

The Sportsman's Association

Of Great Britain & Northern Ireland
FIGHTING FOR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE FIREARMS LEGISLATION



Quarterly Newsletter 30/6/2022

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Hello Everyone,

Best wishes to you all, and I very much hope you are making the most of being able to shoot again now that nearly all Covid restrictions have been lifted, and that in turn your spirits are being lifted.

AGM

The AGM was held on Saturday May 28th, during the Phoenix Meeting. Turn out was vary low, which is a shame, as your input is vital to ensuring the Association is doing what the members want. Thank you to those who sent their apologies.

The proposed ban on lead ammunition was top of the agenda. The British Shooting Sports Council will do a joint submission for all it's member associations. (More on this later in the newsletter.)

For Land Management/ Game Shooting there are already some non-lead shotgun cartridges available, supply is not enough to meet demand, some centrefire ammunition is also available, but again limited supply, and there is no known suitable alternative for rimfire ammunition. I have seen non-lead airgun pellets on the market, but all the reading I have done so far suggests they are not as accurate. There are also penetration and ricochet aspects to solid copper or steel ammunition to be considered, a lead core is essential.

Whilst indoor ranges will be exempt from the restrictions, BSSC are campaigning that all target shooting should be exempt.

The War in Ukraine may have some impact on the lead restrictions currently proposed in the EU, as ammunition manufacturers can not produce both lead and non-lead ammunition on the same production lines, so would not be able to supply the military with the ammunition required when a crisis like that in Ukraine occurs. UK have their military ammunition made by dedicated companies.

Membership has continued to grow at a modest rate, but hopefully by enough that we do not have to increase membership fees for at least a year, to offset the increased insurance fee. There have been a couple of membership applications where I am dubious of the persons identity/residential address/reason for wanting membership. If these concerns are not resolved than I am refunding any money paid and refusing them membership.

I was gently reprimanded for not having the website upto date, and will keep working on that as time permits. Also, it was agreed that we should have a presence on social media, to put out positive messages about our sport. Now I am completely the wrong person for this, so my daughter Sarah has been set the challenge of making this happen. If there is another member who could do this please get in touch, as Sarah's life is hectic with working fulltime and doing a degree on top, and range officering at weekends.

Recent Meeting between BSSC, Police and Home Office

The Home Office gave updates on the Firearms Fees Working Group, who intend to publish a new schedule of fees for consultation later this year. (More on this later in the Newsletter.) That the Home Office intend to update the Non-Statutory Guidance on an adhoc basis only, although admitted that paragraph 6.20 had been omitted in error and if the BSSC did not object would be re-inserted. That the Home Office have no serious concerns about the Statutory Guidance (medical) that was introduced last November, but are monitoring the situation. That medical markers should be in place with GPs by the summer.

Associations commented that greater clarity should be given to GPs on their role in this, that the medical form should be kept simple, and that applicants are often unaware of what is in their medical records which is causing them concern. The Police commented that the medical check has been of great benefit to them, highlighting areas of risk that they were previously unaware of.

The Home Office is to make an 18 staff Firearms Department permanent, within the HO, focusing on licensing.

The BSSC was invited to take part in a working group being set up to review the criteria of Home Office approved shooting clubs, along with Police and other associations.

The Police (England and Wales) update mentioned the importance of co-operating with, and working in partnership with the shooting community. The Police intend to focus on consistency of administration of firearms licensing between forces, and on better training for FEOs. Whilst the guidance on licensing was helpful, they felt things could be done better and hoped for a review. The Associations commented that this training should also include interpersonal skills. An updated Authorised Professional Practice will be published in 2023, which should set out how policing should be done consistently, and if not, how to bring them to account.

Police Scotland's update boasted the introduction of an automated system for firearms licensing which automatically notifies certificate holders of renewal, which has led to a 99% completion of renewal prior to the expiry date and variations turned around in 7-14 days. There are a greater number of AWCs, than FAC/SGCs, and a greater number of contentious medical issues with those AWCs.

Criminal Use of firearms Prevent Board reported that armed crime continues to decrease, with the majority of crime being gang related. That these criminals are mostly after acquiring pistols, and that shotgun thefts are down by a third. (ONS data is available.)

BSSC brought up the subject of Online applications, which provide efficiency and saves on costs, as intended. But that there was much room for improvement and that paper applications must still be accepted. Savvas highlighted the case of a member in Hertfordshire, whose paper application was refused, the police will now look into this. There should be the ability to "save and return", that medical forms should be seen by the applicant for review and that perhaps scans of current certificates should be uploaded, although police felt a list of current guns owned was more helpful.

