

The Sportsman's Association

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



Quarterly Newsletter 30/06/2023

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Hi Everyone,

I hope the good weather has helped to keep your spirits up, and to get you to the range for plenty of shooting in the dry. With the last newsletter I tried to give a little hope for the future, and a little less doom and gloom, well.... I'm not sure how well that is going.... but thank you to those who have very kindly said thank you to me, for the information included in the newsletters.

Rachel Westlake.

AGM

This was held on the Saturday evening of the Phoenix Meeting and was attended by a dedicated few, whose presence was very much appreciated. Thanks to those who sent their apologies. Savvas gave his apologies as he had rather pressing business which needed his full attention, and Joe as usual kept the meeting on a tight rope.

Once the formalities of the meeting were dealt with, the main topics were the increased number of voluntary surrenders of firearms being sought by police when red flags are raised on medical grounds, in particular mental health issues. Another member has agreed to work with me to put together information on exactly what procedures should be followed by the police and the relevant law that applies. Also, what action to take if these procedures are not followed correctly.

Section 21 came up for discussion too, and the same member will give more assistance in this area as well. As did online only license applications.

I am on the look out for two new bank accounts to make deposits in which will earn interest, and to make sure all our accounts are within the guaranteed £80,000 should the banks collapse.

All committee members were re-elected.

Short and sweet, but I will expand on some of these issues further into the newsletter.

Statement by Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire

Chris Philp MP made a statement, 29/6/23, on firearms licensing as the result of several recommendations from the Coroner in Plymouth, the IOPC who investigated Devon and Cornwall Police, and the Scottish Affairs select Committee who reviewed Scottish firearms licensing regulations after the fatal shooting on the Isle of Skye.

The gist is, public safety comes first whilst recognising that "the vast majority of licensed firearms holders are law abiding and cause no concern". The Government is providing £500,000 for a national training package, to be provided by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs council, for all police firearms licensing teams. This training is to become mandatory.

An inspection of all firearms licensing teams is to take place in 2024/25 by the Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue. The Inspectorate are currently inspecting Devon and Cornwall to assess the changes they have made since the IOPC report. Results are expected end of July.

The review of firearms licensing costs is ongoing, but a consultation on the new fees is expected this summer, to be implemented later this year.

“The Government has decided not to proceed with recommendations on aligning shotgun and firearms legislation. We will keep this under review, but we are currently of the view that additional controls on shotguns are unnecessary.”

The Government also disagrees with the Coroner’s view that the wording of S27 and S28 of the Firearms Act 1968 “creates a presumption in law in favour of granting a firearms licence to an applicant being granted because it uses the words ‘shall be granted’.” Specific conditions must be met before a licence is granted, which includes meeting the conditions on suitability to the satisfaction of the police. The Government has therefore decided not to progress this particular recommendation.

“The other significant recommendations made to the Government will be the subject of an open public consultation.”

Full statement here: [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

Home Office Consultation

This consultation includes recommendations made by the Coroner, the IOPC and the Scottish Affairs Committee. I encourage all of you who can to complete it, we must never be complacent, and many expect legislation based on this to be proposed in the Autumn.

Use the following link for full details:

[Firearms licensing: a consultation on recommendations for changes made to the Home Office \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

It is unfortunately a yes/no answer survey giving no room for reasoned comment, which many of the questions really require. Here is the first question.

(a) A power of immediate seizure of firearms, shotguns and ammunition

Q1. Do you consider that the police should be granted a specific power of entry (without a warrant issued by a magistrate or sheriff) to be able to seize shotguns, firearms and ammunition where there is a risk to public safety or the peace and the certificate holder does not cooperate with the police and agree to voluntary surrender?

Yes

No

How to respond:

Please submit your response by 23 August 2023 by -

- Completing the online form
at: <https://www.homeofficesurveys.homeoffice.gov.uk/s/firearms-licensing/>
- Email to: firearmsconsultations@homeoffice.gov.uk
- Post to:

Firearms licensing consultation
Firearms Policy Unit
Home Office
5th floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Additional ways to respond:

Please contact the Firearms Policy Unit (as above) if you require information in any other format, such as Braille, large font or audio.

Or failing that contact me for a printed copy of the questions which I will post to you.

Updated Guidance on Home Office Approved Clubs

The review on the role of the HO approved club Firearms Liaison Officer has clearly been completed and is clarified in the latest guidance. It places a huge responsibility on one person's shoulders and I think further discussion is needed, especially for very large clubs.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1151914/Guidance_on_approval_of_rifle_and_muzzle-loading_pistol_clubs_April_2023

Revised Statutory Guidance for Police

This guidance has been revised as of 14/2/23 please use the link to take a look. The revision contains stricter guidance on referees and on the use of S7 permits to extend certificate duration by licensing departments.

