



The British Shooting Sports Council



ANNUAL REPORT

2021

BRITISH SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL

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Cover picture: Matthew Coward-Holley won a bronze medal for Great Britain in the men's trap shooting final at the Olympic Games in Tokyo

Photo courtesy of the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association

FOREWORD

The year opened with the by now familiar restrictions on our personal freedoms which had become an inevitable by-product of the worldwide pandemic. Even so, many of us learned to cope, and shooting sports probably coped better than most other activities. Since shooting usually takes place out of doors, it was an early beneficiary of the steady easing of controls, and although most of our business meetings continued to be held online until the autumn, it was a real pleasure to be able to get out once again during the course of 2020 and meet shooters both in the field, on the range and at clay shooting grounds.

While the national focus on Brexit had been largely overtaken by the pandemic, this was the year in which Britain finally left the EU, and our departure brought challenges for the trade, which has had to come to terms with new and unfamiliar documentation for the transfer of firearms across national borders. The same may be said for individual shooters wishing to take their guns overseas for hunting or sport shooting, and who are no longer able to benefit from the European Firearms Pass. It will inevitably take some time before the new situation beds in.

Britain's gun laws are some of the world's strictest, criminal use of firearms in the UK is very low indeed and thankfully we are largely spared from the shooting tragedies which afflict other countries around the world. Nevertheless, the shooting incident in Plymouth in August was shocking and made us all re-focus upon how best we can ensure that such events can be so far as is possible prevented. We had for two years been discussing with Ministers the introduction of medical checks on certificate holders, and we fully supported the introduction of new Statutory Guidance to the police in November. However, there remains in our view a flaw in that guidance, insofar as there is no statutory duty upon a GP to mark on the medical record of a certificate holder that he or she is licenced to possess firearms. The firearms marker is a fundamental cornerstone of the continuous monitoring of certificate holders by the medical profession and we will continue to argue in favour of it in our dealings with Government.



Jonathan Djanogly MP

Chairman

THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	The Lord Robathan PC
VICE-PRESIDENT	Martyn Jones
CHAIRMAN	Jonathan Djanogly MP
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones, Derek Stimpson
TREASURER	Bill Harriman
SECRETARY	Graham Downing

“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 TD
COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE	Sam Carlisle (to October) James Aris (from December)
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Iain Parker
DEACTIVATED WEAPONS ASSOCIATION	Barry Johnson
FIFTY CALIBRE SHOOTERS' ASSOCIATION	Scott Wylie
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	Simon West
HISTORICAL BREECHLOADING SMALLARMS ASSOCIATION	Derek Stimpson
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Malcolm Plant
MUZZLE LOADERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	Jon Harper-Smith
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Andrew Mercer
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Graham Burns
PREPARATORY SCHOOLS RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Mary Eveleigh
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Savvas Toufexis
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Alex Moreton
VINTAGE ARMS ASSOCIATION	Ian Barclay
CO-OPTED MEMBERS	Jim McAllister David Penn
HONORARY LEGAL ADVISER	Mark Scoggins

ABBREVIATIONS

ATT:	UN Arms Trade Treaty
APCC:	Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
BASC:	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
BMA:	British Medical Association
CA:	Countryside Alliance
CC:	Chief Constable
CSP:	Conference of State Parties
DCC:	Deputy Chief Constable
DEFRA:	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DIT:	Department for International Trade
ECHA:	European Chemicals Agency
EEA:	European Economic Area
EU:	European Union
EUC:	End User Certificate
FCO:	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FA:	Football Association
FACE:	European Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation
FELWG:	NPCC's Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group
FEO:	Firearms Enquiry Officer
GP:	General Practitioner
GMC:	General Medical Council
GTA:	Gun Trade Association
HSE:	Health and Safety Executive
ISSF:	International Shooting Sport Federation
IWA:	Internationale Waffen Ausstellung (International Firearms Exhibition)
MARS:	Manually Actuated Release System
NCA:	National Crime Agency
NFLMS:	National Firearms Licensing Management System
NPCC:	National Police Chiefs' Council
PCC:	Police and Crime Commissioner
PFOA:	Police Firearms Officers Association
PoA:	UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons
RFD:	Registered Firearms Dealer
REACH:	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
SALW:	Small Arms and Light Weapons
TVP:	Thames Valley Police
UN:	United Nations
VoS:	Value of Shooting Survey
WFSA:	World Forum on Shooting Activities

