

BRITISH SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2014

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FOREWORD

In June I retired as Chairman, and we are delighted that Sir Peter Luff MP has agreed to take on the role of Chairman, and wish him good luck.

2014 has been another very active year for BSSC. There has been activity on all our usual fronts, relations with the police are much improved regarding Firearms licensing.

We believe that relations with the Home Office are also on a more efficient basis, and we have a better mutual understanding of the problems involved in managing the control of privately owned firearms and all types of sport shooting. We are well aware of the problems facing the BSSC in the forthcoming years, and are working with HMG and our members in attempting to help control gun crime.

The Lord Glentoran CBE

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL (until June) The Lord Glentoran CBE (from June)
CHAIRMAN	The Lord Glentoran CBE (until June) Sir Peter Luff MP (from June)
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones Tobias Ellwood MP (until July)
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	Andrew Mercer
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Ken Nash
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Mike Wells
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)
AFEMS:	Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition
AG:	Aktiengesellschaft (a corporation limited by share ownership)
ATT:	Arms Trade Treaty
BASC:	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIS:	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
BMA:	British Medical Association
CA:	Countryside Alliance
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CIC:	International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation
CIP:	Permanent International Commission for the Proof of Small Arms
CUF:	Criminal Use of Firearms, an ACPO Secretariat
DG:	Directorate General
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
HSE:	Health & Safety Executive
IT:	Information technology
LRO:	Legislative Reform Order
MEP:	Member of the European Parliament
MLAGB:	Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain
MP:	Member of Parliament
NABIS:	National Ballistics Intelligence Service
NGO:	National Gamekeepers' Organisation
NHS:	National Health Service
PACEC:	Public & Corporate Economic Consultants
PoA:	Programme of Action
RFD:	Registered Firearms Dealer
RRO:	Regulatory Reform Order
SGC:	Shot Gun Certificate
TAM:	Terrorism and Allied Matters
T&R:	BSSC's Technical & Research Committee
TNIAG:	Themed National Independent Advisory Group
UKIP:	United Kingdom Independence Party
UN:	United Nations
VVA:	Valdani Vicari & Associati
WFSA:	World Forum on Shooting Activities

Overview of the year:

2014 saw important changes on the Council. Lord Glentoran stood down as Chairman. Fortunately his vast parliamentary experience and knowledge of sports administration will not be lost to Council as he agreed to succeed the Earl of Shrewsbury as President. The shooting community owes Lord Shrewsbury a great debt of gratitude for his indefatigable defence of our sport in the House of Lords. Council was delighted to welcome as Chairman Sir Peter Luff MP, a keen game shot with a strong interest in rural affairs and a former Minister for Defence Equipment.

Following his appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with responsibility for North America, the Middle East and North Africa, Tobias Ellwood stepped down as a BSSC Vice-Chairman, to the great regret of the Council.

A number of ‘hardy perennials’ continued to flourish, including the involvement of General Practitioners in the firearms licensing process, the continuing debate over whether shotgun instructors operating under Section 11(6) need to be registered as firearms dealers, antique firearms in crime, eCommerce, the EU Directive on weapons control, the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill, firearms fees, firearms forms, the Health & Safety Executive’s revised explosives regulations and the Home Office ‘Guide on Firearms Licensing Law’. Progress was made on all of these issues, to which were added the proposal for a dedicated hotline to enable concerns to be expressed about firearms owners, the Law Commission’s legislative review and the report on firearms licensing offices by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary.

ACPO:

During a period when the role of ACPO has been diminishing and the importance of the College of Policing increasing, the BSSC continued to be involved in discussions with the police on issues, some long-running, of concern to the shooting community. During the year confirmation was received that the proposed Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary inspection to look at consistency and efficiency in forces’ application of licensing guidance would take place.

The ACPO initiatives regarding unannounced home visits to check on security of firearms and the use of a dedicated hotline to provide certificate holders and the public at large with a means of advising the police of concerns about gun owners were the subject of considerable activity. The visits progressed with a very low level of complaint from certificate holders, which indicated that the ‘low key’ intelligence-based approach was working, as was the use of trained staff. The dedicated hotline raised considerable concern and anxiety among the shooting and collecting community and the initial hotline has been discontinued in response to this concern. The existing general CrimeStoppers line remains available for the reporting of concerns, whether or not they are firearms-related. Crimestoppers held a meeting on the 3rd December to discuss ACPO’s proposed campaign concerning ‘licensed firearms’ to be launched in the New Year. Shooting representatives attended and discussions with ACPO and Crimestoppers continue.

