

The Sportsman's Association

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



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Hi Everyone,

Warmest wishes to you all as the autumn says hello and the trees start to turn a beautiful golden, with a mix of days of beautiful sunshine and some very, very soggy ones.

The general election is over, and Labour are in government with a huge majority, even if they only got 33.7% of the vote, in an election with only a 60% turnout, the second lowest turnout since 1918. Which means, if my mental maths is correct, only 20% of the population, eligible to vote, voted for them. They may have the power, but not necessarily the support of the people. This will work well if you are in agreement with their policies, but is going to be hard work if you are trying to change a policy that you feel is wrong.

[\(The 2024 general election - in numbers – Full Fact \)](#)

However, so far, we have very little information on policies that will affect us. I have checked the parliamentary calendar and it is still mostly empty. There were issues such as licensing of moderators, someone operating a S11 range needing an FAC to do so, the final report from REACH UK on Lead in ammunition, all of which we are waiting to hear about.

Olympics and Para-Olympics

Congratulations to all the athletes from Team GB for their efforts at the Paris Olympics and Para-Olympics, with special note to:

Olympics

Nathan Hales – new Olympic record and Gold medal in Men's Trap

Amber Rutter – first GB female medallist in shooting with a Silver in women's Skeet

Para-Olympics

Tim Jeffery – Bronze medal in 50m Rifle Prone

Jodie Grinham & Nathan Macqueen – Archery Compound Open mixed team Gold medalists

Jodie Grinham – Archery Women's Individual Bronze medalist

Commonwealth Games 2026

Glasgow is to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games after a deal was backed by the Scottish government, paid for by Australia at no cost to the UK taxpayer. Neil Gray MSP, held talks with Commonwealth Games Australia to discuss funding, and received the assurances the Scottish government were looking for.

10 sports are likely to be included across four venues in Glasgow. Swimming and athletics must be included, but the likelihood of shooting being included is very slim. Confirmation of dates, sports and venues is eagerly awaited.

Statistics on Firearm and Shotgun Certificates, England and Wales: April 2023 to March 2024 - Published 27/6/ 2024

Summary of statistics

Data taken from the NFLMS as at 31 March 2024 showed that there were:

- 147,364 firearm certificates on issue, a **0.2% increase** compared with 31 March 2023
- 495,798 shotgun certificates on issue, a **1% decrease** compared with 31 March 2023
- 510,717 people who held a firearm and or a shotgun certificate, a **1% decrease** compared with 31 March 2023
- 510 temporary firearm permits, an **84% decrease** compared with 31 March 2023
- 1,042 temporary shotgun permits, an **87% decrease** compared with 31 March 2023

In the year ending 31 March 2024, there were:

- 6,809 new applications for firearm certificates, of which 94% were granted and **6% were refused** (the highest proportion of new applications refused since comparable records began, following the introduction of the NFLMS in 2007)
- 16,529 new applications for shotgun certificates, of which 94% were granted and **6% were refused** (the highest proportion of new applications refused since comparable records began, following the introduction of the NFLMS in 2007)
- 3,778 new coterminous applications, of which 92% were granted and **8% were refused** (coterminous certificates allow a holders' firearm and shotgun certificate to expire on the same day)
- **507 firearm certificates revoked, a 21% increase** compared with the year ending 31 March 2023 (the highest number of firearm certificate revocations since comparable records began, following the introduction of the NFLMS in 2007)
- **1,559 shotgun certificates revoked, a 34% increase** compared with the year ending 31 March 2023 (the highest number of shotgun certificate revocations since comparable records began, following the introduction of the NFLMS in 2007)
- 413 firearms and shotguns reported as lost or stolen (0.02% of around 2 million firearms and shotguns covered by certificates on issue over the same period), a **21% decrease** compared with the year ending 31 March 2023

The latest statistics show that we have the lowest number of firearm and shotgun certificates on issue, but the number of firearms or shotguns per certificate has been increasing, since comparable records were started.