[Firearms licensing: Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Explosives Form ER4b

Concerns about the inconsistencies on the explosive licence application form, reference the size of storage containers, has been addressed. The form is to be amended and police forces are being advised of the amendments.

Trophy Hunting

This has been working its way through parliament and has now had its second reading in the House of Lords, and is at the committee stage. Eloquent arguments for and against were made, and in reading through some of the speeches I have learned about canned hunting, where animals are bred in captivity for the purpose of hunting, and internet hunting where you sit at your computer and select your quarry for someone else to do the act, a bit like a computer game. This bill addresses neither of these issues, or that where an animal is endangered in one country it is not necessarily so in another, or the issue of trophy hunters visiting this country to hunt and go home with a marvelous mounted head, yet we are proposing that the British may not do this abroad. If the pros and cons of this topic interest you read on at: [Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

When the bill went through the commons Sir Bill Wiggin MP argued successfully to ensure that any ban was restricted to trophies from endangered species, as stated in the Conservative party manifesto. As a result, the Bill was amended to remove the Government's *power to vary the species to which the new law will apply* and to require the Secretary of State to appoint an expert Advisory Board to advise on matters related to the import of hunting trophies.

This means the import ban is expected to cover those species listed in appendices 1 and 2 of CITES. Which includes some antelopes and gazelles, some deer, elephants, wolves, big cats, bears, zebras and rhinos. Most of the plains game species commonly hunted in southern Africa are not included.

Firearms Bill

The Firearms Bill, the Private Members Bill requiring operators of a miniature rifle range to have a firearm certificate, and for a new offence of "possessing component parts of ammunition with **intent** to manufacture..." where the person is not authorised to possess said ammunition has its second reading in the House of Lords on 14/7/23.

Removal of Permitted Development Rights for Target Shooting in Scotland

The Scottish Government is consulting on removing permitted development rights for target shooting in Scotland, meaning that even an afternoon long distance event, a practical shooting weekender, a smallbore demonstration at a country fare or even scouts shooting air rifle at a scout camp would no longer benefit from Class 15 temporary use permitted development rights, and would all need to apply for planning permission (the application cost alone being a minimum of £600).

The implications of such a change could be catastrophic and the proposals are completely unjustified and unfair. Removal of these rights would leave most competition or informal target shooting events ruined. Even though they claim it wouldn't affect land management, they don't seem to understand that stalkers, hunters and pest controllers all use fixed targets for practice and zeroing as well. They also claim to want to exclude clay shooting from any changes, yet that is far noisier (their main concern, seemingly) than smallbore or

air rifles, yet no more noisy than practical shotgun, which they wish to see rights removed for. It's a mess and one that will be catastrophic for target shooting.

Please, if you have not already done so, consider objecting to the consultation proposals and, if you are able, notify friends so we can get as many people as possible objecting to these ill-thought-out proposals.

Read about it here under Section 6.2: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-review-permitted-development-rights-phase-3-consultation/pages/6/>

Object to it here: <https://consult.gov.scot/planning-performance/scottish-government-review-of-pdr3>

Written by concerned Scottish members, so please support them.

Firearms Licensing Issues

We had a spate of members contacting us with the same complaint, difficulty getting paper applications for the grant or renewal of their license. All were passed to the British Shooting Sports Council who were very helpful, making contact with the Firearms Licensing Lead at Warwickshire.

The BSSC are fully supportive of the efficiency savings that can be made through online processes, but acknowledge that there is likely to remain a need for paper processing for some time to come, due to the differences in availability of adequate technology between rural and urban areas, let alone the ability of the shooting community to be tech savvy.

Warwickshire, who are the National Firearms Lead also recognise, and still accept, the need for paper applications whilst pushing for a National Digital Application system with portals for different people/agencies to access. However, they can not command another licensing authority to do the same, but they will ask nicely on your behalf. Which seems to work.

We have suggested a change in message that we are seeing all too often, like this one from Norfolk:

Notice - As of October 2023 the Firearms certificate application process will be changing. From this date all new and renewal applications will need to be submitted via our website using our online form.

