

# **The Sportsman's Association**

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



**Quarterly Newsletter 30/12/2021**

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## **Hello Everyone,**

My best wishes to all of you for the New Year. May 2022 be massively better than the last two years, for everyone's health, wealth and happiness.

Thank you to all of you for your kind thoughts and words while I was going through a series of "unfortunate events" as I described them. I now have a 6 month wait before I can see a consultant, in the meantime I am much improved with continued swimming and gyming on a daily basis, and catching up on the mountain of work that built up.

To that end I am prioritising Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to Sportsman's Association and Westlake Engineering. Tuesdays and Thursdays to my other work commitments. Hopefully this will provide some order and reliability to my chaotic working life.

The membership card printer has been returned and is working fine so far, all of you who were waiting for cards should have received them over New Year. If not please let me know and I will send another.

## **AGM**

The AGM went ahead on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October at the ATSC Clubhouse. It was a small but humorous gathering.

For those that could not attend, in brief the Association is financially healthy with accounts up to date and a small surplus made in the last two years. Membership has continued to slowly increase over the last few years. Insurance costs did go up last year and we will need to monitor whether membership fees need to reflect this. However, the running costs of the Association have reduced significantly since I became Secretary, so for the moment that will offset the increase in insurance.

It was agreed to hand the development of the new website into the hands of a lovely chap who has done a sterling job for the Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association. Progress is now much swifter, so thank you to Tony for the recommendation.

Savvas has continued to represent us at the BSSC, who have continued working throughout the pandemic with zoomed meetings, and he is always available to advise me when I do not have the knowledge to answer a member's inquiry.

I have booked the ATSC for our next AGM for Saturday May 28th, during the Phoenix Meeting. The NRA will also be hosting an International Gallery Rifle Federation World Championship, and the International Target Shotgun Federation World Championship. Hopefully the Phoenix trade show will be on too, then there will be lots to see and do, making it a worthwhile trip out.

## **Statutory Guidance to The Police**

The long-awaited statutory guidance to the police has been published and came into force on 1/11/2021.

*“The guidance covers the processes and criteria for assessing suitability to possess firearms and to be a Registered Firearms Dealer (“RFD”). It is intended to assist chief officers in carrying out appropriate, proportionate and consistent checks and assessments in order to come to an informed decision.”*

Please read the notes on the medical information now required from your GP, or another suitably qualified doctor registered with the General Medical Council. This information is now required with every grant or renewal of a firearms or shotgun certificate, or registration of a firearms dealer. If an applicant is not registered with a GP in the UK then they will not be issued with a certificate.

The fee charged by the GP is entirely upto the GP, some will do it for free, some will ask a moderate fee, some will charge an enormous fee. Do ask your surgery manager first, giving you the option to use a company like MedCert instead, who have a fixed fee.

Once your certificate has been granted/renewed, the police will ask your GP to place a firearms marker on your medical records, as a reminder to the GP to inform the police if your medical situation changes and questions arise of suitability to possess a firearm safely.

The police must inform the GP within one month if a certificate is revoked or cancelled, if it expires and is not renewed, or if the application is refused. The GP can then remove the firearm marker from the patient’s record. What the police do with your medical information once it is no-longer relevant is not so certain. I have emailed my own firearms licensing department for clarity in this area as one member was very distressed at the amount of medical information his FEO had acquired from his GP, and is very concerned as to what will happen to that information now it has been established that it is not relevant to his safe possession of firearms.

Also of relevance is the section on the duration of certificates and registrations. If you have applied to renew your firearm or shotgun certificate at least 8 weeks before the expiry date, and it has not been renewed by that expiry date, then an automatic extension of upto 8 weeks will be applied. During the period of extension, you may continue to possess, purchase, and acquire firearms and ammunition as per the conditions of your certificate. The police should acknowledge receipt of your renewal paperwork, and that it has been submitted in time to benefit from this extension.

If you did not submit your renewal in time to benefit from an automatic extension a temporary section 7 permit may be issued, but this is at the discretion of the police.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-guidance-for-police-on-firearms-licensing/statutory-guidance-for-chief-officers-of-police-on-firearms-licensing-accessible-version-from-1-november-2021>

## **Guide on Firearms Licensing Law 2021**

This was published on 8/12/21 and can be downloaded from the following link:

[Firearms licensing - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearms-licensing-law-2021)

Do give this a good read as there has been quite a lot of change since the last publication in 2016.

One area of the guidance that is contentious is the guidance on Realistic Imitation Firearms and “permitted activities”.

*“a defence for making a realistic imitation firearm available for ‘permitted activities’, **defined** as “the acting out of military or law enforcement scenarios for the purposes of recreation” and primarily intended to cover those participating in airsoft skirmishing”*

There is no absolute definition of “permitted activities” only an “interpretation”, as printed in the Realistic Imitation Firearms Regulations 2007 which “*interprets*” “*permitted activities as mean(ing) the acting out of military or law enforcement scenarios for the purposes of recreation*”.