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Overview of the year

National life was again dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the first half of the year, severely restricting shooting sports and preventing international travel. However, with the gradual easing of restrictions which took place from July onwards, there was a welcome return to at least a degree of normal life. The Olympic Games, which had been postponed since 2020, were held in Tokyo and Team GB won a clay shooting bronze, while meetings and other events started once more to be held 'in person' rather than online. Having been unable to entertain guests for two years at its usual Annual Luncheon, BSSC held a drinks party at the House of Commons, enabling friends and colleagues to meet up for the first time in many months. Lead in ammunition remained a major strand in BSSC's work, the Council lending its support to European colleagues over ongoing EU proposals before turning closer to home as HSE announced a consultation on restrictions on lead ammunition in Great Britain. The shooting tragedy in Plymouth in August focused attention on firearms licensing and in November the Government introduced its new Statutory Guidance to Chief Officers of Police on licensing procedure, which had been under discussion for two years and which brought with it a requirement for compulsory medical checks on firearm and shotgun certificate holders.

Aim to Sustain

The Game Fair at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, on July 23 saw the launch of Aim to Sustain, a formal partnership between nine leading rural organisations including BASC and CA. The new public-facing grouping aimed to highlight the crucial role that sustainable game shooting plays in delivering biodiversity net gain through preserving and protecting cherished rural landscapes and wildlife. The partnership undertook to showcase the contribution that game management makes to sustaining rural communities, providing high quality food and making the countryside a place that visitors can enjoy throughout the year.

Antique Firearms

A draft Statutory Instrument on changes to the law regarding antique firearms having been published late in 2020, a draft circular was issued by the Home Office and commented upon. In due course the SI was signed by the Minister and brought into force, amending S58(2) of the 1968 Act with regard to the definition of an antique firearm and amending the obsolete cartridges list. Owners of antique firearms that were reclassified were given a transition period in which to obtain certificates for them or make arrangements for their disposal. It subsequently became clear that, owing to a drafting oversight, an exemption had been omitted from the revised Regulations which allowed possession under S58(2) of certain antique punt guns and firearms of calibres greater than 10 bore. There was therefore further communication with Home Office officials, resulting in an agreement that there would be a further revising Statutory Instrument laid to correct the problem and confirm the uncertificated status of these guns prior to the end of the transition period. A Home Office press release was circulated and a new Statutory instrument formalising the correction came into effect on January 22, 2022.

APCC consultation

A consultation on firearms licensing was opened by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. This was highlighted in a number of local newspapers, most especially in the West Midlands, where the W Midlands PCC endorsed a call for full cost recovery of firearms fees. The consultation was badly flawed, providing no means of verification of respondents, thus opening up the possibility that the answers produced by the survey could be heavily skewed in one direction or another. The questions were over-simplistic and of particular concern was the binary way in which respondents were asked to give their opinions on the matter of ‘full cost recovery’ of firearms licensing. The questionnaire provided no opportunity for respondents to consider the Treasury rules over the provision of public services and nor did it address the question of best practice by licencing departments, both of which are fundamental to the question of licensing fees. The Secretary wrote to FELWG Chair DCC Dave Orford outlining BSSC’s concerns.

