



The British Shooting Sports Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Chairman's Foreword

2025 was a year of sustained challenge and serious engagement for the British Shooting Sports Council, set against a political and regulatory environment that continued to evolve rapidly and, at times, unpredictably.

Throughout the year, the Council worked constructively with Government, Parliament, policing bodies, regulators and international partners to ensure that the lawful shooting community was properly represented and that policy discussions were informed by evidence, experience and practical reality. While debate around firearms licensing, environmental regulation and public safety inevitably continued, the Council remained consistent in advocating proportionality, national consistency and a balanced, evidence-based approach to regulation.

A significant proportion of the Council's work during 2025 was necessarily focused on firearms licensing performance and reform. Persistent inconsistency between police forces, increasing backlogs, and the strain placed on licensing departments by both workload and resourcing remained a matter of concern. The Council continued to engage closely with the Home Office, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and HMICFRS, emphasising that public safety is best served by a licensing system that is properly resourced, professionally delivered and applied consistently across England, Wales and Scotland.

Environmental regulation of ammunition, particularly proposals relating to the restriction of lead, also featured prominently during the year. The Council engaged extensively with DEFRA, the Health and Safety Executive and European partners, highlighting the practical implications of proposed transition periods, the importance of elite sport and historic firearms considerations, and the need for policy that reflects technical reality as well as environmental ambition. While outcomes to date have been disappointing, the Council has continued to pursue constructive dialogue on behalf of its member organisations.

Alongside these major policy areas, 2025 also saw the emergence of wellbeing and safeguarding as an increasingly important strand of the Council's work. Engagement on suicide prevention and mental-health support for certificate holders underscored the need for proportionate, humane and stigma-free approaches that protect both public safety and individual welfare.

I would like to thank the Council's Officers, representatives and member organisations for their continued professionalism, commitment and cooperation throughout a demanding year. I am also grateful to our partners in Government, policing and international forums who continue to engage openly and constructively with the Council.

As we look ahead to 2026, the Council remains well placed to continue its role as a responsible, authoritative and trusted forum for coordination, dialogue and representation on behalf of the shooting sports community.

Mark Garnier OBE MP
Chairman

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	The Rt Hon. the Lord Brady of Altrincham
VICE-PRESIDENT	Martyn Jones
CHAIRMAN	Mark Garnier OBE MP
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones, Derek Stimpson
TREASURER	Chris Miles
SECRETARY	Jeremy Hinde

“The aims and objectives of the Council are to promote and safeguard the lawful use of firearms and air weapons for sporting and recreational purposes in the United Kingdom amongst all sections of the community.”
(Extract from the Constitution of the Council)

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES

Association of Professional Shooting Instructors	Chris Miles
British Association for Shooting and Conservation	Bill Harriman
Countryside Alliance	Roger Seddon
Clay Pigeon Shooting Association	Iain Parker
Deactivated Weapons Association	Barry Johnson
Fifty Calibre Shooters' Association	Scott Wylie
Gun Trade Association	Stephen Jolly
Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association	Derek Stimpson
Institute of Clay Shooting Instructors	Sean Taylor
Muzzle Loaders' Association of Great Britain	Allan Whiffin
National Rifle Association	Simon Lee
National Smallbore Rifle Association	Graham Burns
Sportsman's Association of Great Britain & Northern Ireland	Savvas Toufexis
United Kingdom Practical Shooting Association	Julia Hilger-Ellis

Vintage Arms Association

Ian Barclay

Co-opted Member

David Penn

Co-opted Member

Graham Downing

Honorary Legal Adviser

Mark Scoggins



British Shooting Sports Council

ABBREVIATIONS

APCC:	Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
APP:	Authorised Professional Practice
APPG:	All-Party Parliamentary Group
ASA:	American Suppressor Association
ATT:	Arms Trade Treaty
BASC:	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BMA:	British Medical Association
BSSC:	British Shooting Sports Council
CC:	Chief Constable
COP:	College of Policing
CPSA:	Clay Pigeon Shooting Association
CUF:	Criminal Use of Firearms
DCC:	Deputy Chief Constable
DCS:	Detective Chief Superintendent
DEFRA:	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
D&C:	Devon & Cornwall
ECHA:	European Chemicals Agency
EFP:	European Firearms Pass
ESG:	Environmental, Social and Governance
ESSF:	European Shooting Sports Forum
EU:	European Union
FAC:	Firearm Certificate
FACE:	European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation
FEO:	Firearms Enquiry Officer
FELWG:	Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group
FOI:	Freedom of Information
GP:	General Practitioner