ACPO/BMA Protocol:

Another long running discussion concerned the role of General Practitioners in the firearms licensing process. This has arisen after it became clear that in some instances of serious misuse of legally-possessed firearms, the certificate holder had had significant health problems. The Home Office medical evidence working party, which includes the police, the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council and shooting organizations met on the 11th March. This was concerned mainly with pilot projects on GP involvement in Durham and Wiltshire and with the evolving process of GP involvement in firearms licensing in Scotland. Also discussed were GP record keeping and the costs of GP involvement.

Further meetings were held at the Home Office on the 8th July and 23rd September. In July updates were given on the pilot schemes involving General Practitioners in Durham and Wiltshire. A possible wider pilot scheme in Essex was discussed.

The meeting on 23rd September was largely discussed the setting up or continuation of pilot schemes with GP surgeries in Durham, Wiltshire and Essex and the development of a national protocol for GPs to follow. There had been reports of problems arising from medical reporting in Durham, Hampshire and Lincolnshire. These were raised with ACPO, which reports that "There is a national working party led by the Home Office which includes BASC, BSSC, NGO, FELWG, BMA, NHS, and others who sometimes attend to help inform the meeting such as a representative from the Information Commissioner's Office. The reason there is a varied approach at present, is that there are a number of pilots running in forces. Some pilots such as Durham are at the application stage, whilst others such as Wiltshire and Essex, seek to improve information sharing in the lifetime of a certificate, but asking GP's to discreetly mark a certificate holder's GP record to help inform police if risk factors become apparent." Constructive consultations continue.

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

At the TNIAG meeting on the 20th May discussions covered problems arising from internet purchases of firearms-related material and the very rapid growth of parcel post to serve the internet trade. One company handled between half a million and one million parcels a night at East Midlands Airport. Vetting of each package was impractical. At the meeting on the 30th September discussions centred on the results of three local firearms amnesties in the Midlands, the criminal misuse of antique firearms and the Home Office's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, which has a section dealing with supply of firearms to organised crime groups and street gangs.

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

The Practitioners Group, at which representatives of ACPO Firearms & Explosives Licensing Working Group (FELWG), BSSC and the Home Office meet to discuss matters relating to firearms licensing, met on the 12th February.

Among subjects on the agenda were the forthcoming Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, import licensing changes relating to antique firearms, medical reporting as part of the certificate application system, Section 11(6) (this permits the use of a shotgun, without holding a shot gun certificate, at a time and place approved for shooting at artificial targets by the relevant chief officer of police, and the long-running discussion arises from differing police practice as to whether a registered firearms dealer's certificate is needed by commercial instructors providing shotguns for their clients' use), and the computerisation of dealers' records.

The continuing computerising of firearms licensing is another long-running subject for discussion. There had been slippage, but it was expected that 'on-line' applications for the grant, renewal and variation of certificates on the police's 'eCommerce' system would become available in 2015. There has been strong shooter support for on-line applications, but paper application forms would remain available for those who prefer to apply 'off-line'),

The Practitioners Group met again on the 23rd April. Agenda items included Visitor's Permits, medical reporting, 'one for one' variations and the ongoing debate about the licensing status of those giving shooting instruction and making available shotguns at Section 11(6) clay shooting grounds.

At the meeting on the 16th October there was discussion of a number of issues including firearms fees, eCommerce, the new national version of Shogun (now the Scottish national firearms licensing system), the inspection of firearms licensing offices by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies, medical reporting, risk management in firearms licensing and the ACPO home visit and 'hotline' initiatives.

The reduction of the number of FELWG meetings a year to two has inevitably slowed progress, but the Practitioners meetings allow stakeholder contributions to be fed into its deliberations and much beneficial fine tuning is achieved by exchanges of views in the Practitioners' Group.

ACPO TAM 'Solitaire':

The Secretary attended a meeting with ACPO Terrorism and Allied Matters on the 30th June concerning progress on the roll-out of Solitaire, designed to raise dealers' and Home Office Approved Rifle Clubs' awareness of potential extremist or terrorist threats. Firmer active central control of the programme was to be developed, the content of the presentation was to be reviewed and additional means of reaching the shooting community would be considered. Intermittent 'roll-outs' continued at force level.

Antique firearms:

EU Regulation 258/2012 has made new requirements for the import of firearms, component parts and accessories manufactured after 1899 and the Regulation came into force in the UK on the 1st April 2014. The Gun Trade Association had been in close contact with BIS Import Licensing, and had produced guidance for members which would sit alongside BIS Notice to Importers 2852. In essence all firearms manufactured after 1899 will now need an import licence to bring them into the UK. There is no exemption for post 1899 antique firearms. It should be noted that this applies to import and does not affect domestic controls on firearms or exemptions to them.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, which extended the prohibition on the possession of firearms to those who had received suspended sentences, received Royal Assent on 13 March 2014 and came into effect on the 14th July. This Act also extended the class of firearms to which this prohibition applied to include Section 58(2) antiques held as curiosities or ornaments. It also increases the maximum penalty to life imprisonment for those convicted of manufacture or possession for sale or transfer of prohibited weapons or ammunition.