The UKPSA support Target Shooting with Airsoft Realistic imitation Firearms, with their Action Air Competitions. The NRA and NSRA support Target Shooting of old courses of fire like Police and Service Pistol with Airsoft Realistic Imitation Firearms. Many airsoft retailers are now recognising that many of their customers do not skirmish at all.

Airsoft is one area that I get asked about nearly every week, so I am trying to put a simple guide on Airsoft and Airguns, with definitions and the relevant bits of law. I am currently waiting on further advice from Nic Doherty on “permitted activities” and will hopefully have this ready for publication in the next newsletter.

These two sets of guidance and the Security Manual as published in 2020 should keep you well informed.

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

## **Trophy Hunting**

The draft of the Animals Abroad Bill which could ban the import of hunting trophies is after many delays, expected to be published in February. In the meantime, a Private Members Bill, sponsored by John Spellar MP on the Trophy Hunting Import (Prohibition) Bill, specifically to prohibit Hunting Trophies of wild animals was introduced in the House of Commons on 24/11/21, and will have it’s second reading on 14/1/22.

Below is a link to a video by The Economist on the benefits of Trophy Hunting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y7YFjisSTg>

## UK Proposals to Phase Out Lead Ammunition in Bid to Protect Wildlife

On 23/3/2021 DEFRA announced they are considering restrictions under the UK's new chemical regulation system, [UK REACH](#) to phase out lead ammunition in a bid to protect wildlife.

From 23/8/21 to 22/10/21 The Health and safety Executive opened a call for *“information and evidence to support the development of a UK REACH restriction dossier (report) on risks to the environment and human health of the use of lead in ammunition (projectiles) in all habitats in Great Britain (GB; England, Scotland, Wales). Military and non-civilian use of ammunition is excluded. Indoor ranges are excluded.*

*UK REACH came into force at the end of the EU exit transition period (31<sup>st</sup> December 2020) and regulates the access of chemicals to the GB market. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol, EU REACH continues to regulate the access of chemicals to the Northern Ireland market.”*

The BSSC member organisations worked tirelessly to provide the best answers possible in a very short timeframe, before submitting their response. In summary member organisations advised on:

1. The number of outdoor ranges there are in GB, what types of targetry are used, and in what combination on a range complex, the amount of lead used on these ranges and how many of these ranges are on agricultural ground.
2. What procedures outdoor shooting ranges use to contain lead, and minimise lead leaching into the environment, how lead is recovered and recycled from outdoor ranges and in what quantity by percentage of lead fired. The costs involved in containment and recovery of lead on ranges.
3. What procedures are followed to clean up and prevent or reverse environmental damage when a range is no longer operational, and how many range complexes have such plans in place.
4. How much land in GB is used for hunting/pest control and the quantity and types of lead ammunition used.
5. Quantity and frequency of game meat consumed in GB, and by whom.
6. Quantity of lead shot in game meat – government guides and reports from the Food Standards Agency were submitted.
7. Quantity and supply of lead shot and ammunition, and whether manufactured in GB or imported.
8. **“HOME CASTING OF LEAD CARTRIDGES”** – Clarity was given on the difference between lead cast projectiles and cartridges. No-one can really say how many people cast their own, or by what quantity, and UK REACH showed no knowledge of making projectiles from lead wire.
9. The types of lead substitutes that are currently, or will soon be, available, by Shotgun, Centrefire Rifle, Rimfire Rifle, Air Rifle. The reliability of supply and costs of these lead substitutes.

10. The impact if non-lead ammunition were made mandatory, by shotgun, rifle, pistol - centrefire, rimfire, muzzle loading - hunting or target shooting etc.
11. The effect of the voluntary move away from lead shot for live quarry shooting with shotguns.
12. The impact of lead ammunition in the natural environment.
13. The financial impact on the shooting community and wider public, both professional and sporting/recreational.

Many of the questions in the call for evidence were lacking in knowledge of the shooting sports, and industry. We can only hope that they are quick to learn even the basics, such as the difference between a bullet and a cartridge.

Again, just as they failed in 1996/7 there is no consideration to the effect such changes are likely to have from a social point of view. Yes, personally Westlake Engineering effectively lost a business in 1996/97 which took a decade to become viable again, and if all lead ammunition is banned that effectively happens again as we specialise in Muzzle Loading Pistols. But I, personally, was hardest hit by the collapse of the social world that the Pistol Shooting Community provided me with, not just locally in our own shooting clubs, but internationally as with the loss of major pistol competitions annual connections with overseas competitors were lost.

If our industry is devastated by unwarranted regulation, then so too is our community. The positive impacts of the friendships and human contact of people with a shared interest, across all ages, all sexes and all abilities/disabilities are huge.

