBE
CHAIRMAN	Sir Peter Luff (until March)
VICE-CHAIRMAN	Martyn Jones
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
DEACTIVATED WEAPONS ASSOCIATION	Barry Johnson
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	John Batley
HISTORICAL BREECHLOADING SMALLARMS ASSOCIATION	Derek Stimpson
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Malcolm Plant
MUZZLE LOADERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	Ken Hocking
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Andrew Mercer
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Ken Nash
SCOTTISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNTRY SPORTS	Alex Stoddart
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Mike Wells
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Adam Rowsell
CO-OPTED MEMBER	Jim McAllister
HONORARY LEGAL ADVISER	Mark Scoggins

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC:	Assistant Chief Constable
ATT:	Arms Trade Treaty
BASC:	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BMA:	British Medical Association
CA:	Countryside Alliance
CMS:	Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
CSP2	Second Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
DEFRA:	Department for Environment and Rural Affairs
DWA:	Deactivated Weapons Association
ESSF:	European Shooting Sports Forum
EU:	European Union
FAC:	Firearm Certificate
FACE:	European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation
F&GP:	BSSC's Finance & General Purposes Committee
FELWG:	Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, an ACPO body
FESAC:	Foundation for European Societies of Arms Collectors
GP:	General Practitioner
GTA:	Gun Trade Association
HBSA:	Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association
HMIC:	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HSE:	Health & Safety Executive
IMCO:	EU Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee
IUCN:	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LAG:	DEFRA Lead in Ammunition Group
MEP:	Member of the European Parliament
MEWG:	Home Office Medical Evidence Working Group
MLAGB:	Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain
MoD:	Ministry of Defence
NaBIS:	National Ballistics Intelligence Service
NFLMS:	National Firearms Licensing Management System
NGO:	National Gamekeepers' Organisation <i>or</i> Non-Governmental Organisation
NPCC:	National Police Chiefs' Council
NRA:	National Rifle Association
PoA:	Programme of Action
REACH:	EU Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
RFD:	Registered Firearms Dealer
SACS	Scottish Association for Country Sports
SGC:	Shot Gun Certificate
T&R:	BSSC's Technical & Research Committee
TNIAG:	Themed National Independent Advisory Group
UN:	United Nations
WFSA:	World Forum on Shooting Activities

Overview of the year:

The major concerns in 2016 were the passages of two important pieces of draft legislation: the Policing and Crime Bill and the EU Firearms Directive. The Council had considerable input into both. On her last day as Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Liz Truss announced that there was insufficient evidence to justify a ban on lead shot in ammunition. This represented a major success for shooting. We were delighted to welcome new members the Deactivated Weapons Association and the Scottish Association for Country Sports.

Approved Clubs criteria:

Following further revisions a meeting of the clubs Working Group held at the Home Office on the 24th May, new Approved Clubs criteria were published on the 1st August 2016. The police insisted on retaining their requirement for clubs to keep records of the use of each member's firearm(s) by maker, calibre and serial number. Changes relating to temporary membership will be helpful. The Home Office is intending to introduce an all-electronic application system for all firearms-related applications administered by the Home Office (i.e. section 5, approved clubs and museums). This is to be welcomed, but delays have continued.

Chairman:

Because of pressure of work as Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sir Peter Luff decided not to offer himself for re-election as Chairman of the BSSC. The Council is most grateful to Sir Peter for his leadership and his political counsel during a legislatively very active period.

Council and Committee meetings:

A meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee took place on the 11th February at which were discussed the draft accounts for 2015, possible lobbying costs for the EU Weapons Directive and the Annual Luncheon. It was followed by a meeting of the Technical & Research Committee. Here were discussed firearms fees, deactivated firearms, Scottish legislation, medical evidence, approved clubs criteria, antique firearms, a meeting with the Minister, the Olympics, a successor to Sir Peter Luff and the Directive. The Annual General Meeting was held on the 17th March at which Lord Glentoran was re-elected as President, Martyn Jones was re-elected as a Vice-Chairman, Bill Harriman was re-elected as Treasurer and Jim McAllister was co-opted. The draft accounts for 2015 were adopted and Brittle & Co was adopted as auditor. This was followed by a Council meeting at which the Policing and Crime Bill, the EU Directive and medical evidence and licensing were discussed. The Council meeting was followed by the Annual Luncheon, at which the Council's guests were Detective Chief Superintendent Jo Chilton (Head of NaBIS), Angharad Thomas (Head of the Home Office's Drugs & Firearms Department), Alex Stoddart (SACS) and Martin Parker (Chief Scientist, NaBIS). A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee took place on the 12th May. Matters discussed included the Policing and Crime Bill, firearms fees, firearms Rules, eCommerce, deactivated firearms, Scottish legislation, medical evidence, the Home Office 'Guide', antique firearms, the EU Weapons Directive, the Practitioners' Group, a meeting between BASC and ACC Dave Orford, Chair of NPCC Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, a meeting between BASC, the Countryside Alliance, the National Farmers Union and Essex Police, the Olympics and the vacant position of Chairman. On the 16th June Council met and discussed Committee minutes, the Policing and Crime Bill, the EU Weapons Directive, the Practitioners' Group, the vacant position of Chairman and membership. A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee took place on the 15th

September. Subjects discussed included the BSSC's Forward Plan, the Policing and Crime Bill, firearms fees, the further computerisation of the National Firearms Licensing Management System, deactivation, firearms licensing in Scotland, medical evidence in the grant and renewal of firearm and shotgun certificates, the EU Firearms Directive and the impact of Brexit, the HSE draft Guidance to Explosives Regulations, shooting at the Olympics and Paralympics and the UN Arms Trade Treaty. This meeting was followed by a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee at which the draft budget for 2017 was discussed. A further meeting of the Council took place on the 27th October. Among items on the agenda were: The Council's Forward Plan, the Policing and Crime Bill, deactivated firearms, medical evidence, the draft EU Firearms Directive and guests for the Council's Annual Luncheon. The Technical & Research Committee met on the 1st December. Agenda items included: The Policing and Crime Bill, firearms fees, revision of the Firearms Rules, computerisation, deactivated firearms, Scottish legislation, medical evidence, the legal status of Steyr LP5 and LP50 air pistols, FACE UK, the EU Firearms Directive, the forthcoming meeting of the Practitioners' Group, the Olympics and media training for Association representatives.

Council membership:

Council was delighted to welcome the Scottish Association for Country Sports, which was elected to membership at the Council meeting held on the 17th March. SACS was founded in 1994 to safeguard and promote lawful country sports, including shooting in all its forms and firearms interests. It has over 15,000 members and affiliated groups, including a large Northern Ireland contingent. It is focused on direct member support and firearms licensing cases and is determined to encourage the next generation of shooters and anglers. It will be represented on Council by its Director and Secretary, Alex Stoddart. Also welcomed to our ranks was the Deactivated Weapons Association, which was elected to membership at the Council Meeting held on the 16th June. The DWA was founded in September 2014 to promote the UK's deactivation standard, support trade members and provide a conduit to UK authorities. It has over 50 trade members and has recently introduced membership for collectors. It is represented on Council by Barry Johnson, DWA's Chairman.

Deactivated firearms:

The new EU Regulations on deactivation came into force on the 8th April 2016. On the 6th April GOV.UK published an updated version of the Home Office's document on adapting shotgun magazines and deactivating firearms. These new EU Regulations were open to interpretation and in many respects inferior to the Home Office specifications. As a result there has been a period of uncertainty lasting into 2017 regarding the status and saleability of UK specification deactivations. The Home Office, the Proof Houses, the Deactivated Weapons Association and other stakeholders have been working on resolving this issue and there is known to be similar confusion in other Member States. In due course the Home Office agreed with the Commission an 'EU Plus' version of the EU specification which was a practicable procedure. While discussions continued over a possible dispensation for sales of firearms deactivated to the most recent UK standard, which would allow existing stock to be sold, this remained unresolved during 2016, as did the DWA's lobbying throughout the year to have the Association's draft 2015 specification accepted as a new EU standard. The drafting of this 2015 specification had included all the major deactivation businesses and it was clear, easy to follow, well-illustrated and effective. Simple possession of UK specification deactivations remained legal, however. The Policing and Crime Act, which became law in 2017, created a new offence of selling or gifting, or making available for sale or as a gift, a 'defectively deactivated' firearm within the EU which did not meet the EU