Although no further legislation is envisaged regarding antique firearms, the Home Office and police continue to seek measures that would reduce the availability of antique firearms to criminals. A meeting was held on the 14th May which included the Home Office, police, National Ballistics Intelligence Service, Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association, Heritage Arms Study Group, Arms & Armour Society, Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain, Royal Armouries and BSSC. It was proposed that paragraph 8.2 of the Guide be reworded to strengthen the test for ‘curiosity or ornament’. The main discussion point was on how to limit acquisition of late 19th century antique breechloading revolvers by criminals. Examples of criminal supply of antiques were outlined by the police. Occasional perverse Court decisions continued to be made, including a recent finding of a 9mm Browning High Power pistol to be an antique. It was noted that many antique dealers only occasionally sold antique firearms and many were not RFDs. There was discussion of the role of the internet and stoppages at the UK border.

Both the BSSC and the Home Office have held discussions with the British Antique Dealers Association on advice to dealers in antique firearms who are not RFDs. Draft advisory leaflets have been circulated for comment by the Home Office.

A further meeting of the Home Office Working Group on Antiques took place on the 16th September. There was discussion about the financial value of the antique firearms trade and how people collected. The refinement of the ‘obsolete calibres’ list was reported on. Mark Murray-Flutter from the Royal Armouries was developing an electronic version which was designed to be more user-friendly.

Approved Clubs criteria:

A further meeting with the Home Office and police was held on the 25th July. The main topics were the keeping by the club of record of members’ shooting activity, the redrafting of the Home Office’s ‘Approval of Rifle and Muzzle-loading Pistol Clubs’ leaflet, last issued in 1998, and the updating of the ‘Guide’ to reflect the changes to the leaflet.

Work continued on the redrafting of the Home Office’s ‘Approval of Rifle and Muzzle-loading Pistol Clubs’ leaflet. A meeting was held on the 3rd October, mainly to address police concerns as to reporting procedures for members who had left the club or had not shot for twelve months and to resolve issues arising from circumstances where the Club Secretary (or other responsible club officer holding the club firearm certificate) lived in a police area other than the one in which the club operated.

Computerisation of dealers’ registers:

A major issue for registered firearms dealers during the year was the anticipated requirement to comply with Article 4 of the EU Weapons Directive 2008/51/EC. The Home Office

advised that, from 31 December 2014, paper based records would not be acceptable and dealers would be required to keep their register on a computerised filing system for a minimum of 20 years.

On the 23rd December, however, the Home Office changed its advice and stated that there would be no mandatory requirement to computerise. Dealers might therefore continue to use manual registers if they so wished.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP11):

This was held in Quito. A motion initiated by UK conservation organisations seeking an immediate ban on lead in ammunition (not just shot and not just for hunting) was changed after intervention from FACE (the European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation. BSSC is a member of FACE UK) and CIC (the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation) but could lead to a move for a ‘gradual phase-out’ of lead in ammunition. FACE considers such a ban is unacceptable without evidence, as does the BSSC.

Council and Committee meetings:

The Finance & General Purposes and the Technical & Research Committees both met on the 26th February. The F&GP Committee considered membership, the draft accounts for 2013, annual increases in subscriptions and the arrangements for the Annual Luncheon. The T&R Committee discussions included firearms fees, revisions to the Firearms Rules, computerisation of dealers records, Approved Clubs criteria, the Health & Safety Executive’s review of explosives regulations, UN issues, the EU Directive on weapons control, ‘smart gun’ technology and shot revolvers.

The Annual General Meeting took place on the 20th March. At the AGM the accounts for 2013 were approved and the following were elected as Officers: As President, Lord Glentoran (succeeding the Earl of Shrewsbury), as Chairman, Sir Peter Luff MP (succeeding Lord Glentoran), as Vice-Chairmen, Tobias Ellwood MP and Martyn Jones, and as Treasurer, Bill Harriman. Jim McAllister was co-opted. Sir Peter Luff formally took over from Lord Glentoran as Chairman at the Council meeting on the 19th June. The AGM was followed by a Council meeting at which were discussed, *inter alia*, firearms fees and progress on the PACEC report.