Brexit

On January 1, 2021, the Brexit transition period ended and the UK formally left the European Union. This affected shooting sports in a number of ways. Firstly, the Secretary confirmed with officials the less than satisfactory arrangements for the carriage of private firearms to the EU by travelling hunters and sport shooters which had been advised by the Home Office in the absence of the European Firearms Pass. These amounted to no more than advising shooters to check what local documentation was required and then obtain it. Secondly, the Secretary was able to establish that since the EU Lead in Wetlands Regulation had not been published by the year end, it would not apply in Great Britain. Unexpectedly, though, it was confirmed by DEFRA that owing to the Northern Ireland protocol, the Regulation would apply in Northern Ireland. The Secretary liaised with Northern Ireland shooting associations and FACE over the application of the new legislation in the Province.

EU Export Rules

A response was sent to an EU consultation on export rules. BSSC highlighted the difficulties caused by the tightening of regulations on end user certificates, and the fact that additional regulation had required the shipment of firearms and ammunition by increasingly long and complicated routes. This was causing additional cost and delay, whilst also increasing the risk to these shipments.

British Shooting Sports Council meetings

The year opened to a further period of full Covid lockdown which continued in varying degree for six months, once more necessitating all meetings and events to be held online and preventing any overseas travel. A meeting of Council was held on February 18 and considered the most recent draft of the new Statutory Guidance to Chief Officers of Police. The meeting also noted that the EU had published its Regulation restricting the use of lead in or near wetlands. Although this would not apply to Great Britain, it would, because of the wording of the Northern Ireland protocol apply in NI. There was also a discussion on the concept of a centralised firearms licensing agency.

Council met on March 25 and discussed the current exemption enabling young people aged 14-17 to shoot unsupervised with air rifles on private premises. Evidence for airgun fatalities was noted, in which there was a significant pattern of incidents in which airguns had been left loaded. Council therefore supported a letter to the Minister over the signatures of the Chairman and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, proposing that the storage conditions for airguns should include a requirement that an airgun be unloaded when stored. It was also noted that the new body UK-REACH would be consulting on a restriction on lead in ammunition in the UK. Congratulations were sent to Olympic Skeet shooter Amber Hill, who won a gold medal at the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi.

Council met on May 6, when detailed consideration was given to policy regarding the use of lead ammunition in target shooting, which did not impact on the human food chain and where there was no currently viable alternative for small calibres or air rifles. Target shooting had not been mentioned in Parliament and it was recognised that there was a need to raise levels of knowledge before the consultation was launched. A letter of condolence was sent on behalf of BSSC by the Chairman to HM the Queen on the death of HRH Prince Philip, who had been a strong supporter of shooting sports. A letter of thanks was received by Her Majesty.

Council met on July 8 which again turned to the subject of lead ammunition and also considered a new draft of Chapter 8 of the Home Office Guide which took into account the changes to the obsolete cartridges list. The draft chapter was supported by BSSC. It was also noted that a total of £4.2m had been paid in compensation for lever release and MARS rifles surrendered under the Offensive Weapons Act compensation scheme. It seemed that several hundred were still unaccounted for and that some owners had not been contacted by police prior to the launch of the compensation window, which occurred during the lockdown period. Their possession of the rifles remained legal, as no date had been set for the prohibition of these firearms, although legislation was expected imminently.

The Council meeting on September 9 was the first to be held in person at the Farmers Club since the start of the pandemic some 18 months previously. There was a full discussion on the tragedy which had occurred on August 12 in Plymouth, BSSC's response to that tragedy and its likely implications for firearms licensing in Great Britain. An article by the Chairman and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown in The Times on medical involvement in licensing was considered and Council reaffirmed the need to put pressure on the Government to introduce a statutory duty on GPs to place an enduring firearms marker on certificate holders' patient notes.

Council met on October 21 to discuss and confirm its final response to HSE to that organisation's call for evidence on lead ammunition. The wording of the questionnaire had suggested a distinct lack of knowledge of shooting sports by the HSE, but it was felt that BSSC had provided the best information possible, and the member associations were thanked for their considerable efforts in preparing the response.

