



Sportsman's Association News

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by Mike Wells, General Secretary

A HANDLE ON KNIFE LAWS

This month, a look at proposed new knife laws and firearms licensing costs...

The Government proposes to ban all mail-order knife sales and state that transactions must be face-to-face, with age verification that the buyer must be over the age of 18.

This action, if it becomes law, will put a lot of knife makers and knife dealers out of business. The government wants to win Brownie points because we do not have enough police officers, the lowest number in 30-years, down 20,000 since 2010! We have also had the largest increase in crime in a decade!

A knife ban will never work; there will continue to be stabbings, as it is more of a cultural problem, where criminals have no fear of the law and no discipline. I, like many others, carried a knife as a Scout throughout my teens, but then I was taught respect. Knife crime was very rare; the Krays knifed Jack McVite and killed him but that was Gangland London in the 60s.

On the block

Every household has a cutlery drawer and knife block, I have around 30 knives. So, anyone over 18 can buy a knife in a shop, will that prevent knife crime? The criminal will just help himself.

The Government have no idea that handmade knives cost £300-£400, they are highly collectable. The criminal will get hold of a knife costing £6.99 or less; this has not been thought through. Do the authorities not know that a knife can easily be made? Shivs are made by convicts from toothbrushes!

Former Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said he would never penalise a majority because of the actions of a minority, and then went on to ban .22 pistols. Well, if the knife trade is going to be singled out and prohibited to sell by mail order, then all the items that attract the 18 age limit should be included. Cigarettes, tobacco, axes, spirits, beer, wine, solvents, lighter gas fireworks etc., I bet Amazon would never agree to this.

The solution? There is none! Knives are sold all over Europe and are in every house, this is just another illustration by our Nanny State. Although there are knife shows, they are few and far between.



Knives are to be found in every home, shed and garage- not just online!

FIREARMS LICENSING: COST TO THE TAXPAYER

There have been recent press releases claiming that the cost of issuing firearms licenses is placing a heavy burden on taxpayers.

These headlines are as eye-catching as they are misleading; claims that there is a serious mismatch between the fees asked for and the actual cost of firearms licenses neatly avoids the key question whether the police costs claimed are accurate and represent fair value for money.

The basis for calculating firearms licensing fees should be only the cost of issuing the certificate, not the entire cost of running the licensing office, which has other duties such as administering explosives legislation, dealing with refusals and Crown Court appearances and issuing European Firearms Passes. The National Firearms Licensing Management System (NFLMS) is slow, admittedly inefficient and therefore a poor source of evidence for fee increases. In 2014 the Home Office incorporated the anticipated savings from 'ecommerce', the hoped-for online successor to the NFLMS, in the calculation of firearm and shotgun certificates. This initiative unfortunately has failed.

Law & licences

Fees paid by shooters for Firearms Licenses were reviewed and increased in 2014 after a lengthy and detailed analysis of the costs incurred by police forces across the UK. The analysis highlighted enormous variations in efficiency

between Forces; for example, the estimated time taken to conduct and review background checks for a license applicant, including a search of the Police National Database, varied from an efficient five-minutes to a frankly astonishing four-hours. These figures were provided by individual Firearms Licensing teams.

Apportioning costs to the myriad of work delivered by the police must be a thankless task and the absolute cost is heavily influenced by investment in IT, administrative processes and staff training. Firearms licensing has for too long been starved of investment; the College of Policing has highlighted the urgent need for a fully-accredited National Training Scheme for Firearms Licensing staff. Hard-working police staff are hamstrung by relying on creaking 20-year-old databases, whose upgrades have been promised but consistently delayed. The strain on the National Firearms Licensing Management System can only increase with the implementation of changes to legislation in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and the new EU Firearms Directive.

The law-abiding and responsible shooting community are prepared to pay for an efficient service; however, they should not be penalised by a lack of investment in training of police staff or back office systems. Local authorities would serve their taxpayers far better by properly resourcing their committed and enthusiastic firearms licensing staff.