Later that afternoon the Council held its annual luncheon at the Army & Navy Club. It was addressed by Owen Paterson, the Secretary of State for the Environment, who spoke about the beneficial effects of shooting on the countryside. The Minister’s interest in the impact of any rise in firearms fees on the rural economy has ensured that the process of fees negotiations had actively continued. Other guests of the Council included Peter Taylor (Chair of the Practitioners Group), Fraser Lamb (Chief Inspector, Firearms & Explosives Licensing, Police Scotland), Ann Faulkner (Explosive Policy lead, Health & Safety Executive) and Dr Edward Impey (Master of the Armouries, Royal Armouries).

A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee was held on the 22nd May. Among issues discussed were: Firearms fees, Firearms Rules, General Practitioner involvement in firearms licensing, the Home Office ‘Guide on Firearms Licensing Law’, legislative change, approved

clubs, pistol shooting, antique firearms, the Council's Forward Plan, the Health & Safety Executive's review of regulations, the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice document and the Law Commission's proposed review of firearms legislation.

The Council met on the 19th June. It discussed Scottish devolution, legislative reform, EU lobbying, the review of the EU Directive on weapons control and the Council's substantial input, the PACEC report on 'The Value of Shooting' and outcomes from the recent meeting of the Foundation of European Societies of Arms Collectors. The retirement of Colin Greenwood after 43 years was minuted. He had produced more papers for BSSC than anybody else, providing the Council and the Gun Trade Association with high quality support for their defence of the shooting sports. His output on the fees issue alone in the past four years had been extraordinary.

Meetings of the Finance & General Purposes and the Technical & Research Committees were held on the 11th September. The F&GP Committee was concerned with agreeing a draft budget for 2015 to be presented to Council on the 9th October. Among issues discussed at the T&R Committee were firearms fees, deactivated firearms, the Scottish air weapons Bill, GP involvement in firearms licensing, revisions to the Home Office 'Guide', legislative reform, approved clubs criteria, the HSE's explosives review, the Arms Trade Treaty and the PACEC report.

A Council meeting was held on the 9th October. Among issues discussed were the proposed 'Crimestoppers' campaign to provide a dedicated telephone line to enable the reporting of certificate holders who were causing concern, fees, the Air Weapon and Licensing (Scotland) Bill and Approved Clubs criteria. The budget for 2015 was agreed.

A meeting of the Technical & Research Committee was held on the 4th December at which the firearms fees consultation, the Scottish air weapons Bill, GP involvement in firearms licensing, contingency planning, revisions to the Home Office 'Guide', legislative reform, approved clubs criteria, the HSE's explosives review, the EU Directive on weapons control, the Arms Trade Treaty and the Olympics were discussed.

eCommerce for firearms licensing:

BSSC continued to be closely involved in the eCommerce for firearms licensing project. On the 13th October a workshop was held at Software AG, the contractors for the eCommerce system which was intended to computerise many police activities, including firearms licensing. It would improve speed, efficiency and consistency. Shooting representatives were invited to comment on the user-friendliness of the front end program, which had been revised to take into account past comments from shooting representatives. This was impressive. The major concern was over slippage as initial police trials had not yet taken place and there had already been about one year's delay. Nevertheless it was hoped at this time that the system would be operational for the first wave of 24 participating forces by early 2016.

EU Directive on weapons control:

A major meeting on the EU Weapons Directive took place in Brussels on the 11th February, as a result of Directorate General Home's pressure to take over responsibility for the EU Weapons Directive from DG Enterprise and Industry and the latter's resistance to this move. The meeting was arranged by Veronique Mathieu MEP to enable discussion on the

Commission's document 'Firearms and the internal security of the EU' published on the 21st October. BSSC was represented by Graham Downing (Countryside Alliance).

Fabio Marini, Head of Task Force Firearms, DG Home claimed that 6 in 10 Europeans believed the level of firearms crime would increase in the next 10 years. It was claimed that loopholes in the law enabled the diversion of legally owned firearms and that almost half a million firearms were unaccounted for. DG Home was proposing:

- New standards on marking and on deactivation and reactivation
- Common standards on serial numbers
- Better disposal rules
- Action on new technology such as 3D printing
- Action on better police intelligence through improved communication and border controls

Sylvia Kainz-Huber, Deputy Head of Unit, Defence, Aeronautic and Maritime Industries, DG Enterprise and Industry, mounted a strong defence of its actions. She discussed computer records, the European Firearms Pass, and said that member states were free to apply stricter rules if they so wished. The Commission had in 2010 presented an analysis on replicas and their conversion and concluded that these are already covered by the Directive. Extending the scope of the Directive to cover other replicas had been considered inappropriate, as had been the reduction of categories from 4 to 2. The Commission had asked CIP (the Permanent International Commission for the Proof of Small Arms) to develop a protocol for common deactivation standards. The Commission was launching a formal evaluation on the Directive and how its provisions have been applied in member states. The Commission would then come forward with proposals if necessary. Nothing was to be decided in advance.