HAC: House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

HMIC: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

HSE: Health and Safety Executive

IOC: International Olympic Committee

ISSF: International Shooting Sport Federation

IWA: Internationale Waffen Ausstellung (International Firearms Exhibition)

MPS: Metropolitan Police Service

NCA: National Crime Agency

NFLMS: National Firearms Licensing Management System

NGO: National Gamekeepers' Organisation

NPCC: National Police Chiefs' Council

NRA: National Rifle Association

NSRA: National Smallbore Rifle Association

PCC: Police and Crime Commissioner

PMB: Private Members' Bill

PNC: Police National Computer

PoA: Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

REACH: Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals

RFD: Registered Firearms Dealer

RUTIC: Project RUTIC (certificates checking system)

SGC: Shotgun Certificate

SI: Statutory Instrument

TVP: Thames Valley Police

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

VoS: Value of Shooting

WFSA: World Forum on Shooting Activities

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

The work of the British Shooting Sports Council during 2025 was characterised by continuity, escalation and consolidation. Issues that had emerged in previous years—most notably firearms licensing performance, national consistency, and environmental regulation of ammunition—moved decisively into the foreground of policy discussion and regulatory development.

Domestically, the Council devoted substantial effort to engagement with the Home Office, DEFRA, policing bodies and regulatory agencies. Firearms licensing reform, including the future structure of the licensing system, performance standards, fees and guidance, remained a central concern throughout the year. Persistent backlogs and inconsistency between police forces continued to undermine confidence among certificate holders and the trade, while placing additional strain on licensing departments.

At the same time, proposals relating to the restriction of lead ammunition required sustained technical and policy engagement. The Council worked to ensure that environmental objectives were balanced against practical considerations, including supply chains, range infrastructure, elite sport participation and the unique challenges posed by antique and historic firearms.

Internationally, the Council continued to play an active role through participation in European and global forums, monitoring developments in EU and United Nations policy and ensuring that UK experience and expertise were represented where possible. These discussions increasingly highlighted the interconnected nature of environmental, trade and regulatory agendas affecting shooting sports.

Alongside these established areas of work, 2025 also saw the Council begin to engage more formally with issues of wellbeing and safeguarding. Discussions around mental health, suicide prevention and proportionate safeguarding within the firearms licensing framework reflected a recognition that public safety must be supported by humane and evidence-based approaches.

In February the Government announced that there would be a further consultation on the potential alignment of Section 1 and Section 2 firearms. This is of a great deal of concern on many levels and the BSSC has been fully focused on this matter. As the year has progressed then this matter has become increasingly worrying in the licensed shooting community's consciousness and 2026 will be a vital year of keeping a steady hand on the tiller, and working together with our partners and others to bring a thoughtful, constructive and evidenced based approach to Home Office and Government.

Throughout the year, the Council's activities were guided by its constitutional objective: to promote and safeguard the lawful use of firearms and air weapons for sporting and recreational purposes across the United Kingdom, while supporting public safety through responsible engagement and informed policy development.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Council Meetings and Governance

The Council met regularly throughout 2025, alternating between in-person meetings and virtual conferences in order to balance effective governance with cost efficiency and accessibility. Formal Council meetings were supported by ongoing engagement between Officers and Association Representatives, ensuring continuity of oversight and timely decision-making during periods of heightened policy activity.

