

Sportsman's News

February 2017

By Mike Wells

Lending firearms

Comment on Policing and Crime Bill, new clause 'Authorised lending and use of firearms' for shooting artificial targets

1 The intention of the clause was to clarify the law with regard to the status of the lender of a firearm on private land. The purpose to which the firearm is put by the borrower, whether shooting game, controlling pests or target shooting, has never been at issue, as the present law enables 'use' of the firearm, which embraces all of the above. The proposed clause as presently drafted clarifies who may lend a gun, but greatly restricts the purpose it can be put to.

2 The argument that 'shooting at artificial targets is covered by S11(6)' ignores the very many occasions when informal shooting at clay targets by non-certificate holders using borrowed shotguns lawfully occurs on private premises. This will range from one-to-one instruction of a novice shooter, through an informal 'straw bale' clay shoot amongst friends, to events at which large numbers of young people are given the opportunity to shoot for the first time (such as the recent Scouts and Guides Jamboree in Essex where BASC used S11(5) to coach 7,000 young people).

3 If every informal occasion on which non-certificate holders are offered the opportunity to shoot at clay targets requires S11(6) approval, then there would be a huge amount of additional work for Police Firearms Licensing departments. This would presumably involve land inspections and would be time-consuming and burdensome both for the police and for those wishing to shoot. At a stroke, the ability to set up a clay trap on private premises and coach a non-certificate holder would require lengthy and tedious administration by an already overstretched firearms licensing service.

4 Furthermore, the frustration on the part of those wishing to lend shotguns for informal clay target shooting would be enormous. There would be great dismay and resentment on the part of the shooting community which would negate any value accruing from the clarification in respect of who may lend a shotgun. Most shooters would feel that the proposed clause is a step backwards.

5 How is it proposed to police the distinction between (lawful) use of a shotgun at live quarry and the (unlawful) shooting of clay targets?

6 It is specious to argue that the clause as proposed permits the use of a rifle at artificial targets by virtue of a condition attached to a firearm certificate. The use of a rifle under 1(3) as proposed would have to comply with all of conditions (a), (b), and (c), (and not merely (c), which refers to the matters specified in the certificate). It would surely be illogical for the law to permit artificial target shooting by non-certificate holders with a Section 1 firearm (which presumably would include a Section 1 shotgun) and yet exclude target shooting with a conventional Section 2 shotgun.

7 There is no public safety issue surrounding informal target shooting on private premises. Indeed, it can be argued that there is much more deliberate judgement (and thus inherent safety) over the siting of clay traps and the selection of a firing position for target shooting than there is in the shooting of live quarry which may run or fly in any direction from any source.

The Bill agreed

The British Shooting Sports Council welcomes the Government amendment to the Policing and Crime Bill, agreed in the House of Lords on 7th December, regarding the lending of rifles and shotguns by a certificate holder. This measure will clarify who may lend and will considerably benefit those wishing to take up the sport, the occasional shooter, the young shot and others who do not hold certificates. The BSSC is most grateful for the considerable efforts made by the Minister, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis, and by Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP and its member Associations in achieving this important addition to the Bill.

We fight on

We have bigger fish to fry; We are pushing for Home Office approved rifle and pistol clubs to be granted Long barreled revolvers and pistols as well as section 1 shotguns, which are not rifles. We oppose the knee jerk proposal to restrict magazine capacity for AR style rifles to 10 shot.

We also oppose the proposed Draconian welding up of certified de-activate firearm, rendering them useless and worthless, more on this next month.