### **Study at Cranfield University of Steel versus Lead**

Following the call to voluntarily phase out lead shot for live quarry shooting, BASC and the Gun Trade Association commissioned a study on the lethality of steel shot versus lead shot.

The study looked at the penetration of the lead shot in ballistic gelatine, both with and without a covering of skin and feathers, at distances of 30, 40 and 50 yds. Patterning and velocity of loads was also considered.

BASC recommend using a steel shot two sizes larger than your lead shot. Therefore, in the study, a No.5 lead shot load was compared with a No.3 steel shot load. The study wanted to determine whether the increased drag, in both air and target, due to the increased diameter of the individual shots, would reduce the lethality of the shots, taking into consideration the increased weight of the individual steel shots too.

Theoretically the lead shot would have an advantage.

The result with bare ballistic gelatine:

1. Lead shot penetrates more deeply than steel shot.
2. Depth of penetration is more consistent with steel shot.
3. The steel shot remained spherical; all the lead shot was deformed.

The results with ballistic gelatine covered with skin and feathers of pheasant breast:

1. At 40yds the steel shot penetrated further than the lead shot.
2. At 50 yds the lead shot penetrated further than the steel shot.
3. Depth of penetration of both lead and steel at 50yds thought to be sufficient to be lethal at 50yds if the pattering is close enough, for a pheasant.

With the steel shot there was no real difference in shot penetration across the pattern. The muzzle velocity of the lead loads is slightly faster than for steel loads.

A full report is available at: <https://basc.org.uk/lead>

### **The Latest Update from Industry on the Voluntary Change to Non-Lead Shot**

Simon West of the Gun Trade Association has given an update in the Gun Trade News on the progress by the manufacturing industry on the change to non-lead shot ammunition. His message is to the trade, to customers, to parliament and to all the campaigners against lead ammunition.

In his opening statement he says *“Simply put- if we face a ban on lead shot, we must have something else ready, or shooting will stop through lack of ammunition.”*

In February 2020 a five-year plan to transition to plastic free non-lead shot ammunition for shooting live quarry was announced by several leading shooting organisations. Within UK game cartridges make up 30% of all the shotgun cartridges shot.

The cartridge manufacturers stated at the time of the announcement that to do both, in such a time frame, was unrealistic. It is not only the shot and the wad that needs to be taken into account, but the propellant too.

Lead shot is readily available, steel shot is in short supply, and is mostly manufactured in China, where they have been closing factories to meet Climate Change policies, compounding supply issues.

Existing cartridge loading machinery, if it can cope with steel shot, has to operate more slowly with the harder steel shot, and even more slowly when sustainable wads are being used, increasing production times.

Different propellants are required to cope with the heavier steel shot game loads, and these to are in short supply, mostly coming from USA.

Investment into new machinery, new supply chains and more sustainable/eco-friendly materials was ongoing before the Covid Pandemic, but there has been mass disruption in all supply chains and industries over the last two years, and further investment has dried up. This all makes the initial five-year plan impossible to achieve.

Although there has been much marketing of non-lead shot cartridges, for many, many years, supply has been minimal. Using figures for the last five years, use of non-lead cartridges across all shotgun shooting was just 2.5%. That is only 13 million of the 260 million cartridges shot were non-lead.

Quoting Simon again, *“The strong voice of the game shooting organisations provides constructive influence on shooters and the trade as to where we might have to evolve. What they might inadvertently have created with their announcement was a belief in government that transition is there for the taking across all shooting disciplines. The on-going “lead in ammunition” consultation might therefore have been seen as a politically opportunistic moment.”*

Simon’s point is that government must accept that more time to change is necessary or an outright ban on all lead ammunition will destroy shooting completely.

The ammunition importers and manufacturers are committed to investing in new machinery, technologies and materials to meet the change to plastic free, non-lead ammunition where necessary, and have made the Health & Safety Executive aware of the difficulties they are facing, to impress upon them the need for more time, and that it may be necessary to prioritise either steel, or plastic free wads, rather than trying to do both at the same time.

To an extent lead v plastic will be prioritised by the shoots and the game industry, but the GTA are fully aware of the huge socio-economic implications if massive changes in regulation are brought in too soon, and too heavily. GTA are therefore asking the H&SE to work with the industry on this very important issue.

## **Upcoming Events**

Many organisers of shooting competitions and shows have been working hard behind the scenes, full of optimism that we will not be prevented from having fun in 2022. So please support upcoming events, the more the merrier, it will make the organisers day to see lots of smiling faces. I am currently on tenterhooks waiting to hear whether events I am involved in are going ahead in January and February, and when to really start the preparations for my own club’s Open Meeting in April. Ever the hopeful optimist.

Regards,  
Rachel Westlake.