Council agendas during the year reflected the increasing complexity of the external environment. Significant time was devoted to firearms licensing performance, environmental regulation of ammunition, explosives and ammunition control, and preparation for anticipated Government consultations. The Council continued to operate as a central coordinating forum for the shooting sector, enabling member organisations to share information, raise concerns collectively and, where appropriate, align positions in advance of external engagement.

Decision-making throughout the year remained evidence-led and collegiate. Where views differed between member organisations, the Council's role as a forum for structured discussion proved particularly valuable, allowing technical, legal and operational considerations to be explored in detail before positions were formalised.

Practitioners Group

The Practitioners Group continued to play a central role during 2025 as a mechanism for structured engagement between shooting organisations, policing representatives and Government officials. Meetings provided an opportunity to discuss operational issues in depth, including firearms licensing performance data, interpretation of guidance, training standards and emerging regulatory proposals.

During the year, the Practitioners Group considered a wide range of issues, including licensing backlogs, moderators, medical markers, explosives regulation, FEO training, NFLMS replacement and the practical implementation of statutory and non-statutory guidance. The Council continued to emphasise the importance of transparency, proportionality and national consistency within these discussions, particularly where operational practice varied between police forces.

The Group also provided a valuable forum for early identification of emerging issues, allowing the Council to respond proactively rather than reactively to developing policy and enforcement trends.

Secretariat and Administration

The Secretariat's role continued to expand during 2025 in response to the increasing volume and complexity of external engagement. Liaison with Government departments, policing bodies, regulators, member organisations and international partners required sustained effort and careful coordination.

Administrative efficiencies introduced over the year continued to deliver tangible benefits. Consolidation of communications, digital services and administrative arrangements reduced overheads while improving responsiveness and reliability. These efficiencies proved particularly valuable during periods of rapid policy development, enabling timely dissemination of information and coordination of responses across the sector.

The Secretariat also continued to manage the Council's digital presence and communications, ensuring that information was accurate, consistent and appropriately framed for both internal and external audiences.

Events and Engagement

In addition to formal Council and Practitioners Group meetings, the Council supported and participated in a range of events during the year, including stakeholder briefings, seminars and panel discussions. The annual lunch was held once again at The Army and Navy Club in March. These events provided opportunities to reinforce key messages on firearms licensing reform, proportional regulation and national consistency, and to engage constructively with policymakers, enforcement bodies and partner organisations.

Planning work was also undertaken during 2025 for events scheduled for early 2026, including parliamentary engagement intended to support informed dialogue with MPs and officials ahead of anticipated consultations.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Throughout 2025, the Council maintained a stable and well-managed financial position, enabling it to respond effectively to an increasingly demanding policy and regulatory environment without compromising independence or effectiveness.

Financial oversight was provided by the Treasurer, with regular reporting to Council meetings. Expenditure during the year remained within agreed budgets, and no unplanned financial pressures arose that required corrective action. This stability reflected both prudent budgeting and the continuation of cost-control measures introduced in earlier years.

Membership subscriptions continued to represent the Council's principal source of income. During the year, the Council implemented a revised membership charging structure designed to improve transparency, fairness and sustainability. The revised structure sought to ensure that contributions more accurately reflected the scale and nature of member organisations, while remaining sensitive to the financial pressures faced across the sector.

Administrative efficiencies continued to deliver savings throughout the year. Increased use of virtual meetings, careful selection of venues for in-person meetings, and consolidation of digital services reduced overheads while maintaining effectiveness. These savings allowed resources to be directed toward policy engagement, technical analysis and coordination work, particularly in relation to firearms licensing reform, environmental regulation and legal and regulatory issues.

The Council remained mindful of the potential for increased financial demand should regulatory or legislative developments escalate, including the possibility of legal challenge or enhanced national coordination activity. Financial planning therefore remained cautious and forward-looking, ensuring that the Council entered 2026 in a position of resilience and readiness.

LEGISLATIVE AND HOME OFFICE



Engagement with the Home Office

Engagement with the Home Office remained a central strand of the Council's work throughout 2025. Discussions during the year covered a wide range of issues, including firearms licensing performance, fees, sound moderators, statutory and non-statutory guidance, and anticipated consultation activity relating to wider firearms licensing reform.

