



*Of Great Britain & Northern Ireland*

**FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE FIREARMS LEGISLATION**



## **Quarterly Newsletter 30/03/2021**

The Sportsman's Association  
PO BOX 2379  
Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP4 4AN

[www.sportsmansassociation.co.uk](http://www.sportsmansassociation.co.uk)  
Email: [info@sportsmansassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@sportsmansassociation.co.uk)  
[membership@sportsmansassociation.co.uk](mailto:membership@sportsmansassociation.co.uk)  
mobile 07521 508076

## Hello Everyone,

I hope spring has brought you some much needed cheer and the prospect of being able to do some more shooting/archery/fishing has got you primed to head outdoors.

All being well, outdoor shooting on permitted land and ranges will resume from **March 29<sup>th</sup>** applying the rule of six and social distancing. Formally organised outdoor sports will not be subject to limits on numbers of people as long as they follow guidance from their national governing bodies, involve minimal travel and no overnight stays.

**No earlier than April 12<sup>th</sup>** Indoor ranges can re-open for individual training only or for single household groups. Gunshops etc. can re-open too.

**No earlier than May 17<sup>th</sup>** indoor ranges to re-open applying the rule of six

**No earlier than June 21<sup>st</sup>** all restrictions may be lifted!

Do please check the guidance and the websites of your preferred activities.

[COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/coronavirus/coronavirus-response-spring-2021)

[Coronavirus legislation and guidance on the law | GOV.WALES](https://www.gov.wales/coronavirus-legislation-and-guidance-on-the-law)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): local protection levels - gov. scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19-local-protection-levels)

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations>

NRA <https://nra.org.uk/news/>

NSRA <https://www.nsra.co.uk/index.php/119-frontpage/2795-the-nsra-and-lord-roberts-centre>

BASC <https://basc.org.uk/coronavirus/firearms/>

CPSA <https://www.cpsa.co.uk/news/coronavirus-covid-19>

GTA <https://gtald.co.uk/news/shooting-grounds-and-ranges-opening-in-england/78>

MLAGB <https://www.mlagb.com/news/>

UKPSA <https://www.ukpsa.co.uk/news/covid-19-coronavirus-update/>

HBSA <https://sites.google.com/site/hbsauk/home/latest-news>

CA <https://www.countryside-alliance.org/covid-19-hub>

### **Firearms Licensing Renewals**

Firearms Licensing Departments have been trying very hard to get renewal reminders out in plenty of time. Please respond as quickly as possible, too many people are leaving it too late to get the 8-week extension that can be applied if the renewal is not completed in time. This then involves moving your firearms into storage with an RFD. Some RFD's at the request of the police have been asked to open to facilitate these late responders firearms, to then be threatened with fines because they are not viewed as an essential business under current regulations.

I understand there may be extenuating circumstances for not responding straight away, if so, please let the police know as soon as possible. If not, please hop to it, everyone will benefit.

### **EU Proposals to Ban All Lead Ammunition**

The proposals on the restriction of all lead in ammunition (gunshots and bullets) and fishing tackle, prepared by the European Chemical Agency were published on 15/1/2021 (about 900 pages long). These proposals will go to public consultation and to the Risk Assessment and Socio-Economic Assessment Committees which are expected to have submitted a combined opinion to the Commission by January 2022. Legislation could be passed later in that year.

The proposals are:

A ban on the use of lead shot for hunting with a five-year transition period and the option for Member States to derogate for sports shooting when releases into the environment are minimised.

A ban on the use of lead in rifle bullets with transitional periods: 18 months for any center-fire caliber equal to and above 5.6mm and

5 years for calibers less than 5.6mm centrefire (and rimfire in general). Derogations for continued use, if releases to the environment are minimised, i.e., when sports shooting ranges are equipped with bullet traps.

Military and other non-civilian uses of lead ammunition – such as by police, security and customs forces – are not included in the scope of the investigation. Indoor uses of lead ammunition are also excluded.

We will update you once BSSC has digested this proposal.

### **FACE Survey Re Firearms Affected By A Prohibition Of Lead Ammunition**

FACE, THE European Federation for Hunting and Conservation are conducting a survey across Europe & UK to establish how many firearms are used for hunting and target shooting, and how many of these will be suitable/unsuitable for non-lead ammunition. It is important that as many people as possible respond to this survey. The following link: [www.face.eu/survey](https://www.face.eu/survey) will take you to the FACE website where you need to click on the green box **ENGLISH** to reach the survey. UK based anti-shooting lobbyists are campaigning very effectively in Europe to have lead ammunition banned, it is very important that we do not rest on our laurels, and help FACE as much as possible, especially if the Northern Ireland Protocol means these proposed laws will apply to Northern Ireland. Supposedly "Green" bodies based in the UK, like WWT/RSPB and others, are campaigning hard in Europe to see these regulations adopted.