For firearms licence holders, 97% are men, 3% are women, with shotgun licences 94% are men, 6% are women.

Whilst we welcome the enormous decrease in temporary certificates being issued, which hopefully suggest Licensing Authorities have caught up on the backlog, the sudden increase in the number of revocations and refusals needs a closer look. This may be in part due to the medical part of the application process, and in part the more in-depth background checks that the statutory guidance permits. Hopefully licensing authorities will not be prejudicial in their assessments, however BASC have been to court recently on this matter, and won, resulting in the police having to pay BASC some of their costs. Judges are perhaps showing less tolerance for having their time wasted.

[Statistics on firearm and shotgun certificates, England and Wales: April 2023 to March 2024](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-firearm-and-shotgun-certificates-england-and-wales-april-2023-to-march-2024) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Court Upholds Constabulary's Decision to Revoke Firearms Certificates - and Awards Costs to Police

If you do not comply with the requirements to keep your firearms safe, or fail to notify a change of address do not be surprised if your certificate gets revoked. The gentleman in this case admitted to committing some offences over the storage of firearms and ammunition, for which his certificate was revoked, but appealed the revocation of his certificate and lost. The court upheld the decision to revoke the certificates and awarded the Constabulary £22,000 in costs.

“Upon attending the home address, officers had found two firearms - bolt-action rifles – insecure within the property, in contravention of the terms of his firearms certificates. Upon examination by a police officer, one of the rifles was found to have two rounds in its magazine – although none in the chamber. As such, the weapon was ready to use so that anyone entering the property would have had immediate access to a loaded rifle. Officers also found live firearms and shotgun ammunition, insecure, throughout the property.

“In this instance the Constabulary reached the decision to revoke the certificates in light of a number of factors – not least the former certificate holder’s irresponsibility with regards the safe storage of firearms and ammunition. “In the face of the appeal, the Constabulary maintained that, in order to keep the public safe, the revocation of the certificates should stand. This position was supported by the court.”

I believe he was a well-respected and much liked gentleman with working interests in the field sports and shotgun shooting industry, but there are no excuses for poor safety.

Challenging the METs Unlawful Practices

There have been many complaints about the procedures being used by firearms licensing very recently.

For FAC and SGC holders Project Titanium, where current and former family members are questioned about the suitability of the licence holder/applicant, with absolutely no protections for the licence holder/applicant against false allegations.

The MET, who have recently insisted that only they can “**approve**” servants to an RFD. This is not lawful.

Yes, the industry has agreed that informing the police who they have as servants, so background checks can be run on them, and if there are any genuine security issues then the RFD can be notified. But the Police have no right in law to decide who an RFDs servants are, and have completely overstepped their role.

The MET also decided that a RFDs servants should undergo medical checks as per licence holders, and issued a form to all RFDs in their area to initiate this, stating renewals and grants of RFD licences will not be granted unless the RFD complies. Again unlawful.

Whilst there is some merit to the reasoning behind this, which the trade may well welcome, there are procedures to be followed between the Police, the Home Office and the industry, and a proper introduction through primary legislation, to make this happen.

For the MET, or any other licensing authority, to threaten to revoke, to refuse renewal or grant of a licence, if a licence holder/applicant does not comply with a process that is not required by law, is unlawful and must be challenged.

Savvas Toufexis, our director, is doing this with the MET over a whole raft of failures by the MET, in his personal dealings with them.

The BSSC are fully aware of Savvas' complaints, and are in discussion with the Police and Home Office about many of them.

The Gun Trade Association are challenging the MET too:

<https://www.shootinguk.co.uk/news/gta-challenges-mets-unlawful-licence-form-148733/>

Savvas & Border Force

Savvas was recently travelling by Air with an Air Rifle, and found himself detained by Border Force for 5 hours, resulting in all sorts of travel complications. Border Force required a certificate to state that the rifle was not a licensed rifle and had a muzzle energy of less than 12ft/pounds. There is no such thing, but Border Force, as we know from personal experience, knew enough to be cautious but not enough to be correct. It was only when the boss from Border Force appeared, 5 hours later, and said the rifle was exactly what Savvas had said, and that he had one too, that Savvas was able to go on his merry way.