Refusal of Paper Applications for Grant & Renewal

Since the meeting between BSSC, HO and Police there have been more paper applications refused by firearms licensing offices in Kent, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire and others. The BSSC have been in communication with the Police and are protesting in the strongest terms, as this is totally unacceptable. Not everyone has access to online licensing.

Medical Information Acquired During the Term of a Certificate

In the last newsletter I mentioned that whilst the Statutory Guidance states that medical history relevant at the point of application/renewal will be retained for the duration of the certificate. It was not yet clear what will happen to medical information requested by the police, during the term of the certificate, which after investigation is found too **not be relevant**.

After attending a regional meeting my Firearms Licensing manager came back to me with:

“The Region have all confirmed that any medical information, not applicable to the granting of a certificate, will not be kept. Our Regional Chair also attends the National Firearm meetings and she will raise this at the next meeting to try and ensure this is a national process.”

With regard to our member who used the GDPR process to request the deletion of medical data he considered to be excessive and not relevant to his possession of firearms, here are parts of the reply from the data protection office:

The licensing department *confirmed to us that they work under the force and national guidance on data storage and use, but we also use MOPI guidance which dictates what data we store and for how long. If the GP report was received as part of a general enquiry (which it was) it would be retained with the Enquiry Officers Report and disposed of once a new Enquiry Officer Report is received and certificate renewed.*

This is all in line with the Firearms Act 1968, MOPI Guidelines and national and force policy we act under as a department.

They have reviewed their main data storage areas stating that if they held your full medical records, they would be able to redact/remove the unnecessary information. They have confirmed to us that they have not located any document containing your full medical history. They forwarded to my team a letter from your Medical Group, explaining that the information contained within is not excessive, nor does it provide depth which could be considered intrusive. The report provides enough information for a rationale judgement to be made.

Having reviewed the information held, we agree with the assessment that it is not excessive or intrusive.

In conclusion, medical data the police consider to be relevant will be retained for the duration of your certificate, on renewal that data will be replaced by the more current data submitted at renewal, and then retained for the duration of the renewed certificate. Non relevant data can be removed, but it comes down to the assessment of what is deemed relevant. This is an area where there are going to be subjective disagreements.

<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/information-management/management-of-police-information/retention-review-and-disposal-of-police-information/>

Transfer of Medical Records to NHS Digital

A year ago, it was announced that the medical history of every person in England was to be copied across from their GP to NHS Digital. The identity of the patients was to be encoded before the records were made available to academic and commercial third parties for research and planning purposes.

However, the coding of the patient's identity could be reversed if a valid legal reason was given, and since the records will include mental and sexual health data, potentially criminal records, and other sensitive information, including possibly medical markers for FAC/SGC/RFD holders there were grave concerns about just how many people should have access to information which should be very restricted for security reasons.

The transfer was delayed to give people time to opt out, and then further delayed because of Covid. Having given evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee on the right to privacy with digital data, Professor Ben Goldacre, suggested that "one national organisation" could "act as a data controller for a copy of all NHS patients' records in a Trusted Research Environment." Professor Goldacre, who himself opted out of data sharing his medical records, told MPs patients should be told first what protections are being put in place to provide security for their records, and their anonymity.

A Trusted Research Environment is a highly secure digital safe location for data which enables authorised researchers to access this data remotely. Data that could be used to directly identify an individual is not available in TREs (for example name, date of birth, address or NHS number). This reduces the risk of unauthorized people/organisations accessing the data, and reduces the risk of a researcher being able to re-identify a person from de-identified data.

Therefore, we, our medical data, and our medical markers should be much more secure.

It is believed it is now Government policy to set up a Trusted Research Environment for the transfer of all medical records in England, although it has not been announced when this will happen, and that the ability to opt out will end on 31/7/2022.

Retained EU Law (REUL) and the Brexit Freedoms' Bill

The Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg, the Minister for Brexit Opportunities published on 22/6/22 an online catalogue of the 2400 EU Laws, REUL, which are still in place, and invites the public to voice which pieces of legislation should be scrapped.

[Retained EU law dashboard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

You can email your suggestions to Mr Rees-Mogg at publiccorrespondence@cabinetoffice.gov.uk,

or by post to Jacob Rees-Mogg, Cabinet Office, 70, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS.

"Creating this catalogue of REUL is the first step in accelerating regulatory reform and reclaiming the UK statute book. The government will continue developing this

comprehensive record of where EU-derived legislation remains and will work to identify more legislation which can be amended, repealed or replaced. This dashboard will document the government's progress against that aim. As such this is the first iteration of Cabinet Office's interactive REUL dashboard. Going forward the dashboard will be updated on a quarterly basis, as REUL is repealed and replaced, or more REUL is identified."