The Council continued to emphasise the importance of evidence-based policymaking and the need for practical, deliverable solutions that enhance public safety without imposing unnecessary or counterproductive burdens on licensing authorities, certificate holders or the trade. Regular dialogue with officials provided opportunities to raise concerns, offer technical input and respond to emerging proposals. During a Cabinet reshuffle, Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP was replaced by Sarah Jones MP. The BSSC have requested a meeting with her at the earliest opportunity that her diary allows.

Sound Moderators

The regulation of sound moderators remained under consideration during 2025 following the interruption of earlier reform proposals by political developments. The Council maintained its position that sound moderators are a public safety and hearing-protection tool, and that their regulation should reflect this reality.

Engagement during the year focused on ensuring that the extensive technical evidence and consultation responses previously submitted remained visible within Government, and that any future consideration of reform would build upon the work already undertaken rather than restarting from first principles. This appeared to bear fruit when in June the Government announced that moderators would be deregulated, although they stopped short of allowing them falling out of licensing completely. The Government stated that

they would make this change when parliamentary time allowed. The BSSC and partners engaged with Lord Graham Brady (President), and this was raised as a potential amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill in the House of Lords. At the time of writing this annual report, the matter is due to be discussed at the committee stage in early 2026.

Section 1 and Section 2 Alignment

Proposals and commentary relating to the potential alignment of Section 1 firearms and Section 2 shotguns were monitored closely throughout the year. The Council consistently expressed strong opposition to alignment, noting the absence of evidence that such a change would deliver public safety benefits.

The Council also highlighted the significant administrative burden alignment would impose on licensing departments already struggling with performance and resourcing, as well as the likely economic and participation impacts on shooting grounds, rural communities and the trade. Engagement with policymakers sought to ensure that these considerations were fully understood ahead of any formal consultation. This issue has been discussed at length in Council meetings and there are a series of plans in place as we await the publication of the consultation, most likely to be in early 2026.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance

Revisions to statutory guidance continued to attract close scrutiny during 2025. The terminology has meant a firmer stance in many areas of the guidance with an associated impact on firearms licensing times on a system that was already inconsistent across many forces. The BSSC will continue to work with all stakeholders to try and address these inconsistencies, and ensure that interpretation of the guidance is proportionate and reasonable.

Additionally, the BSSC in conjunction with partners has completed a review of the non-statutory guidance at the request of the Home Office and has formally offered its recommendations and observations. In 2026, the BSSC will undertake a review of the Security Manual in partnership with the College of Policing.

FIREARMS LICENSING AND POLICE ENGAGEMENT

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)

Engagement with the National Police Chiefs' Council remained a core element of the Council's work throughout 2025. Persistent concerns regarding firearms licensing performance, national consistency and governance continued to be raised through formal and informal channels.

Analysis of NPCC and Home Office data during the year indicated a continued decline in certificate holder numbers alongside increases in refusals and revocations. While headline statistics suggested improvement in some areas, the Council noted that such figures often masked significant regional variation, long processing times and unresolved backlogs within individual forces.

The Council consistently emphasised that public safety and public confidence are best served by a licensing system that is predictable, proportionate and applied consistently. The absence of enforceable national performance standards remained a central concern, contributing to what many stakeholders described as a postcode lottery for applicants, certificate holders and registered firearms dealers.

College of Policing

The College of Policing continued to play a significant role in firearms licensing policy and practice during 2025, particularly through its oversight of authorised professional practice, guidance interpretation and training standards.

The Council remained fully engaged with the College on issues including firearms enquiry officer (FEO) training, application of statutory and non-statutory guidance, and the interaction between licensing practice and wider policing priorities. Support for structured FEO training initiatives continued, with the Council recognising the value of professional development in improving decision-making and consistency.

At the same time, the Council expressed concern where training materials or guidance risked embedding overly cautious or inconsistent interpretations of legislation. The Council reiterated that professional judgment, informed by evidence and experience, must remain central to licensing decisions.