This experience highlights again the lack of training that is given to Border Force staff, and BSSC will try and push this with the Home Office, just as they have over FEO training.

Epsom & Ewell MP Helen Maguire Seeks Changes to Gun Licensing Laws

The coroner's report on the deaths of the Pattison family at Epsom College was released on the 8/8/24.

Extract from the report: [Emma Ellette and George Pattison: Prevention of Future Deaths Report - Courts and Tribunals Judiciary](#)

"The firearm which George Pattison used was a shotgun lawfully held by him under Shotgun Certificate Number [REDACTED]. That certificate was originally issued by Surrey Police in 2012. In 2016, the police were notified of a domestic violence incident, whereby it was alleged that Emma Pattison had assaulted George Pattison. The matter was investigated and, although the certificate was removed temporarily, it was later returned. There was a renewal application in December 2016 which was granted and a further application for renewal in 2022, which was also granted.

The last renewal application required completion of a new form by the applicant, providing details of the applicant's GP and answers by him to medical questions, which included, have you ever been diagnosed or treated for any of a number of medical conditions, which included 'Depression or anxiety', to which the applicant responded 'No'. The inclusion of the GP's details and medical questions is a safeguard to ensure that the Licensing Officer is aware of an applicant's medical history.

However, George Pattison had consulted an on-line GP and, over the course of 2019 to

2021, had been prescribed a significant amount of Propanolol, the purpose of which was to assist with the symptoms of anxiety. It is unknown whether knowledge of that medical history on the part of the Licensing Officer would have affected the renewal of the shotgun certificate to Mr Pattison.

Further, as set out above, in 2016 there was an allegation of assault made by Mr Pattison against Mrs Pattison. It would appear that, at the time, no consideration was given as to whether this might have been an example of coercive controlling behaviour on the part of Mr Pattison. However, there was evidence within the papers of subsequent domestic abuse / coercive controlling behaviour on the part of Mr Pattison towards Mrs Pattison. That evidence does not appear to have come to attention of the Licensing Officer at the time of Mr Pattison's most recent application for renewal of the licence. "

The coroner's concerns expressed in the report are:

1. An applicant for a shotgun certificate is able to obtain medication from an on-line doctor without the knowledge of their GP, giving rise to a risk that a licensing authority might grant a shotgun certificate to an applicant who has a relevant previous medical history about which the authority is not aware.
2. In consulting an on-line doctor, it is possible for an applicant for a shotgun certificate to avoid the current safeguards relating to full disclosure of their previous and current medical history.
3. Consideration should be given as to how a licensing authority can obtain full and accurate disclosure of an applicant's history of coercive controlling behaviour towards another / others.

Helen Maguire MP has written to the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper and Health Minister Wes Streeting, arguing that any history of coercive behaviour needed to be fully disclosed to, and considered by, the gun licensing authorities during the application and renewal process, and to close the loophole which led George Pattison to obtain medication following an on-line consultation without it being reported to his primary GP, whose role is to report concerns to the gun licensing authority.

The firearms licensing authorities do have scope under current legislation with regard to coercive behaviour, we have seen that with Project Titanium, but the question of on-line doctors is one that may not have been considered.

I personally did not even know that you could use an on-line doctor rather than your GP. In order to get a firearm or shotgun licence you do have to be registered with a GP, and a medical marker should be placed on your records, but how you incorporate medical records from another doctor, whether online or not, is something which is going to need some consideration.

Training for All Firearms Enquiries Officers

The College of Policing launched their training course for FEO's on 23/7/24 at an event attended by most of the licensing authorities in England and Wales. The course is designed to train all FEO's to a national standard and will be rolled out over the next two years, starting in November, with 2 courses every month. The Home Office expect all licensing authority staff to attend the course over time and are putting £1million of funding in place for the first year, after which further funding will be considered.