We are not opposed to lead being replaced by other materials in certain circumstances, as long as the other materials have been subjected to the same tests lead has been, and it is proven beyond a doubt that they are safer for the environment, will not damage or destroy our sporting equipment, or be a risk in use.

While there are alternative non lead cartridges for shotguns which have been available for many years, this is not quite the case for rifle or pistol ammunition, time will be needed by the trade for development and manufacture, AND yes, we are no longer in the EU, but we will be under pressure to follow suit if the EU go down this path. We are still waiting for clarity as to whether the Northern Ireland Protocol means that NI will be subject to these laws.

The regulations on **Lead Shot Over Wetlands** were not published in the European Journal until 26/1/2021 so is not automatically applicable to all of the UK but comes into force in the EU from February 2023, unless challenged by a member state in the two months after publication. FACE believe it will apply to Northern Ireland as part of article 5.4 of the "Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, Annex 2, point 23. The BSSC are asking DEFRA to confirm if this is true. The text of the regulation is here:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0057&from=EN>

### **Antique Firearms Regulations 2020**

New regulations which define in law which firearms can be held, unlicensed, as antiques were approved by the House of Commons 14/12/2020 and by the House of Lords 6/1/2021. They have now been signed by the Minister and come into force on 22/3/2021. The transition period will last until 21/9/2021.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2021/215/contents/made>

NABIS expressed concerns about the use of antiques in crime which led to the Law Commission looking at the relevant legislation and recommending that there should be a statutory definition of "antique firearm" to provide legal clarity. A provision was made in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 for a definition to be set in regulations. The public consultation supported a statutory definition close to the existing Home Office guidance.

The regulations define "antique" by reference to the date it was manufactured, it's propulsion system and a list of obsolete cartridges.

Only firearms manufactured prior to 1/9/1939 qualify as antiques. 23 additional types of cartridge have been added to the existing obsolete cartridges list. Firearms chambered for those cartridges can potentially be held as antique firearms.

7 types of cartridge which are regularly used in crime have been removed from the obsolete cartridges list, and consequently the definition of "antique firearm" no longer applies to firearms chambered for them, these firearms will have to be put on an FAC S1 or S7.1 or S7.3. As long as you apply before 21/9/2021 you will remain in lawful possession of your firearm even if your application is still being processed, or being appealed when the transition period ends.

So, if your beloved firearm is no longer an antique under 58(2) of the Firearms Act, what are your options?

1. Hand it in to the police.
2. Have it de-activated, which is expensive and highly destructive under current specifications.
3. Transfer to an RFD until you have decided what to do. S1 RFD if barrel is longer than 30cm and overall length over 60cm, otherwise a S5 RFD for pistols.
4. Transfer to a S1 FAC if the barrel is longer than 30cm, and overall length is over 60cm. You may then use as any other S1 firearm.
5. Transfer to FAC with S7.1 to possess only.
6. Transfer to FAC with S7.3 to be stored and used at designated heritage sites only.
7. Can export it via specialist customs agents, but quite difficult to do.

If being transferred onto an FAC you may face costs for gun safes and security to comply with current guidance if you do not already have such in place.

The latest 2020 guidance has now been published:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearms-security-handbook>

These firearms can be sold or transferred up until the end of the transition phase. After then they must be proofed first, before sale or transfer, to comply with the Proof Acts which lay down that no small arm may be sold, exchanged or exported, exposed or kept for sale or exchange or pawned unless and until it has been fully proved and duly marked. The maximum penalty is £1,000 for each offence. An RFD can take these firearms in, and arrange for their proofing.

Once these regulations come into force, if you have a firearm chambered for a cartridge which has been added to the obsolete list, you may, if you no longer wish to shoot this firearm, dispose of the ammunition and ask the police to remove said firearm from your FAC as you will hold it under Sect58(2).

NABIS want these regulations to be reviewed every three years and amended if thought necessary for public safety. BSSC want a seat on the review panel.

My thanks to Jim Hallam (RFD) for clarifying a number of points on this.

### **Project Sylloge**

This is a National Crime Agency initiative to monitor the potential migration of antique firearms into criminal hands via auction houses. Information on past sales by auction houses was requested, to be compared with a crime database to identify any links. The GTA has produced a best practice guide on data protection to address concerns by the trade on the release of customer data.

## Firearms Security Handbook

All amendments to the 2019 Firearm Security Handbook were agreed with the police and signed off in September barring the outstanding issue of CCTV on shop-fronted dealers' premises, which was resolved in conference on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The publication of the revised Handbook is now on the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearms-security-handbook>

## Statutory Guidance to The Police

After a year's delay the Home Office issued an amended version of the proposed Statutory Guidance for Police, which included proposals for the medical involvement in firearms licensing. A line-by-line analysis showed that officials had taken little notice of shooter representations over such matters as the medical fee, the permanent marker and the ability of a private GP to complete a pre-application medical check. In particular it ignored the 'deal' which shooting representatives, including the BSSC Chairman, had agreed with the Minister in June over a proposed 10-year certificate.