2025 saw the delivery of the last of the series of pilot days held at Bisley, introducing FEOs to the most likely types of firearms they would see on their visits and giving all the students an opportunity to shoot some of them on the world-famous ranges at Bisley. Going forwards, the BSSC will continue to work with the College of Policing to write a national syllabus for any similar events that may be held in locations other than Bisley.

HMICFRS and Licensing Performance

Firearms licensing performance attracted increased scrutiny during 2025, including through engagement with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. Council representatives participated in national discussions and panel events examining the effectiveness of the current licensing framework.

Contributors from policing, inspection bodies and shooting organisations broadly acknowledged that the existing system is under strain, fragmented and increasingly ill-suited to modern demands. The Council supported calls for clearer governance, improved oversight and greater transparency in performance reporting, while emphasising that reform must be properly resourced.

The Council also highlighted the limitations of performance metrics that focus solely on throughput, noting that quality, consistency and timeliness are equally important indicators of effectiveness.

National Firearms Licensing Management System (NFLMS)

The replacement of the National Firearms Licensing Management System remained a significant issue during the year. The Council continued to engage with stakeholders regarding the tendering process and the specification of any successor system.

The Council emphasised that a replacement system must address longstanding deficiencies in data quality, usability and interoperability. A modernised licensing system was seen as essential not only for efficiency, but also for improving consistency, transparency and public confidence.

Discussions during the year frequently referenced comparisons with other nationally administered licensing systems, noting that a more centralised or standardised approach could deliver substantial benefits if properly designed and governed.



Working in Partnership

CRIMINAL USE OF FIREARMS AND PREVENT

Across 2025, the BSSC has continued to engage with the CUF Prevent Board. The overall assessment remains reassuring: the firearms threat in the UK is stable, predictable, and operating within expected limits. There are a number of projects ongoing, dealing with fraudulent documentation, blank firers, counterfeit firearms and 3D printed firearms.

The implementation of the Online Safety Act represents a key regulatory development. While it offers an opportunity to reduce criminal access to firearms-related content, there is also a risk of unintended consequences for the lawful trade. BSSC are now engaged in a dedicated CUF Prevent sub-group with Ofcom that has been established to support consistent interpretation of the Codes of Practice, reduce the risk of over-takedown of legitimate content, and improve engagement between regulators, platforms, and industry. Ofcom has committed to ongoing dialogue and refinement as the regime beds in.

Overall, the Prevent framework remains strong, with good alignment between law enforcement, regulators, government, and the firearms trade. The focus for the coming period is to stay ahead of emerging threats while ensuring proportionate, well-understood regulation that protects public safety without undermining the lawful community.

LEAD AMMUNITION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION

Environmental regulation of ammunition, and lead in particular, represented one of the most significant and sustained areas of Council activity during 2025. Engagement on this issue required detailed technical analysis, sector coordination and continuous dialogue with Government and international partners.

UK Policy Development and DEFRA Engagement

Within the UK, the Council remained closely engaged with DEFRA and the Health and Safety Executive as proposals to restrict the use of lead ammunition progressed under the UK REACH framework. Throughout the year, the Council acknowledged the importance of environmental protection objectives while consistently emphasising that regulation must be technically sound, proportionate and deliverable.

The Council identified a number of fundamental concerns. Chief among these was the proposed transition period, which the Council considered insufficient to allow for the development, testing, certification and large-scale manufacture of suitable non-lead alternatives across all shooting disciplines. Particular attention was drawn to the limitations of existing alternatives for certain calibres, shooting environments and uses, including live quarry shooting and disciplines reliant on specific ballistic performance.

The definition of elite sport and the scope of any associated derogations were also central to Council engagement. The Council argued that an overly narrow interpretation risked excluding legitimate high-level competition, training pathways and international participation, with adverse consequences for the UK's competitive standing.