Yves Gollety, President of AECAC, the European Association of the Civil Commerce of Weapons, spoke. He considered that further harmonisation would run contrary to the principles of the Directive. The Directive required that weapons be recorded and that owners be licensed. Member states had computerised records and detailed registers. Reactivation was not a problem. There was no need for new legislation, rather the existing legislation should be fully enforced. Reopening the Directive would result in loss of competitiveness of 20,000 European small and medium enterprises in competition with Japanese and US firearms manufacturers.

Manuel Esparrago, Head of Political Affairs at FACE, the European Hunters federation, criticised Mr Marini's presentation, which he said confused legal and illegal firearms. Mrs Malmström was wrong in claiming that the legal market feeds the illegal market. It was not true that guns could be sold without control. DG Home's proposed measures would impinge on the competency of member states and the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The figures for firearm misappropriation used by DG Home in its communication were vague and inaccurate.

The EU Commission undertook surveys for the evaluation of the 'Firearms Directive', using the Technopolis Group, Ernst and Young and VVA Consultants. In co-operation with FACE-UK the BSSC prepared a detailed response sent on the 28th April on behalf of UK shooting organisations. On the 12th June the Secretary was interviewed by Ernst and Young. Subjects covered included the impact of the Weapons Directive on the UK; the number of hunters and sport shooters; problems relating to transit at Schiphol which now required a Dutch Customs transit license in addition to an EFP; disguised firearms and civilian firearms which look like

military firearms; certificate life; sound moderators; European Firearms Passes and British Visitors Permits; criminal use of legally owned firearms; 3D guns; the growth in internet shopping; the impact of improved intelligence gathering by the police on crime figures; preservation of dealers' records; brokers and subsidiarity. The Gun Trade Association made three responses to the survey.

As part of its review of the EU Firearms Directive, the EU Commission held a meeting at very short notice on the 9th July about 'Common guidelines on deactivation standards and techniques'. The Proof Houses, BSSC and GTA were able to brief the Home Office prior to the meeting. The EU Commission explained that the status of the proposed deactivation standards had yet to be resolved. It was currently checking the text of the Directive (which at present specifically excluded deactivated firearms) and consulting its legal services. There were some calls for the specifications to cover ammunition although this was seen by others as being too specialist and falling outside the remit of the CIP. A major topic was which 'national entities' might be authorised to deactivate firearms. The Commission seemed sympathetic to a suggestion that Member States which did not have their own proof house should be allowed to rely on the deactivation and verification procedures adopted by other Member States. Although there appeared to be some support for a system of regulation or accreditation for those allowed to deactivate firearms, there was a strong view that this should be left to individual member states to determine and that there were already criteria in the Directive governing the good standing of dealers and gun owners. No decision was taken as regards the possible requirement to keep records of deactivated firearms. There was stress on the importance of ensuring against reactivation through strict standards and verification.

The EU organised a 'high level conference' with police chiefs on "The Firearms Strategy: One Year Later" which took place on the 24th October. The shooting interests were represented by FACE and AFEMS (the Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition) and collecting by Stephen Petroni of FESAC. This appeared to have been focused on the illegal cross-border arms trade in the Balkans, rather than on civilian firearms issues. Although no longer directly involved with the EU Weapons Directive, Commissioner Malmstrom continued to press for tougher domestic legislation, including a ban on under-18s shooting; tougher regulations on transporting firearms (locked box in a car); and a limit on the number of guns that could be kept at home. She continues to claim a link between legally-held weapons and crime. It is believed that some Commission civil servants shared her views and would continue to champion them. With a new set of MEPs FACE had successfully worked to create a new hunting 'Intergroup' (the equivalent of an All Party Committee). UKIP is now the largest UK party in Brussels and has shown positive interest in hunting issues. Lord Hill, the new UK Commissioner, has been briefed on firearms issues by the Countryside Alliance. Within the EU there was talk of a 'common approach' (i.e. greater convergence of national legislations) and 'a more balanced approach between the internal market and security policies objectives' (the present Directive was intended to facilitate the internal market, so this suggested that more weight would be given to security). The BSSC awaits with great interest the report which is expected by the end of July 2015.

Firearms fees:

During April the BSSC was much involved in discussions with the Home Office on a revised structure for certificate fees, which had not risen since 2001. They would be based on inflation and the evolving eCommerce computerised system being developed for a range of police activities, including firearms licensing. This promised increased efficiency and

therefore lower cost, and BSSC, the GTA and the Home Office were able to agree reasonable increases along with a need for future fees reviews on a regular basis. It was understood however that Home Office Ministers had decided not to lay a fees Order in the summer, presumably because of a concern that there would be an adverse reaction in rural constituencies in advance of the general election in May 2015. Following this decision, BSSC member Associations strongly lobbied Ministers to go out to consultation on the scale of fees agreed with the Home Office, as the proposed increases were acceptable. This lobbying was very successful and the short consultation period ran from the 27th November to the 29th December. The results were keenly awaited.