At its meeting on December 6, Council heard of informal discussions with Ministers on the lead ammunition issue, and in particular the use of lead in target shooting. It also noted that the new Statutory Guidance had come into force on November 1. It had taken over two years of discussion and consultation, and a number of positive changes had been achieved, not least the ability of an applicant to go to any GMC registered doctor for the medical check where his own GP refused or was charging an excessive fee. The main outstanding concern was that there was still no requirement on the GP to place the enduring marker in the patient

notes. After the meeting, Council members repaired to the House of Commons for a very successful drinks party with guests from the Home Office, the police, and from across the range of shooting sports.

Criminal Use of Firearms Prevent Board

A meeting of the NCA's new Firearms Prevent Board was held on January 11. Significantly, participation was extended to the Gun Control Network, and it was noted with some concern by BSSC attendees that what had initially been thought of as an operational forum for liaison between the police, the gun trade and the lawful shooting world, was taking on a rather more political dimension. There was further lively discussion about the title of the group and eventually agreement was reached that the title should reflect the fact that the group's objective would be to bear down on criminal use of firearms, not on lawful users. The meeting heard a presentation on a forthcoming publicity campaign to deter illegal acquisition of handguns and heard concerns about top-venting blank firers. A campaign was launched by the NCA shortly afterwards to seek information from RFDs about sales of these items.

Further meetings of the Board were on April 21, July 20 and November 3. There were reports on an awareness raising campaign to young people and the general public on the dangers of possessing and using illegal firearms, a discussion on a project which sought to address the dangers resulting from conversion of top-venting blank firers into potentially viable weapons, criminal use of homemade viable rounds adapted from blank ammunition, and a proposed firearms surrender campaign scheduled for 2022. The Gun Control Network launched a substantive attack on the possession of airguns by young people in which it supported proposals to end the exemption currently allowing those aged 14-17 to shoot unsupervised on private premises. The BSSC Secretary made a strong rebuttal, outlining the points made in the Council's response to the Home Office consultation on Firearms Safety. He stressed the importance of airguns as a means of introducing young people to the sport of shooting in a safe and responsible way. During the course of the year, GTA Director Simon West was appointed Co-Chair of the Board.

End User Certificates

The gun trade, and especially S5 importers, became aware of new and more restrictive documentation which was required by suppliers exporting goods from the EU. In particular they were being obliged by suppliers to supply EUCs that had been endorsed by a UK Government agency. However, no relevant agency appeared to be aware of this requirement, thus creating serious difficulties for companies with shipments that had been arranged or which were already in transit. The Chairman accordingly wrote to the DIT Minister Liz Truss to seek clarification. With import and export documentation remaining a significant hindrance to legitimate trade, forcing importers to ship by sea rather than overland, BSSC responded to the pre-consultation phase of a review of import-export documentation by the European Commission. It highlighted the problems, the additional expense they caused to importers and the heightened security risks inherent in longer journeys and multiple trans-shipment. Continuing concerns by importers were raised with the Home Office in advance of new

legislation on EUCs for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) coming into force across the EU at the end of 2021. The Home Office promised to liaise with DIT over this matter and produced a 'to whom it may concern' letter from DIT which it was hoped importers might use to evidence the fact that the UK Government would not be signing EUCs as envisaged by the EU legislation. Unfortunately the letter has proved to be ineffective and the matter remains a complex, difficult and expensive one for importers.

FACE

Much of BSSC's involvement with the FACE Brussels office related to the ongoing consultation and legislative process regarding lead ammunition. A meeting on February 24 of the FACE Ammunition Working Group, considered at length the newly published ECHA Annex XV dossier, looking at the decision by ECHA to divide 'small calibre' rifle cartridges (which attract a longer transition period of 5 years) and 'large calibre' rifle cartridges (which attract a shorter transition period of 18 months) at the 5.6mm break-point. This was unexpected and allowed only a short transition for the .22 centre fire calibres, for which there is only a limited non-lead offering. The meeting also considered a survey commissioned by FACE on firearms possession and use in Europe, to which there had been some 15,000 responses.