The BSSC are fully supportive of the development of a national approach to FEO training to improve the consistency with which the statutory guidance on firearms is applied throughout England and Wales.

In tandem with this, a pilot course for training FEOs with instructors and coaches from member associations, was run by the British Shooting Sports Council at the Bisley Shooting Ground earlier this month.

The course covered a wide range of shooting activities with an opportunity to see and handle various firearms, and to try clay pigeon and rifle shooting. Also included was a presentation by a chairman of a home office approved club on the role, and responsibilities, of a shooting club.

It was attended by 27 FEOs from Dorset, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley, Kent, Metropolitan Police, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Hampshire. An encouraging start.

Lead in Ammunition

Europe – extract from the World Forum on Shooting Activities Report

“The proposed EU restriction on lead in all ammunition was moved out of the old legislature into the new one, but the Commission did not reach agreement, thanks to heavy lobbying both in the member state capitals and in Brussels. Particularly significant was the lobbying of the European Defence Agency and NATO regarding risks of a lead ban affecting the supply of military ammunition. The proposal is still not scheduled for further discussion in the REACH committee and the next committee is scheduled for February 2025.

Furthermore, ECHA's data on the impact upon civilian shooting ranges was very poor. European Shooting Sports Forum therefore completed and submitted its own comprehensive survey data, which suggests that proposed exemptions could be too costly and challenging for ranges to implement. The launch of this data was timed to coincide with the opening of the Paris Olympics.

The new EU Commission has now been appointed and the lead ban is likely to have slipped from its priorities. On the matter of Lead Authorisation, i.e. a total ban on the use of lead for manufacturing purposes, in response to a written question, the Commission said that it did not currently plan to ban the use of lead and that it was not obliged to follow ECHA's recommendations.”

[FAQ | essf \(shootingforum.eu\)](#) - [The EU Moves to Regulate Sports Shooters – Euractiv](#)

So, no restrictions on lead ammunition as yet in Europe, with a heavy defence against any restrictions being mounted from every country as well as shooting and defence organisations.

UK

The Health & Safety Executive intends to submit its restriction opinion to Defra, The Welsh and Scottish governments at the end of October. The BSSC has had some sight of what is expected to be included, and there does not seem to have been any improvements to the proposals since we last saw them. In fact, a couple of changes which are more restrictive.

Here in UK our Military ammunition is manufactured by companies that do not manufacture ammunition for civilians, so the defence, defence, is less pivotal than in Europe. But all the other challenges faced by the Europeans are the same, except we are now going to be challenging a government with a virtually unbeatable majority, and a Keir Starmer led government that punishes any of it's parliamentarians who vote against it with a very authoritarian left hand.

I should perhaps state that the last sentence is my personal opinion, but you do not get good governance without evidence based data, free discussion, or free voting. Apologies for getting political, that is not my role.

There have been calls from the shooting organisations for their members to get to know their MP personally, to invite them to ranges and to get them to see exactly what we do and how such restrictions will impact us. It is going to be a very hard and difficult task, and I personally do not see the delays in Europe benefitting us, even though our government at the time only copied and pasted what REACH EU were doing.

Travelling to Europe with Firearms

EU Regulation 258/2012 which lays down rules governing export authorisation and import and transit measures for firearms, their parts and essential components and ammunition was revised in April. Part of the revision is for a single general import authority enabling hunters/sport shooters/collectors to enter the EU.

This could potentially offer some of the benefits of the European Firearms Pass, which is no longer available to us unless you live in Northern Ireland, and that it will allow unrestricted travel within the EU. However, applicants will require a 'certificate attesting to the absence of criminal record in the country of origin.' In practical terms, hunters will have the choice of applying for an EU import authorisation or applying for a national import authorisation from the country/ies they are visiting.

[FACE | EU "Firearms" Regulation revised](#)

[*EM New EU Firearms Regulation.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)