standards. Simple possession of UK specification deactivations remained legal, however. The key change in the Bill's wording achieved by the Deactivated Weapons Association was that for the future there would be no requirement to comply with the EU deactivation specification once Britain had left the EU. The technical specification introduced consequent to the Bill had benefitted from DWA input. This had already been well received by the Home Office and the EU, but progress towards its adoption had been impeded by political fallout resulting from the terrorist shootings in Paris and confusion as to whether 'reactivated deactivations' had been involved. While the Home Office's amendment had put the British Government back in control in the long term where deactivation was concerned, in the short term, however, once Royal Assent had been given in Spring 2017, sale of pre-April 2016 deactivations would without question become illegal. The highly adverse economic impact of this on businesses in the short term had been impressed on the Home Office. Another worthwhile amendment included in the Policing and Crime Bill permitted any sale or gift of a 'defectively deactivated' firearm (or an offer to sell or gift such a firearm) from one museum to another.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Lead in Ammunition Group:

The Group continued to meet, but without shooting or gun trade representation. On her last day as Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Liz Truss announced that there was insufficient evidence to justify a ban on lead shot in ammunition. This is a major success and considerable thanks are due to the Countryside Alliance and the Gun Trade Association for all they did to achieve this outcome. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has decided to reject a call for a ban on lead ammunition for Olympic shooting. Instead members, of which the UK is one, voted at the 2016 World Conservation Congress to '*promote, where feasible, the phasing out of lead shot used for hunting over wetlands and lead ammunition used for hunting in areas where scavengers are at particular risk from the use of lead ammunition*'. Many thanks are due to FACE and other organisations for helping to achieve this outcome.

EU Firearms Directive 91/477:)

Progress on the proposed new Directive quickly slowed down from the EU Commission's original near-impossible intention to complete the legislative process in February. Indeed the process ran on until mid-2017. A draft Directive's progress through the Parliamentary process is the responsibility of a 'Rapporteur', a MEP from one of the Committees involved. In this case the Rapporteur has been Mrs Vicky Ford, a Conservative MEP for the East of England and Chair of the IMCO (internal market) Parliamentary Committee. She proved to be knowledgeable about firearms issues, very down to earth, quick to take on board information and willing to get to grips with detail. The Committee meetings had been unusually well attended and the great majority of MEPs who had spoken were in some degree critical of the draft Directive. Some member states have also been critical, for instance Finland. Besides briefing Vicky Ford whenever necessary or requested, BSSC also met with and briefed Mike Penning, the Home Office Minister, in advance of a meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Brussels on the 10th March, at which some very sensible policy points were agreed regarding the minimum age for the possession of firearms and medical tests (proposing that both to be left to national legislation), the continuing use of semi-automatic firearms by civilians and the continuation of possession in exceptional circumstances of prohibited weapons by civilians for cultural or historical reasons.

The Commission (the Civil Servants) remained in favour of the prohibition of semi-automatic rifles, however, although member states were likely to be able to authorize semi-automatic

firearms in exceptional circumstances. The Commission had proposed that Museum collections of Category A prohibited weapons be deactivated and that they should no longer be able to add prohibited weapons to their collections. Fortunately this was soon mitigated and museums with a good reason to do so would be able to retain their prohibited weapons and add to their collections. The Commission was also minded to subject collectors to controls. Deactivated prohibited weapons were also deemed to require control. There was an intention to restrict certificate life to five years unless some form of continuous monitoring was in place. Some form of medical input to the licensing process was proposed. The computerisation of dealer's records continued to be a Commission intention. There was pressure from shooters to ensure that under-18s can continue to acquire firearms, other than by purchase, to enable them to hunt and target shoot.

The European Sport Shooting Forum, of which FACE and FESAC are members, compiled an excellent 'Common position' paper to which all the European hunting, target shooting, collecting and gun trade Associations have signed up. This unity of views was very important and encouraged large numbers to lobby their MEPs.