In addition, the Council raised sustained concerns regarding proposed calibre thresholds for live quarry shooting and the lack of adequate provision for antique and historic firearms. The Council consistently stressed that historic firearms represent a distinct category, with unique technical and cultural characteristics, and that failure to account for these properly would result in disproportionate impact without commensurate environmental benefit.

Formal Representation and Ministerial Correspondence

During the latter part of the year, the Council formalised its position through detailed written representations. A comprehensive letter was submitted to the responsible DEFRA Minister, setting out the Council's concerns in structured form and requesting further engagement.

The response received confirmed the Government's intention to proceed broadly as proposed and declined the opportunity for a meeting. While the response acknowledged stakeholder engagement, the Council noted with concern the limited consideration given

to the technical and practical issues raised, particularly in relation to transition timelines and historic firearms.

Despite this outcome, the Council agreed that continued engagement remained essential and resolved to pursue further opportunities to raise unresolved issues through parliamentary and official channels. Towards the end of the year, the Chairman, Mark Garnier OBE MP, wrote in person to the DEFRA Minister again requesting a meeting. At the time of writing that request awaits a response.

European and International Context

In parallel with UK engagement, the Council remained actively involved in monitoring and responding to developments at European level. Proposals under the EU REACH framework continued to evolve, with discussions highlighting significant uncertainty and divergence between Member States.

Engagement through FACE Europe and direct participation in European meetings underscored widespread concern regarding the feasibility of proposed restrictions, particularly in relation to supply chains, range infrastructure, elite sport and defence-related overlaps. While the UK was in some respects further advanced in policy development, European discussions reinforced the technical and logistical challenges inherent in any rapid transition away from lead.

The Council also monitored emerging international narratives linking ammunition regulation to broader chemical and environmental control agendas. These developments were recognised as potentially influential over the longer term and were factored into the Council's strategic assessment.

Sector Coordination

Recognising the breadth and complexity of the issue, the Council placed particular emphasis on coordination across the shooting sector. Engagement with member organisations, the trade and specialist bodies sought to ensure that technical information was shared accurately and that positions were aligned where possible.

Throughout 2025, the Council's role as a coordinating forum proved critical in navigating differing perspectives within the sector, while maintaining a coherent and credible external position.

EXPLOSIVES AND AMMUNITION REGULATION

The interpretation and application of explosives legislation to small-arms ammunition emerged as a significant concern during 2025, with potentially far-reaching implications for certificate holders, the trade and licensing authorities.

Interpretation of Explosives Legislation

Concerns arose from interpretations advanced by individual police forces regarding the application of the Explosives Regulations 2014 to the storage of shotgun ammunition by certificate holders. The Council consistently maintained that the Regulations were not intended to govern the domestic storage of small-arms ammunition held lawfully under firearms or shotgun certificates.

The Council noted that such ammunition has historically been regulated within the firearms licensing framework, supported by well-established safety practices and guidance. The application of explosives controls designed for industrial or commercial contexts was therefore viewed as inappropriate and disproportionate.

National Implications and Engagement

A specific legal case arising during the year highlighted the potential national implications of divergent interpretation. The Council considered this development very carefully, recognising that the outcome could establish precedent affecting certificate holders across the country.

Engagement with the College of Policing, the Home Office and the NPCC sought to encourage a nationally consistent and proportionate approach. The Council welcomed indications that the College of Policing was seeking to review the issue at a national level, recognising the importance of avoiding fragmented requirements that undermine confidence and compliance.

Throughout these discussions, the Council emphasised that public safety is best served by clarity, consistency and practicality in regulation.

WELLBEING, SAFEGUARDING AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Wellbeing and safeguarding emerged as an increasingly important strand of the Council's work during 2025, reflecting broader recognition of mental health considerations within the firearms licensing system.

Emerging Issues

Engagement with policing bodies and partner organisations highlighted concerns that some certificate holders may be reluctant to seek mental health support for fear of disproportionate licensing consequences. The Council recognised the need to balance safeguarding and public safety with compassionate, proportionate approaches that do not discourage individuals from accessing support.