FACE UK

FACE UK considered the pending EU legislation on lead ammunition and looked also at the impact of Brexit, noting the concerns of travelling hunters and sport shooters, who were being provided with no Government assistance over what documentation was necessary following the loss of the European Firearms Pass. It was noted that FACE Brussels was producing a web page which would contain information on the documentation needed by hunters and sport shooters wishing to travel with firearms. The objective was to produce a map of Europe which would direct the reader details of the paperwork required. The information was to be provided by the individual national hunting associations across Europe and BSSC provided details on the possession of firearms by visitors to GB and NI. This was incorporated in the web page, which went online and is available on the FACE website.

Firearms Rules

The Firearms (Amendment) Rules 2021 introduced new regulations on marking of firearms and revised the form of the Firearm and Shotgun certificates in order to accommodate the additional marking requirements. Details of the new legislation were circulated to Council.

Firearms Safety consultation

A consultation on the security of High Muzzle Energy rifles, possession of air weapons by young people, miniature rifle ranges and reloading of ammunition having been received in November 2020, a response was drafted, taking into account positions agreed by Council on these points. This was sent to the Home Office prior to the closure of the consultation period.

The most concerning of the four areas of consultation was felt to be the proposal to remove the exemption which allows young people to shoot unsupervised with an airgun on private land.

Firearms Security Handbook

At the start of the year, and following agreement between BSSC and the Police over amendment of the Firearms Security Handbook during the course of 2020, it was noted with some frustration that agreed changes to the handbook had still not appeared online on GOV.UK. The Secretary again intervened with FELWG and eventually on January 21, the new version of the Handbook was published.

Football Association

After the Cambridgeshire branch of the FA refused sponsorship for a local football club from the Police Firearms Officers Association because it had the word 'firearms' in its title, the Chairman wrote to the Chairman of the FA expressing his surprise and dismay. A copy of the letter was gratefully acknowledged by the PFOA. The FA eventually responded, supporting the right of local branches to make their own decisions regarding sponsorship.

Grouse shooting

A Westminster Hall debate was held on driven grouse shooting, the requisite 100,000 signatures having been achieved by a petition launched by opponents of shooting. The majority of speakers were supportive, including the BSSC Chairman and those MPs from northern constituencies with grouse moors. Only two MPs opposed.

Guidance to the Police

Statutory Guidance to the Police, in particular around the requirement for medical checks upon applicants for shotgun and firearm certificates, continued to be an active issue throughout most of the year. In mid-January a further revised draft of the proposed Statutory Guidance was received from the Home Office, taking into account some of the comments made by the shooting associations over the earlier draft received in December 2020. However, there remained lack of agreement by Home Office officials that anyone other than an applicant's own GP could complete medical checks for a firearm or shotgun certificate. BSSC thus convened a meeting of all the national shooting associations in which a detailed assessment was made of the draft, with comments being conveyed to the Home Office. The Chairman had further discussions with the Home Office Minister, Kit Malthouse MP. These resulted in the Minister confirming in writing his intention, once the medical arrangements were in place and operating satisfactorily, to extend the duration of the certificate to 10 years. A further revision of the draft Statutory Guidance was received from the Home Office in early July which accepted that any GMC-registered medical professional could undertake checks for firearms licensing.

With this acknowledgement, BSSC's agreement to the draft was confirmed. The new Statutory Guidance was published on October 18 and came into effect on November 1. The Guidance introduced an amended Form 201 for certificate applicants, which includes a standardised medical proforma. Police adoption of this new proforma is being monitored.

Non-Statutory Guidance

Those elements of the former Home Office Guidance document that had not been incorporated into the Statutory Guidance were republished, with a degree of updating, as a new non-statutory guidance document. It was acknowledged by the Home Office that further updating would be required in order to accommodate all the legislative changes that had been made since the last revision, and an updated version was published on December 13, 2021.