Firearms in Scotland:

The Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill was announced on the 14th May. The main points of the Bill relating to air weapons were: it applied to air weapons only in the power range 1 joule to 12 ft lbs.(i.e. not ‘specially dangerous’); the duration of the certificate would be for 5 year and would cost approximately the same as for a Firearm Certificate, a ‘verifier’(a referee) would be required for the application for a certificate; 18 years of age was mandated for purchase of an air weapon, but those aged 14-17 could hire, borrow or use one (but not for hunting for sport); there would be a ‘good reason’ requirement (targets on private land, events, air weapon clubs, collecting, pest control and protecting livestock and crops) and visitor’s permits. There would be special conditions for ‘clubs’ and ‘events’. There would be both statutory conditions and the opportunity for the Chief Constable to apply additional conditions ‘as required’. Those already holding firearm and/or shot gun certificates would be accepted as being ‘fit persons’ and ‘not prohibited’, and would not need to apply for an air weapon certificate for possession and use, should they require one, for the life of their present Firearm Certificate or Shot Gun Certificate, but would still need to apply for an air weapon certificate should they wish to acquire one or when their FAC or SGC expired. Individual air weapons would not be listed on the certificate. There would be security requirements.

Subsection (2) of the Bill was of interest. It provided that an air weapon certificate would remain valid beyond its stated expiry date, provided that the holder had applied to the Chief Constable for a renewal before that expiry date and the Chief Constable had not yet approved or rejected that renewal. The effect of this section would be that the holder would not have to surrender his air weapons immediately on expiry of his certificate. This very good idea could be adopted with great advantage for Firearm Certificates and Shot Gun Certificates.

The Bill was referred to the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Regeneration Committee for consideration. This Committee tabled a series of questions to the Scottish government relating to ‘fitness’ to possess an air weapon, ages of those who currently offend with air weapons, accompanying regulations and guidance, the linking of specific air weapons to a certificate, disposal of unwanted air weapons, shooting clubs and coterminous certificates. It also made a public call for evidence, particularly with respect to the following three points:

- In what ways will the creation of an air weapons licensing system in Scotland contribute to preserving public order and safety, reducing crime and advancing public health policy?

- Is there sufficient provision, or sufficient capacity to provide, suitable numbers of air weapons clubs across all areas of Scotland for use by registered air weapons owners/users?
- How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for personal/recreational reasons?

The BSSC, BASC Scotland, the Gun Trade Association and the Scottish Air Rifle and Pistol Association had all submitted further comments on the Bill and were ‘witnesses’ (i.e. gave oral evidence) at the Local Government and Regeneration Committee meeting on the 19th November. They explained that the Bill would serve little practical purpose and air gun crime was anyway continuing to fall. They supported education as an alternative to licensing, raised the issue of fee levels, explained the importance of informal target shooting, pointed out the lack of an air weapon club structure and discussed security, trade issues and lethality.

Interestingly, the Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Police Federation had also submitted adverse comments on the Bill. The Law Society of Scotland considered that the test for ‘good reason’ should be the same as for shotguns, that the sale of air gun ammunition should be controlled, that keen visiting competition shooters should be granted a permanent competition certificate in place of a visitors permit and that there should be financial compensation for surrendered air weapons to discourage sale into the wrong hands before the Bill came into force. The Scottish Police Federation supported stricter controls (but did not explain what these should be). Its objection was based on the inability of the existing staffing and IT systems to cope. Nor had the costs of dealing with the recording and destruction of surrendered air weapons been included and the costing was considered inadequate. Coupled with earlier comments from the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents’ President, Chief Superintendent David O’Connor, who 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", it appeared that organizations with experience of firearms licensing had significant concerns about the Bill.

Health & Safety Executive:

Following the three meetings with the HSE in 2013, concerning the Executive’s review of Explosives Regulations, a further meeting was held on the 18th February, attended also by police, re-enactment and caving interests. This was very useful and productive, but work remains to be done on the HSE’s draft ‘Overarching principles’ paper and on ‘Sub-sector specific’ guidance being prepared by BASC, BSSC and other shooting and gun trade associations This would cover recreational use (including re-enactment and caving) and the retail gun trade. Both of these documents were at an early stage and some of the fine detail in the Regulations had yet to be confirmed.