The Home Office held a stakeholders meeting to discuss progress on the 24th April. Main points from the Home Office were: the retention of .22 rim-fire semi-automatic rifles was a Home Office red line; a complete ban on semi-automatics did not seem to be achievable; a ban on fully-automatic rifles converted to semi-automatic was likely; maximum magazine capacity could be limited; the location of marks continued to be under discussion; and there was a possibility that firearms made before 1946 would be exempted from the marking requirement. There was support for IMCO's proposal regarding continuous monitoring as a prerequisite for a certificate of longer duration than five years. There was discussion as to the practicality of keeping records of components and of holding records of deactivated firearms: there were an estimated 300,000 deactivated firearms in the EU. The Home Office would prefer deactivated firearms to remain outside the Directive. The Commission accepted that there are difficulties with the deactivation Regulations, so the EU working group would be reconvened.

Much time had been devoted to drawing up comments on Rapporteur Vicky Ford's very thorough draft European Parliament Legislative Resolution. She received about 800 proposed amendments. On the 11th May a draft of IMCO's latest report in draft was received. It was a considerable improvement and Vicky Ford is to be congratulated. Key points included:

- Amendment 13 which covers the status of collectors satisfactorily.
- Amendment 43 which allows acquisition of firearms (other than by purchase) by under-18s.
- Amendment 48 which covers the grant in special cases of authorities for prohibited Category A firearms and ammunition.
- Amendment 49 which includes possession by collectors of Category A items for historical, cultural, scientific, technical, educational, aesthetic or heritage purposes.

Negotiations were far from over, however, and the draft Directive remained mutable. By the end of the year the situation remained very fluid. There had been two EC meetings specifically to evaluate the deactivation Regulations. 'Trilogue' meetings had begun between the EU Commission (the civil servants), the EU Council of Ministers (political heads of interior Ministries) and the EU Parliament (represented by the IMCO Committee). These meetings would determine the final text of the new Firearms Directive. A number of issues had been raised concerning import/export controls and problems relating to implementation,

including dual use items and ‘civil/military cross over’. This arises from the Directive being concerned only with possession of, and trade in, arms for civilians. The EU has separate legislation covering trade in war matériel. Political points to be addressed in the Trilogue meetings included: marking, data filing and exchange of information, the inclusion of a medical review in the licensing process, deactivation, Annex I, including categories A and B, category A exemptions (mostly centre-fire self-loading rifles for target shooting, and items for museums and collectors) and salute and acoustic weapons (i.e. blank firers).

Official ‘trilogue’ and unofficial meetings working to achieve consensus on the draft Firearms Directive have continued. Information had been provided by the BSSC to Cameron Smith, the IMCO Committee’s policy adviser, particularly on marking issues and the use of Category A prohibited firearms for target shooting. Issues where agreement still had not been reached by the end of the year were: folding stocks, firearms converted from full automatic to semi automatic and large capacity magazines for centre-fire firearms, of which only this last might impact on the UK. The negotiated position on magazines by the end of the year seemed to be to limit magazine capacity to 20 rounds for a centre-fire pistol and 10 for a centre-fire long arm. The retention of .22 rim-fire semi-automatic rifles in Category B was still in place. There remained a difference in stance between the EU Commission and Vicky Ford, the *rapporteur* for the draft Directive, on any prohibition based on the appearance of a firearm (particularly the AK47 and AR15). Progress on reaching an agreed draft Directive remained much slower than anticipated.

FACE UK:

The FACE Firearms Experts Group, on which sit Graham Downing (Countryside Alliance) and Matt Perring (BASC), has been very active with regard to the EU Weapons Directive. The Secretary also attended the Group’s meeting on the 4th March. A meeting of FACE UK was held on the 11th October. The agenda included the 2017 subscription and FACE’s successful lobbying on lead in ammunition. Other issues being addressed by FACE are large carnivores, bird hunting in the Mediterranean, trophy hunting and, of considerable concern to the UK, the prophylactic use of chemicals in game feed.

Firearms fees:

The anticipated meeting to review fee levels for firearm certificates, shotgun certificates and registered firearms dealers certificates did not occur during 2016. The Policing & Crime Bill includes a new power to levy a fee for a prohibited weapon authority and to levy increased fees for museum firearms licences and the approval of rifle and muzzle-loading pistol clubs. The Home Office went out to consultation on these in early 2017. The draft EU Firearms Directive sanctions the charging of a fee to cover the administrative cost of the issue of a European Firearms Pass, hitherto free.