House of Commons drinks party

In view of the repeated cancellation of the BSSC Annual Luncheon, a decision was taken to hold a drinks party in the Churchill Room, House of Commons. This was hosted by the Chairman on December 6, and guests were invited from the Home Office, from policing and other public services, from shooting sports and the gun trade, and from the All Party Parliamentary Group of MPs and Peers on Shooting and Conservation. Some 70 guests attended, including Home Office Minister of State Kit Malthouse and around 20 MPs and Peers, and the event was enjoyed by all. In his introductory speech, the Chairman welcomed the new Statutory Guidance and looked forward to further progress on the medical marker which would open the way to a 10 year certificate. He spoke about the technical challenges surrounding a transition to non-lead shot for quarry shooting and spoke of the need to protect from unnecessary restriction those branches of the sport where spent lead ammunition could be contained or recycled, or where there was no viable alternative to lead. In his response, the Minister said that Government had to strike a balance between the public who see firearms in crime and develop a natural antipathy towards them, and the legitimate aspirations of the shooting community. He valued the expertise of BSSC and the shooting associations and hoped to see an improvement in service and consistency across the country following publication of the Statutory Guidance, commenting: "We have a remarkable record in firearms safety, and the reputation of shooting rests on that record of safety."

Lead in Ammunition

EU Restriction on lead in all ammunition

At the beginning of February the European Chemicals Agency, ECHA, published its Annex XV restriction dossier proposing restrictions on lead in ammunition and fishing weights. The main conclusions were:

- Lead shot cartridges not to be placed on the market (there being a 5 year transition period). There were proposed derogations for competition shooting for individuals, or for designated locations which had appropriate containment and recycling.

- Lead rifle bullets not to be used (there being a 5 year transition period for calibres up to 5.6mm and an 18 month transition period for calibres 5.6mm and above). There was a proposed derogation for target shooting at designated locations which had appropriate recovery and recycling.

Consultation on the proposals opened on March 24. It was noted that while the EU legislation would not affect Great Britain, Northern Ireland would be included within its scope. A webinar organised by the European Shooting Sports Forum exposed obvious differences between the attitude of the international clay target shooting bodies, which would not countenance any move away from lead and the hunting associations, which recognised some change as being inevitable. BSSC continued to be involved with the work of FACE Brussels in its response to the ongoing ECHA consultation process and a meeting of FACE UK was held to agree a formal response to ECHA from the UK. As a member of the FACE Ammunition Working Group, the Secretary continued to be involved with the work of FACE Brussels regarding the ECHA consultation process, and he attended a number of meetings and webinars on the subject. At the year end it was noted that the consultation process had seen slippage of 3-4 months as a result of Covid, and opinions of the committees concerned were not expected before March 2022

UK Restriction on lead in all ammunition

An announcement was unexpectedly made by DEFRA Minister Rebecca Pow on March 23 that the UK Government was proposing its own consultation on a restriction on lead in all ammunition, mirroring the EU process. The Minister anticipated a consultation phase inside a year, with possible legislation to follow. It was noted with concern by those shooting associations which had signed up to a phased withdrawal from lead shot for live quarry that the timing of the DEFRA process had the potential to short-circuit the voluntary process they had entered into. The opening of a call for evidence was announced by HSE, seeking information and data with which a restriction dossier would be prepared. BSSC submitted a full response after detailed liaison with all member associations. The response covered shooting ranges, hunting, consumption of lead-shot game, lead in game meat, manufacture and supply of ammunition, home casting of lead bullets, substitution of lead in ammunition, the voluntary phase-out of lead in live quarry shooting, and the potential impacts of a restriction of lead in ammunition on wildlife, businesses, hunters and sport shooters. It was pointed out that an orderly transition from lead for hunting, where projectiles are dispersed into the wider environment and food is a by-product, was already underway. Target shooting, however, did not release lead beyond the confines of the range, where it may be sequestered or recycled, and it was stressed that target sports did not accept that transition from lead was necessary or practical. Information on the manufacture and sales of lead-based and non-lead ammunition was provided and it was noted that any transition would present the gun and ammunition trade with major challenges.