I did not find the dashboard particularly easy to use, but did eventually find four firearms related pieces of legislation and four on explosives. This is an opportunity to change the legislation on De-activated Firearms, but it is not going to be easy, as the law as written is not easy for the layman to understand where it originates from.

License Fee Review

Kit Malthouse, **Minister of State for Crime and Policing**, has said "The Government is committed to ensuring an efficient and effective firearms licensing system and to **achieving full cost recovery for the police**. We have commenced a review of firearms licensing fees for police issued certificates, which will be informed by the work of a Firearms Fees Working Group. The Working Group will carry out a detailed review of the cost to the police of administering firearms licensing and develop proposals for revised fees, in accordance with HM Treasury Guidance."

BSSC will form part of this working group.

The proposals for new fees for police issued certificates will be subject to public consultation in due course.

Fees were last increased in 2015, the Home Office published the following statements:

"These changes will allow police forces to cover the full cost of running the firearms licensing service once eCommerce, an online system currently being developed by the police, becomes operational in due course."

"The increase in fees and the introduction of online licensing will end what is currently an unsustainable process for the police and will create a fairer and more effective system for forces, licence holders and the general public."

"The Government will work with police to introduce an online licensing system which will be reviewed in twelve months to assess whether costs are being fully recovered, with a view to increasing fees further if they are not."

Nearly all firearms licenses are now done online, so just which costs have escalated in the last seven years to warrant a further increase? Also, most Firearms Licensing Departments are so far behind in their work that we should not be paying for their inadequacies and incompetence. Nor should those who do not have access to online systems be excluded.

Northern Ireland Firearms Representative Group (NIFRG)

This is a new umbrella organisation formed to consult with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice, on behalf of their members. With the aim of improving the efficiency of the licensing system, and curbing excessive regulatory demands.

HSE Publishes Restriction Dossier on Lead

On 29 April 2021, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the Agency for UK REACH received a request under Article 69(1) of UK REACH from the Defra Secretary of State, with the consent of the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government, to prepare an Annex 15 restriction dossier assessing the risks to the environment and human health from lead in ammunition (projectiles). In the European Union (EU), a restriction has been adopted for lead in gunshot over wetlands (January 2021), and a restriction for lead in shot, bullets and fishing weights is in progress. This Annex 15 dossier prepared by HSE examines whether a similar restriction should be introduced into Great Britain (GB; England, Scotland and Wales) covering lead in ammunition in all habitats.

In the request, Defra asked HSE to consider the risks posed by the use of lead in ammunition and the potential need for further risk management measures beyond those already in place. Lead-containing propellants, and police and military uses are outside of the scope defined by Defra.

Article 69(6) of UK REACH requires HSE to publish proposals for restrictions on its website and invite interested parties to submit comments on the proposed restriction within 6 months of the date of publication. This public consultation fulfils this requirement.

An additional 60-day consultation on the draft socioeconomic opinion will be held at a later stage to invite comments and to inform the development of the final socioeconomic opinion.

The dossier is 227 pages long, and in places quite technical, the consultation period closes On 6/11/22.

[UK REACH – Restriction Proposals 004 - Lead shot in ammunition - Health and Safety Executive - Citizen Space \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

[A4template-online \(hse.gov.uk\)](#) – Annex 15 restriction report

[A4template-online \(hse.gov.uk\)](#) – Annexes

The consultation gives you the opportunity to give general comments, except where specific questions are asked, and you are not expected to answer every question. You can save and return.

It starts by asking about the types of bullets used in GB, both lead and lead-free, by calibre, activity, and quantity.

There is a request for information on the use of non-lead projectiles:

Please provide information on the technical and economic feasibility of potential alternatives for the following, including information on:

- *product performance*
- *price differences between lead-containing products and alternatives*
- *the number of affected products (both the number of projectile products and the number of firearms)*
- *expected costs and timelines for research*
- *development and implementation of the new products*
- *full-scale production of alternatives*
- *any other information that you think will be helpful to our evaluation*

Derogations for special licensed target shooting ranges, and clay target shooting ranges are a consideration if the range can ensure 90% recovery of lead from the site, and minimal risk of lead contamination, plus some restrictions on use of the land.

Buy back schemes are being considered for those with large quantities of stock.

Please read the proposals, probably several times to get to grips with them, and submit your opinions, backed by evidence where possible.

Big Guns and Big Bangs

On a much happier note, or very loud bangs. Our member Nigel got to fire his 1943 25pdr field gun, to start a parade of boats, at the Festival of the Sea, at Harwich. One shot as a ten-minute warning, and second to start the boats off.



Regards, Rachel Westlake.