At a meeting on the 15th May the HSE advised that their Board had passed the ‘entry level guidance’ and had expressed thanks to the Working Sub-Groups who had achieved this very tight deadline. The new Regulations would come into effect on the 5th October. HSE had prepared a draft leaflet on ‘Storing and Selling Shooters’ Supplies Safely’ and a draft ‘Retailer’s Risk Assessment Checklist’. The HSE also intended that advice on explosives in the domestic environment would at some point become available. The remainder of the

meeting was devoted to discussing the draft sub-sector 'Guidance', compiled by Matt Perring (BASC) with the help of Dr Sandy Robertson (MLAGB). Points discussed were definitions, layout options, the need to differentiate between 'Hazard Type' and 'Hazard Division', possible confusion over the use of the terms 'percussion cap' and 'primer', 'prohibited persons' (there is a different definition to that in the Firearms Act), artillery and re-enactment, differences in storage practice at game fairs and re-enactment events and UN definitions of 'small arm' and 'propellant'. It was expected that some more work on sub-sector guidance was required before signing off by the HSE. Thanks was again expressed to the Shooters and Retail Trade sub-group which was further ahead than most groups, had produced well-rounded subsector guidance and had been very positive in its attitude. Our thanks for their major contributions must go particularly to Matt Perring and Sandy Robertson.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary:

The HMIC was to carry out an inspection of 12 police forces' Firearms Licensing Offices. HMIC is not a government or police organisation, but speaks on behalf of the public. It had formed an 'External Reference Group' which met for the first time on the 11th December and on which there is representation from ACPO, BSSC, BASC, the National Gamekeepers Organisation, the Gun Control Network, the Home Office, NABIS, the College of Policing, the Crown Prosecution Service and the BMA. The 12 forces were yet to be finalised. Terms of reference were discussed. It was anticipated that the report would include consistency of the application of the firearms acts, risk management and training for firearms licensing managers.

Home Office 'Guide on Firearms Licensing Law':

The old hard copy Home Office 'Guidance' of 2002 was superseded in October 2013 by an on-line publication titled 'Guide on Firearms Licensing Law October 2013'. The 'Guide' is a consensus document which is invaluable for the facilitation of every-day activities involving the use, trade in and licensing of firearms. Being on-line it is much easier to revise and a programme of further review began in 2014, a major co-operative activity between the Home Office, the police and the shooting organisations.

Over the year BSSC commented in detail on the following chapters and appendices: Chapters 2 (Definition and classification of firearms and ammunition), 3 (Prohibited Weapons), 5 (Restrictions on the possession, handling and distribution of firearms and ammunition), 6 (Exemptions from the requirement to hold a certificate), 8 (Antique firearms), 10 (Firearm Certificate procedures), 11 (Shotgun Certificate procedures), 12 (Assessing suitability), 13 (Good reason to possess a firearm), 15 (Permits), 18 (Rifle and muzzle-loading pistol clubs) and 28 (Import and export of firearms) plus Appendices 3 (Conditions for firearm certificates), 4 (young persons and firearms law) and 5 (Antique firearms-obsolete calibres).

Home Office Firearms Rules:

Work with the Home Office continued on new firearms application forms relating to grant and renewal and the new short form for variations, on certificates and on temporary permits. The applications process has been significantly improved. Referees are no longer required to sign either the application form or one of the photographs, which remove potential delaying

factors in an increasingly computerised process. Mike Eveleigh (BASC) worked tirelessly on the forms working group and contributed considerably to both re-drafting and to the removal of errors during a long drawn out process. The new application forms for certificate applications and variations have been very well received. Work on forms is expected to continue in 2015.

Home Office legislative change:

The Council had been working for some years with ACPO to draw up a list of legislative changes that might be achieved, without recourse to primary legislation, by means of a Regulatory, or Legislative, Reform Order. The agreed list was:

- To amend Section 11(4) Firearms Act 1968 (as amended) to read “not exceeding .22” rim-fire” instead of “not exceeding .23””. This was to clarify the type of rifles that could be used at a miniature rifle range or shooting gallery.
- To extend the life Registered Firearms Dealers’ certificates of registration from three to five years.
- To amend the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended) so that where there is currently reference to “occupier” this is changed to “owner, occupier or other properly authorised person”.
- To amend Section 7 of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended) to permit Section 5 prohibited weapons and ammunition to be held on a temporary permit where necessary.

Section 1 of the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 gives Ministers certain powers to make orders (“legislative reform orders”) that remove or reduce burdens resulting directly or indirectly from legislation, and section 2 makes similar provision in relation to orders that promote principles of better regulation. Section 3 sets out facts that the Minister proposing to make a legislative reform order has to address. They include positive tests (need for legislation, proportionality and fair balance of interests) and negative ones (no removal of necessary protection, no unreasonable interference with rights and freedoms, no constitutional significance). The Minister can only proceed if satisfied that all relevant section 3 tests are passed.