To something along the lines of - **As of October 2023 the Firearms certificate application process will be changing. From this date all new and renewal applications will need to be submitted via our website using our online form, with the exception of license holders who can not use or do not have access to digital technology. In these instances, a paper application will be available on request.**

And Hertfordshire have closed their office temporarily. While we applaud their intention to sort themselves out, there have been so many delays in licensing, that this is most frustrating for those trying to carry on a business or club in Hertfordshire.

Temporary suspension of new grant applications

The decision has been made to temporarily suspend any new grant applications.

On the 12 August 2021, tragic events in Plymouth unfolded where 5 people were killed and 2 others injured by a man using a gun which he held a licence for.

The Government published the latest Firearms Licencing Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police, in February 2023. The tragic events and the new statutory guidance has significantly changed firearms licensing nationally.

The process of obtaining and retaining a licence are now more robust, with considerably greater checks. In certain cases, checks with external agencies, such as health professionals, social services, probation services, multi-agency groups.

Checks with other regulatory or enforcement bodies, conducting drugs or alcohol testing, credit or other financial checks, interviews etc.

This has had a direct impact on firearm licensing nationally, with a requirement to review cases, rewrite policy and standard operating procedures with longer time taken to review grant applications. We are working through applications as quickly as possible.

A review of the firearms licensing department is currently underway to understand the impacts of the changes following new statutory guidance – understanding demand, backlogs, future demand and the departments capacity to deal with it. Temporary staff are currently working to assist until the review concludes.

If you require a new licence for your work, please [contact us](#).

In due course I was communicating directly with Warwickshire and brought up a number of issues about the inconsistency of firearms licensing departments throughout the country, and the lack of respect for firearms licensing that this causes.

So, in addition to the above I brought up the S21 aspect of Home Office Club compliance with guidance as mentioned in the last newsletter, and that members have faced seizures/voluntary surrenders on medical concerns where correct procedures have not been followed, especially with receipts. Although the language and tone used by police when conducting the seizure/surrender has improved. This is becoming more common, and there is no timeframe in which these issues are being resolved, with differences of a few months to 18 months before members know whether their firearms are being returned to them or their licences revoked, allowing the opportunity to challenge should they so wish.

I am awaiting a date for a Teams Meeting where Warwickshire hope to update me on where, and how, improvements on a national scale are being made.

Lead metal is proposed for REACH Authorisation Listing

Separate from the ongoing “Restriction” of lead in ammunition under REACH (which is now at the European Commission ‘legal proposal preparation’ stage), there has been another ongoing process regarding **all** lead metal under REACH called “Authorisation”. Lead metal was added to the Candidate List of chemical substances of very high concern for human health and the environment. The ECHA has now, [published its 11th Recommendation for the inclusion of substances in Annex XIV to REACH](#). The recommendation is dated 12 April 2023, following the adoption of an opinion in February 2023 regarding the discussion to add lead metal to REACH Authorisation Listing. Seven other substances are included in the list.

Authorisation under REACH should be understood as a licensing system, whereby chemical substances which are included on the Authorisation List (Annex XIV of the REACH Regulation) may not be used or placed on the market for use in the EU, unless an authorisation has been granted for that specific use.

If lead metal makes the “Authorisation” List, its continued use would become very difficult (and very expensive), especially for the continued manufacturing of lead in ammunition (where non-lead could be used). As you know, the big uses for lead are not ammunition, but batteries, construction, etc.

With reference to the next steps, there are great uncertainties concerning the timing of the regulatory process, and how the big industrial sectors will lobby in the capitals and in Brussels. The worst-case scenario could mean that companies using the substance would have to apply for and pay for an authorisation to continue using it until the so-called “sunset date” which should be set no earlier than 2028.

It will be up to the EU REACH Committee to politically and technically discuss this recommendation and decide whether to include lead metal or not in the Annex XIV of the REACH Regulation. A position paper by the International Lead Association, co-signed by 30 associations representing the main lead sectors. It’s aim is to highlight the need to work on **Restrictions instead of Authorisation**, and that risks of the substance can be effectively managed also through the update of the Occupational Exposure Limits (OELs).

In short, this decision is another step towards the eventual end of lead in ammunition in Europe. For hunters, it’s useful to note that the timing of Authorisation is unclear, the more immediate end to lead use for hunting is likely through the ongoing Restriction process.

Update from the FACE Ammunition Working Group 13/4/23

I could find nothing on the HSE website that suggests the UK is going to replicate this here in UK, but since everything made in EU using Lead will be affected, we will feel the consequences of this regulation if it comes into force through trade with the EU.

We are expecting to hear from the government in the Autumn on the proposed bill to restrict lead in ammunition.