Firearms in Scotland:

Airgun owners were able to apply for the new air weapon certificate from 1st July. Unless they held a valid firearm certificate or shotgun certificate, airgun owners were required to have an air weapon certificate by 31st December to avoid committing an offence. Despite a publicity campaign, many airgun owners appear to have remained in ignorance of the requirements in the new legislation. 7,000 were expected to apply, of which 4-5% are expected to be contentious. 30% of applications were returned as they had been completed incorrectly. An estimated 200,000 people own air guns in Scotland and there are estimated to be 500,000 air weapons there. Air weapon owners who have a firearm certificate or shotgun certificate are covered for possession (but not acquisition), so are not required to apply for an Air Weapon Certificate until their FAC or SGC is due for renewal. In a major divergence

from the Home Office 'Guide' the Scottish Government stated that antique airguns that remain functional would require a certificate, even if they were collectors' items and not used. Police Scotland has stated that 11,569 weapons were surrendered during a three-week surrender scheme which ended on the 12th June. An additional 1,000 were handed in thereafter. It is understood that English or Welsh firearm certificates or shotgun certificates granted before the Scottish air weapon legislation became law will be accepted as an authority for a visitor domiciled in England or Wales to bring an air weapon into Scotland until that FAC expires. A visitor would not be able to purchase an air weapon in Scotland, however, without the appropriate Scottish authority. On the expiry of his current firearm certificate or shotgun certificate, an English or Welsh domiciled person will thereafter have to apply for a visitor's permit for an air weapon. A new 'Firearms Practitioners Group-Scotland' has been created to discuss local issues and where necessary to feed them into the UK Practitioners' Group. By the end of the year just over 9,500 applications had been received, and the hand-in had also gone well. Progress was on target. 1,372 applications had been submitted after the 31st October deadline. Late applicants would have to make alternative storage arrangements for their air weapons until they were licensed.

Health & Safety Executive:

The publication of draft guidance for the 'Shooters and Shooting' sub-sector of the Explosives Regulations 2014 continues to be delayed pending the resolution of a storage issue. This is being worked on by the Shooting Sub-Sector Working Group.

Home Office 'Guide on Firearms Licensing Law':

In previous years the Council had been closely involved in the redrafting of parts of the 'Guide'. On the 1st April the Home Office published on-line a revised edition of its firearms 'Guide'. The Policing & Crime Bill included a provision to make the 'Guide' statutory and there would be consultation on aspects of this proposal. The new 'Guide' included the following changes:

- An EU Implementing Regulation that established common guidelines on deactivation standards and techniques for ensuring that deactivated firearms are rendered irreversibly inoperable came into force on 8 April 2016. (Chapters 2 and 28). This was unsatisfactory and has been commented on above;
- Revised guidance for certificate holders and the police, taking account of recommendations made by the HMIC in their report of 15 September 2015 resulting from their inspection on how the firearms licensing system is working in practice. (Chapters 10, 11, 12 and 19) and the new appendix 11, which incorporates the new firearms licensing and medical information;
- An updated list of firearms forms (appendix 2); and,
- A change to the wording of conditions imposed on a firearm certificate by the police (appendix 3) to bring the guidance in line with the wording incorporated in the National Firearms Licensing Management System.

Only parts of the present 'Guide' will become statutory.

Home Office Policing and Crime Bill:

The Law Commission had published its report on 'Firearms Law Reforms to Address Pressing Problems' on the 16th December 2015. Besides identifying a number of pressing problems, the Law Commission also advocated the 'codification' (i.e. complete re-writing) of firearms legislation, a proposal that the Council strongly supported in the knowledge that it would be a major, but ultimately very worthwhile, legislative undertaking. The Government's response was to introduce legislation as part of the Policing and Crime Bill to

address the pressing problems identified by the Law Commission. The Bill set out to define ‘lethality’, ‘component part’ and ‘antique’, to mandate deactivation processes, inspection and marking and to make it an offence to possess, with intent to convert an imitation firearm into a firearm, an article that is capable of being used for such a conversion.