Discussions during the year explored practical measures to improve communication, reduce stigma and promote early intervention. These included clearer guidance, improved signposting to support services, and voluntary arrangements for temporary firearm storage where appropriate.

Collaborative Approaches

The Council supported collaborative initiatives involving police, health professionals and shooting organisations, recognising that effective safeguarding requires joined-up approaches rather than purely enforcement-led responses.

While this workstream remains at an early stage, the Council acknowledged its importance and committed to continued engagement as understanding and best practice develop.



NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

European and International Forums

The Council remained active at European and international levels during 2025, primarily through FACE Europe and the World Forum on Shooting Activities. Engagement focused on issues with potential implications for the UK shooting community, including lead ammunition regulation, international trade, ammunition marking and traceability, and emerging regulatory trends.

The Council monitored developments relating to proposals on ammunition tracking and chemical marking, noting concerns regarding cost, practicality and the potential for regulatory creep. Participation in these forums provided early insight into emerging policy directions and supported coordination with international partners.

Domestic Stakeholder Engagement

Domestically, the Council maintained relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, including trade bodies, land management organisations, individual police licensing departments, and parliamentary groups. Conferences, seminars and panel discussions provided opportunities to reinforce key messages on licensing reform, proportional regulation and national consistency.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the Council moves into 2026, a number of issues that shaped activity during 2025 are expected to continue, intensify or reach key decision points. The coming year is therefore likely to require sustained engagement across multiple workstreams, with particular emphasis on consultation activity, regulatory reform and national consistency.

Consultation activity is likely to remain a central priority in 2026. The BSSC are anticipating that the Home Office consultation may well cover additional firearms related issues and not just the potential alignment of Section 1 and Section 2 Firearms. The Council will continue preparatory work to ensure that member organisations are informed and, where appropriate, coordinated in their responses. Emphasis will remain on evidence-based submissions that highlight operational reality, public safety considerations and the need for proportional, deliverable reform.

Linked to this, firearms licensing performance and national consistency will continue to demand close attention. Persistent variation between police forces, ongoing backlogs and differences in interpretation remain a source of concern for certificate holders, the trade and shooting organisations. Engagement with the Home Office, NPCC, College of Policing and HMICFRS will therefore continue to focus on governance, resourcing, training and the development of systems capable of supporting a more consistent and effective licensing framework.

Sound moderators will also feature on the policy agenda. The Council will continue to press for deregulation in a way that reflects the substantial technical evidence already provided through earlier consultation processes.

Environmental regulation, and lead ammunition in particular, will remain a significant and demanding area of work. As UK REACH proposals progress toward implementation, the Council will continue to engage with DEFRA, HSE and other stakeholders on unresolved issues relating to transition periods, elite sport, historic firearms and practical feasibility. In parallel, the Council will continue to monitor European and international developments, recognising that wider regulatory trends may influence future UK policy.

The Council also anticipates ongoing engagement in relation to communications regulation, including matters involving OFCOM, where changes or interpretations may affect shooting organisations, events or broadcasting arrangements. Monitoring and, where necessary, engagement in this area will form part of the Council's wider horizon-scanning activity.

The Firearms and Ammunition Security Manual is another area that will require continued attention. Work on this including its interpretation and application, remains important to ensuring that guidance is proportionate, practical and consistently applied. The Council will continue to engage with policing bodies and officials to address areas of ambiguity or concern and to resist the gradual escalation of requirements beyond their original intent.

Across all these areas, the Council's approach entering 2026 will remain consistent: constructive engagement, coordination across the shooting sector, and firm advocacy for regulation that is evidence-based, proportionate and capable of delivery. While the external environment remains challenging, the Council is well placed to continue its role as a trusted forum for dialogue and representation on behalf of the lawful shooting and collecting community.

Jeremy Hinde, Secretary
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The Council is a founding member of the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) and an NGO in Roster Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Constituent Associations: APSI, BASC, CPSA, CA, DWA, FCSA, GTA, HBSA, ICSI, MLAGB, NRA, NSRA, SAGBNI, UKPSA, VAA.

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