The Home Office Minister decided, however, that there would be difficulties in using a RRO or LRO for three of the four proposed changes, so this initiative was dropped. This was a most disappointing outcome although it was understood that the Home Office would consider other legislative options. It shortly became clear that another opportunity to amend legislation had emerged when the Law Commission began its review of firearms legislation (see below).

Japanese Embassy:

In May the Council responded to a very detailed questionnaire from the Japanese Embassy about legislation affecting, and the organisation of, competitive shooting with firearms and air weapons. Considerable thanks were received for producing such a comprehensive reply at very short notice.

Law Commission:

The Law Commission began a review of firearms legislation in September. Professor David Ormerod QC, one of the Law Commissioners, anticipated twelve months of intense dialogue with stakeholders. In his view firearms law did not function as well as it might and it was in the ‘top three’ of pieces of criminal legislation in need of reform. Prosecutors required specialist advice even to decide on prosecution, and the Act needed the support of a group of ‘sub-legislative’ documents to function. The situation regarding the definition of ‘antique’ was a microcosm of the Act’s definitional problems. It was left up to the jury to decide, sometimes with very differing results. The intention was to focus on modifying and simplifying firearms offences and achieving clear definitions of all relevant terms, including ‘antique’. It was noted that the EU was also undertaking a review of weapons legislation. The Law Commission’s review had Ministerial support as a scoping exercise, but Ministers did not wish to commit a new government. It was expected that the Law Commission would report in 2016. On the 23rd December the BSSC submitted to the Commission a 27 page paper covering proposed changes to the Firearms Act 1968.

PACEC:

During the year PACEC (Public & Corporate Economic Consultants) continued the updating and expansion of its 2006 report on ‘The Economic and Environmental Impact of Sporting Shooting’, a project in which the BSSC was a major stakeholder. Over 16,000 responses were received, an excellent response far larger than the total received for the 2006 report. Coverage was much wider, with greater emphasis on target shooting and the commercial aspects of the sport. Besides the updated report, a shorter brochure ‘The Value of Shooting’ was prepared for more general distribution and both were launched in July. ‘The Value of Shooting’ is available on <http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/> or the BSSC’s website.

The media launch went well. *Countryfile* (audience 5-6m) gave the report lengthy coverage on 6th July. This was followed by a BBC poll on whether or not shooting was good for the countryside, resulting in a resounding vote in favour. A letter signed by the organisations which had commissioned the report was published in the Times on Monday 7th July. There was good regional coverage in the media and The Value of Shooting was available for the party conference season.

Standing Conference on Countryside Sports:

The Conference held a meeting on the 13th November. Business included an update on UK and EU Parliamentary matters, the work of FACE and FACE UK, the growing pressure regarding the use of lead in ammunition, invasive non-native species, a presentation on ‘The Value of Shooting’ and a presentation by the Law Commission on the Wildlife Bill, which was concerned with shooting: hunting, the Common Agricultural Policy and fishing were outside its remit. It was anticipated that there will be intense lobbying from animal rights groups.

UN Arms Trade Treaty:

There is a lot of activity aimed at establishing how the ATT would fit together with existing UN initiatives such as the Small Arms Programme of Action which deals with illicit trade

and with the UN Vienna Firearms Protocol. A wide range of Non Governmental Organisations are seeking a role in the implementation and administration of the ATT. The infrastructure for the implementation of the UN Arms Trade Treaty is being created. There will be a well-funded secretariat in Geneva. Concern has been expressed over the imprecise language of parts of the Treaty which may create practical problems in the future. So far as civilian firearms are concerned, it seems certain that the Vienna Firearms Protocol will be the controlling legislation, and there have been no calls for its modification. The UN's Programme of Action on illicit firearms is increasingly focusing on new technology, particularly 'smart guns' which can be programmed to prevent use by third parties, and 3D printers.

53 nations having ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, it entered into force on the 24th December. Anti-gun NGOs have been jostling to become involved in the implementation process. There is talk that the treaty is only a beginning, and there will be pressure to strengthen it.

World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA):

The Secretary attended the World Forum's Executive Committee meeting and Plenary Session in Nuremberg on the 5th and 6th March. WFSA had concentrated its efforts on lobbying at the UN during the "Fifth Biennial Meeting of States to Consider Implementation of the Programme of Action" from the 16th-20th June (the PoA deals with illegal trafficking in small arms). It has also been active in supporting shooters in Latin America where there are well-funded anti-firearms initiatives, on environmental aspects of the shooting sports and on promoting the further involvement of the World Forum, representatives of shooting organisations and the shooting industry in the work of the UN on small arms issues.

World Forum will be participating in the UN General Assembly First Committee meetings in New York in October. The First Committee deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community.

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