Concerned (rightly as it transpired) that the Government would not commit to codification, given other pressures on Parliamentary time, the BSSC decided to submit a number of additional amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill to the Home Office. These had been advocated by the Council for some time, were non-controversial and were intended to assist both the police and the shooting public.

- The first would replace ‘occupier’ with ‘authorised person’ in Section 11(5) of the 1968 Act and Section 16 of the 1988 Act. This would clarify who may lend a shotgun or estate rifle to a person without a certificate;
- The second would be for all Section 1 firearms used for target shooting to be covered by Home Office Club Approval;
- The third would be to revert expanding ammunition to Section 1;
- The fourth would widen the Section 7 permit to cover any class of Section 5 prohibited weapon or ammunition that could be held on a firearm certificate;
- The fifth would allow the continuation in effect of a certificate beyond its expiry date until the application for renewal is determined, as in the Scottish Air Weapon legislation.

These were tabled at the Report stage of the Bill in the Commons by Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, the Chair of the All Party Shooting and Conservation Group. The Home Office Minister Karen Bradley undertook to ‘study my hon. Friend’s new clauses further, and if there are elements that can sensibly be taken forward without our compromising public safety, I shall be happy to look into whether it might be possible to do that in the Bill’. After this very promising start, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown arranged a meeting to discuss the proposed amendments on the 7th September with the new Minister with responsibility for firearms licensing, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis, Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service. At this meeting the Minister agreed to carry forward amendments which would revert expanding rifle ammunition from Section 5 to Section 1 status and extend the life of firearm certificates and shotgun certificates by eight weeks beyond their expiry date during the renewal process, should the police have not completed their investigations and despite the certificate holder having submitted his renewal application in a timely manner. An amendment would also go forward substituting the term ‘authorised person’ for ‘occupier’ in regard to the lending of shotguns or estate rifles. Section 11(5) of the 1968 Act and section 16 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 enable a person who does not hold a certificate to borrow a shotgun or firearm from the occupier of private premises and to use it in the presence of the occupier (or, in the case of section 16, his ‘servant’). The Law Commission had identified ambiguities surrounding these provisions. To clarify the current law, this new clause would repeal these existing provisions and replaces them with a new section 11A. This aimed to ensure that a person could borrow a rifle or shot gun not only from a person entitled to allow entry to private premises for the purposes of shooting, but also from a certificate holder who had been authorised, in writing, to lend his firearm to persons who do not hold a certificate for use on the aforementioned premises. The borrower would have to be in the presence of either the person who has lent the firearm or another certificate holder (authorised to lend a firearm) while he is in possession of it, and comply with the conditions attached to the lender’s firearm certificate. The new clause will allow the weapon to be used for hunting animals, shooting game or vermin, or shooting at artificial targets. This was an important and generally-welcomed change, as it considerably widened the definition of who may lend a

firearm and removed the need for many casual shooters to be granted certificates for occasional use. The Council is most grateful to the Minister for steering through these changes which will assist both shooters and the police. Other changes in the Bill included an exemption for airsofts from the definition of lethality, thus clearly excluding them from the definition of a 'firearm', and a clause enabling the Minister to define an antique firearm. This would be closely based on the existing Home Office 'Guide'. BSSC met with civil servants to discuss the wording of the clauses concerned with the definition of antique firearms.

Regrettably, the proposal to extend Section 7 temporary permits to cover Section 5 items held on firearm certificate, such as Section 7(1) pistols or pistols used for humane despatch, would not be taken forward by the Home Office. Nor would be the proposal for Home Office Club Approval to be extended to the use of all Section 1 firearms.

