

SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION NEWS

MARCH 2018

By Mike Wells Secretary General

Most interesting

AIR WEAPONS REVIEW

The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service recently announced his intention to review the regulation of air weapons in England and Wales. This was in light of a report from the coroner following the death of Benjamin Wragge, a 13 year old boy who was accidentally killed by an airgun pellet in 2016 while playing with friends. The coroner requested that Government review the current legislation relating to air weapons so that steps may be taken to prevent similar tragedies occurring in the future.

There are already strong firearms controls in this country based on a clear recognition that all firearms, including air weapons, are dangerous and Government has a duty to protect the public from their misuse. There are a number of regulations in place in relation to air weapons, and the Minister has decided that now is an appropriate time to take stock of the regulatory position and assess whether the current controls continue to be appropriate and effective. In doing so, views are being sought from the families of those who have been killed or injured in air weapon shootings and their MPs who have raised concerns about air weapons in recent years, as well as from a number of shooting and other organisations, and from the police through the National Police Chiefs Council firearms licensing lead.

The review is focusing on a number of issues which have been highlighted by the coroner and further matters which were raised during the debate in Parliament on air weapons on 9 October. The debate was called by Karin Smyth MP, whose constituent, Harry Studley, was shot and seriously injured with an air rifle. The issues discussed during the debate included access to air weapons by children and young persons, secure storage and safe-keeping, manufacturing standards and the post-sale modification of air weapons to increase the power levels, and whether there would be merit in introducing a licensing regime for lower powered air weapons. These issues are set out below. If you wish to put forward your views in response to these questions, please do so by 6 February.

Yours sincerely

Nick Hunt

Head of Tackling Crime Unit

BSSC Defending the shooting community

The member Associations of the British Shooting Sports Council represent the major organisations concerned not only with shooting and the gun trade but also with the collection and preservation of our heritage of arms.

We are concerned by the comments made by Judge Richard Bond on the 21st December when sentencing Paul Edmunds for serious firearms offences.

While we welcome the heavy deterrent sentences imposed, we cannot but deplore Judge Bond's wholly inappropriate comments on the law. He has gone well beyond the accepted convention that sentencing remarks should be confined to the facts of the case in hand and should not amount (as we consider these comments do) to a

direct attack on current legislation, on the work of the Law Commission and on law-abiding shooters, collectors and dealers who were not present before the court to defend themselves.

Judge Bond's comments demonstrate an unfamiliarity with firearms and with the very strict legislation which controls them, which was substantially strengthened by the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The government is carrying out consultations regarding, *inter alia*, the definition in law of antique firearms, which has been sought by the police. This is the subject of vigorous debate among the organisations devoted to the preservation of heritage, such as our members the Muzzle Loaders Association of Great Britain and the Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association, and among collectors themselves.

Judge Bond is quite correct to state that "As this case has shown, almost all firearms holders (sic) are decent responsible and careful people who understand their responsibilities fully". It should be borne in mind that law-abiding firearms holders will be subject indefinitely to any changes in legislation, introduced at whatever cost to their activities, while the criminal just moves on to a new source for the weapons he seeks which can be obtained in many ways - hidden in trucks or vessels, or *via* the mail or the dark web.

During 1997 over 250,000 handguns were forcibly surrendered by 57,000 law abiding men and women. The press have announced that gun crime is at an all time high

Obituries

On November 10th 2017 the Gun Trade lost one of its most tireless champions and defenders, Colin Greenwood. His enthusiasm for shooting sports of all kinds was boundless and his firm belief in people's right to take part in these activities unshakeable.

Colin left the police after 25 years in 1979, having reached the rank of Superintendent and became editor of 'Guns Review', combining this with work as an expert witness as firearms consultant. It was about this time that Colin became the permanent consultant to the newly formed 'Shooting Sports Trust', an association of manufacturers and importers of firearms and ammunition, which came together to fight the 1979 'Green Paper' proposing controls on firearms.

Department S

Sleuth Jason King `Played by Peter Wyngarde sadly died during December I shot with him, and SAGBNI on an appeal. `He certainly influenced my generation