Graham Downing the BSSC Secretary wrote in strong terms to the Minister in response. Shooting organisations consulted with each other, all of whom were invited, along with the Secretary BSSC, to a meeting with officials on 4/12/20. The mood of the meeting was fractious, and the shooting associations made clear their displeasure with the draft and re-stated their positions over the principal issues at stake. A further draft is promised for early 2021.

## Threat Posed by Armed Crime

The National Crime Agency had an inaugural meeting of a new body to address the threat posed by armed crime, to which the BSSC secretary, the GTA director and NFU secretary were invited. Our representatives questioned the name "**Firearms Prevent Board**" stating that if the support of the lawful shooting community was wanted then the name should reflect the intention to prevent **criminal use** of firearms.

There is already an existing body, TNAIG, dedicated to this subject, which it seems will be absorbed into this new body.

Presentations were given on the threat assessment from illegal imports from Europe, top venting blank firers being converted to live firers and used by gangs, theft of lawfully owned shotgun, theft of MoD components and accessories, the threat of the criminal misuse of S11(4) exemptions for the operation and use of a miniature rifle range.

## Firearms Fees Review

The Home Office has announced a full review of firearms licensing fees before the end of the year. BSSC secretary Graham Downing has prepared a paper outlining the BSSC position over fees.

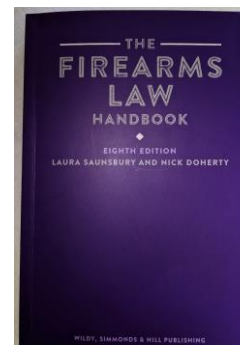
The Home Office is reminded that Treasury guidelines preclude charging for the 'public good' elements of police firearms licensing administration and argues that firearms licensing practice should operate to high standards of efficiency. These should incorporate cost and time-saving practices learned over the past 8 months of the COVID crisis. Further savings from the rollout of online applications should be acknowledged and allowed for, and the new and additional cost to applicants of the medical process should be acknowledged. Fees should reflect the actual minute-by-minute costs of the processes required when licensing departments operate to these new high standards of efficiency, the Fees Working Group should be re-established to agree new and appropriate fee levels, a CPI/RPI review should be undertaken on a regular basis and fees should be adjusted accordingly

## The Value of Shooting Survey

A new survey of the value of shooting will soon start. BSSC, BASC and CA are major funding contributors to this and are currently involved in the selection of suitably qualified research bodies. I will forward the result as and when it is available.

## The Firearms Law Handbook

Many of you are familiar with Laura Saunbury and Nick Doherty, both of whom have helped many members with legal problems and are great supporters of the Sportsman's Association. The eighth edition of "The Firearms Law Handbook", written by Laura and Nick, was published in 2019.



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Further to that they now have a website for the book, with updates as and when new bits of law come into force, so you can always stay up to date.

You can also use the website to ask a question of Laura or Nick on firearms law.

<https://firearmslawhandbook.co.uk>

## **British Olympic Team**

The British Olympic Team approached the BSSC with concerns about travel disruption during 2021 and that team members may consequently be separated from their firearms. It was agreed that the Team Coach should also have a certificate with the competitor's firearms on in addition to the competitor's own certificates. Assistance was sought from NPCC to fast-track variations of Team GB's FACs.

The Tokyo Olympics have been rescheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> July to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Our shooting team as announced so far are:

Team GB: Kirsty Hegarty (women's Olympic trap), Matt Coward-Holley (men's Olympic trap), Aaron Heading (men's Olympic trap) and Seonaid McIntosh (women's 50m 3 positions rifle and 10m air rifle).

Paralympics Team GB: Matt Skellhon (rifle prone SH1), James Bevis (rifle prone SH2), Tim Jeffery (rifle prone SH2), Ryan Cockbill (rifle prone SH2), Lorraine Lambert (rifle 3 positions SH1, Issy Bailey (air pistol SH1)

We wish them all every success.

## **Other things to potentially look forward to this year:**

**Sportsman's Association AGM** – potentially booked for 29<sup>th</sup> May at the ATSC Clubhouse, Bisley, during the Phoenix Meeting. I will confirm as soon as possible.

**Sportsman's Association Website** – I have just started on a new website to be launched just as soon as it is ready. If you have thoughts on what should be included please let me know. It is 25 years since we formed, if you have photos from the marches in the early days, I would love some copies. I am hoping to do a short history and a thank you to those who have supported us over the years on the home page. So, all contributions/nominations are very welcome.

**Modern Shooting Show** – 26<sup>th</sup> June Newbury Race Course  
<https://modernshootingshow.co.uk>

**Target Shooting Show** – 20/21<sup>st</sup> November Stoneleigh Park  
<https://www.targetshootingshow.co.uk>

The organisers of both these shows have been putting out feelers to see if enough people are interested, do please contact them via their websites if you are interested in attending and supporting them.

Keep on keeping well,  
Rachel Westlake.