Home Office Medical Evidence Working Group (MEWG):

A further meeting of this Home Office Working Group took place on the 28th January. Among the items discussed were fees for medical reports, the need for modifications to the National Firearms Licensing Management System's software and for reviews on progress after 6 and 12 or 18 months. The question of fees for medical reports requested as part of the firearms licensing system remained unresolved during 2016. Under the old system, whereby at grant or renewal of a certificate the Firearms Licensing Office would only seek a response from the applicant's GP if the applicant had stated that he had a medical condition that raised a concern, or other intelligence pointed to such a possible medical problem, such a referral took place in only a small percentage of applications. The intention was to move to a system where every applicant's GP would be contacted. This involved sending a letter to the applicant's GP in the expectation of a brief response made at no charge by the GP. Also requested was that the GP should attach an encoded enduring marker to the applicant's medical records to act as a reminder to the GP should the certificate holder develop at some future date any medical condition which put into question his continuing safe possession of a firearm. The BSSC raised concerns, still un-allayed, over the risk to the security of certificate holders identified as such on their medical records. In the expected minority of cases where a detailed report was required, the applicant was to bear the cost. If yet further reports were required, the police would be expected to pay. Initially in England and Wales the police letter was sent out only after the certificate had been granted because of a number of awaited software modifications to NFLMS. During the summer the system was changed again and the GP letter was sent out on receipt of the application. (In Scotland this process had already been adopted.) There was a growing problem whereby many more GPs than expected have sought to charge a fee for responding to the initial letter of enquiry, despite the statement in the Home Office 'Guide' which makes it clear that there is no expectation of payment for a response to the initial letter. The GP also had the option of not responding to the letter if he had no concerns about his patient, as the police would assume he has no concerns if no response is received after 21 days. Some risk-averse forces were unwilling to proceed with an application without a response, particularly if there is a prior medical history that has given cause for concern. Some practices have indeed opted not to respond to the letter, in some cases because they conscientiously objected to participating in the firearms licensing process, in others because of a lack of funds. All surgeries are independent commercial bodies and the BMA cannot require them to forego a fee or charge a specified level of fee, and a wide range of fees were being charged. The BMA had initially indicated that it would expect most GPs to respond without fee to the police's initial letter. The BMA has twice changed its advice to GPs, however, and not in a helpful way. The Home Office decided to wait and see how the change to letters being sent out on receipt of an application was working in practice. This was

not satisfactory and the British Shooting Sports Council met the Policing Minister Brandon Lewis on the 7th September and requested an early meeting of the Medical Evidence Working Group to address the issue. The BSSC stands by the Home Office ‘Guide’ at ‘Annex A: GP and Police Information Sharing Guide’, page 262 paragraph 12 which states ‘...The applicant or certificate holder should not be disadvantaged, nor the application delayed, by a GP’s refusal to provide medical information.’ The shooting associations cannot sign a blank cheque on behalf of their members for GPs to charge whatever they wish. A new application form for firearm and shotgun certificates was introduced on the 1st April to take account of the new medical evidence procedures, but was not entirely satisfactory and work on it continued into 2017.

Metropolitan Police SO19 Firearms Enquiry Team:

Meetings of the Independent Advisory Group were held on the 8th March and the 25th October. Matters discussed in March included the local impact of the terrorist shootings in Paris, the EU Firearms Directive, the Law Commission, the Policing and Crime Bill, the need for NRA competency cards to use MoD ranges, medical evidence issues, ‘open authorities’ for deer stalking and vermin control, the new firearms application forms, reporting non-attendance at approved clubs and the legal position on multiple shot air pistols. In October the movement of firearms from legal ownership into the illegal pool was discussed, as were Firearms Enquiry Officer training, staffing, medical input regarding the grant and renewal process for certificates, cartridges for deer stalking and telephone renewals.

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

A meeting of the TNIAG was held on the 29th February. Among subjects discussed were the current level of gun crime threat, criminal armourers, the Policing and Crime Bill, the firearms surrender scheme and the EU Directive. A further meeting was held on the 30th June and agenda subjects included the use of antique firearms in crime, illegal importation and the sentencing tariff for those convicted of possession with intent to endanger life. At the 26th September meeting, agenda subjects included the firearms threat and trends, the use of antique firearms in crime, consultation on aspects of the Policing and Crime Bill, stated cases and the EU Directive. On the 12th December, agenda subjects included firearms threats, tackling youth violence and recent legal issues.

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

Andy Marsh having been appointed Chief Constable of Avon & Somerset, ACC Dave Orford of Durham Constabulary succeeded him as Chair of FELWG. A Practitioners Group meeting took place on the 8th June. Matters discussed included new fees for Section 5 prohibited weapon authorities and approved clubs, the Policing and Crime Bill, eCommerce, computerisation of dealers’ records, medical reports, the keeping of records of target shooters’ activities, cartridges suitable for deer stalking, the EU Directive, the new deactivation regulations and the Arms Trade Treaty. A further Practitioners’ Group meeting was held on the 5th December. Matters discussed included the Policing and Crime Bill, computerising dealers’ registers, renewal backlogs, cartridges for deer stalking, the legal status of Steyr repeating air pistols and the EU Directive.

NPCC National Firearms Licensing Management System:

The Council has been closely involved in previous years with the firearms licensing part of the ‘eCommerce’ project, intended to computerise a wide range of police activities. It was therefore very disappointed to learn that this urgently-required modernisation had been

abandoned. Nevertheless the intention remained to do something about NFLMS, the ageing system used in England and Wales, which is nearing the end of its useful life, particularly as the new EU Weapons Directive may require computerised record keeping of dealers' transactions and possibly some form of record keeping of deactivated firearms as well. Any new firearms licensing system will continue to 'stand alone' rather than to be part of a wider system. While the intention had been to replace NFLMS, the likelihood is now that NFLMS will be upgraded rather than replaced. Council anticipates that this will take one or two years to achieve.

Standing Conference on Countryside Sports and Management:

The Secretary attended a meeting held on the 3rd November. There were reports on the legislative situations in the EU and UK. The EU (*via* REACH, a European Union regulation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation & restriction of Chemicals) would be looking at the use of lead in ammunition outside wetlands. This was flagged up as a matter of concern. The impact of Brexit on the sale of UK game meat within the EU remained unclear.

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

The BSSC is an member of World Forum and sits on its Executive Committee. WFSA was represented at the UN's First Extraordinary Meeting on the ATT held in Geneva on the 29th February and 1st March. For the first time WFSA had a seat at the table and was able to participate, which marks a step forward. The WFSA Executive Committee and Plenary meetings were held in Nuremberg on the 2nd and 3rd March. Main topics were the ATT, the EU Weapons Directive, air transit issues regarding the movement of hunting trophies, the increasing concern over ricochets when hunting, and the increasing impact of social media. Baron Gilbert de Turkheim gave a keynote speech on the first 12 years of FACE. Special 20th Anniversary awards were made to Ted Rowe, chair of the Manufacturers' Action Group, and to Carlo Peroni, the first President of World Forum, for their lifetime devotion to the firearms industry. The Shooting Ambassador Award was made to Olegario Vasquez Raña a Mexican businessman who is the national record-holder in many shooting disciplines and the world record-holder in air rifle (1973 and 1975). With regard to the Arms Trade Treaty, a 'Provisional Initial Reporting Template' for the ATT's National Control System has been published and section 1F asks whether 'Arms for recreational, cultural, historical and sporting purposes are included in the national control list (Article 2 (1)(h) & Preamble. 13th para.' There is therefore no doubt that there is an intention to encourage each nation to report on the international movement of civilian firearms, including it seems antiques.

The Second Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (CSP2) took place on 22nd-26th August 2016 in Geneva. 73 States Parties, 30 States Signatories, 5 Observer States, 12 Organizations and 21 International Coalitions of NGOs and associations attended the event. Control Arms had 59 representatives. World Forum was represented, formally and informally, by nine. As of 22nd August, 130 States had signed the Treaty, 85 of which had ratified it. Control Arms focused on its claim that numerous State Parties which had signed or ratified the Treaty (including France, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK), plus Turkey, the USA and Canada had repeatedly violated the provisions of the ATT related to human rights by transferring weapons to Saudi Arabia, which were then used to fuel the conflict in Yemen. Much of the business was concerned with the establishment of a Voluntary Trust Fund, the endorsement of the recording template, reporting periods and deadlines, the development of a web-based version of the template, the establishment of a Working Group on "Transparency and Reporting" and of an ad hoc open-ended Working Group on "Effective Implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty", treaty

‘universalisation’ (i.e. persuading all nations to ratify), approval of the appointment of Mr. Dumisani Dladla as the Head of the Secretariat and arrangements for the Third Conference in 2017.

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