Transition from lead shot in game shooting

On November 30 the Chairman and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown wrote to DEFRA Secretary of State George Eustice about the challenges faced by the gun and ammunition trade in producing sufficient non-lead cartridges to supply the UK market. They said that the gun trade had always seen a five-year phase-out of lead as ambitious and pointed out that of the 260 million

cartridges used annually in the UK, only 2.5% were currently lead free. Steel shot cartridges needed specialised powders from the US and the shot itself was mainly sourced from China, so there were significant supply chain issues. The Secretary of State was told that the industry needed time to adapt, and that if restrictions were imposed before alternatives to lead were available in sufficient quantity, damage could be done to the countryside.

Media Training

In 2020 BSSC Council agreed to hold a series of media training courses to enable shooting association representatives better to respond to requests for interviews on TV, radio or online. In light of the continuing pandemic, these were held online. Member associations were invited to nominate candidates for training via Zoom, two half-day courses were held, with a total of eight candidates being trained.

National Crime Agency

The Secretary had a one-to-one meeting with Christian Ashwell of the National Crime Agency. The aim was to share experiences and to enable both parties to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities which exist for the shooting community to assist the police in bearing down upon armed crime.

NFLMS Discovery Project

The Secretary attended a meeting with police representatives involved in reconfiguring and updating NFLMS, the objective being to share the views of the shooting associations with firearms licensing over the operation of Police IT.

NPCC FELWG

It was announced that ACC Dave Orford was to hand over the chair of FELWG pending his retirement in 2022 from policing. The Chairman wrote to Mr Orford thanking him for his leadership of firearms licensing, which had commanded respect from those involved with the management and administration of shooting sports. Contact was immediately established with his successor, CC Debbie Tedds of Warwickshire Constabulary, along with her newly appointed staff officer.

Offensive Weapons Act

A compensation scheme having been agreed within the terms of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 for 'faster firing' MARS and Lever Release rifles and their accessories, a hand-in process was put into operation by police forces. With the conclusion of the three-month compensation window, it became clear that 1,133 of these firearms had been surrendered, whilst the number manufactured was considerably more. The publicity surrounding the surrender scheme had occurred during the Covid lockdown period and some owners were apparently unaware of the timing of the compensation window and in a few cases of the actual prohibition. Concerns were addressed to Home Office officials. The BSSC Secretary liaised over these matters and recommended that Police should deal with due consideration any such cases coming to light.

Olympic Games

The GB shooting team attended the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Although depleted as a result of a last minute positive covid test for Olympic Skeet medal hopeful Amber Hill, the team achieved success with a bronze medal for Matt Coward-Holley in the men's Trap event. A message of congratulation was sent by BSSC and a video of Matt with his Olympic medal was circulated to Council.

Plymouth shootings

On August 12, 22 year old Jake Davison shot and killed five people and injured two others before fatally shooting himself in the Keyham area of Plymouth, Devon. It was the first fatal mass shooting in the UK since the Cumbria shootings of 2010. Davison used a licenced shotgun, his gun and certificate having been taken from him by Devon and Cornwall Police in 2020 following his alleged involvement with an assault, but subsequently returned to him shortly before the shootings. A particular feature of the shootings was the posting by Davison of misogynistic messages on social media prior to the shootings. Immediately after news of the event broke, the BSSC Secretary contacted the Chairman, Vice Chairman and members of Council. Although the incident remained headline news for 48 hours, media response to it was light in comparison to previous UK mass shootings. It was agreed by Council members that further action needed to be taken to highlight the requirement for a Statutory duty on GPs to place the permanent firearms marker on the patient notes of certificate holders, and to press the case for this with the Department of Health. The Chairman and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Shooting and Conservation made the case for such a Statutory duty on GPs in an editorial article in The Times.

Practitioners Group

The Practitioners Group is the forum in which BSSC member associations liaise with the police, Home Office and other regulatory bodies. A well-attended online meeting was held on April 29, in which concerns were raised with the Home Office over the Statutory Guidance and the Offensive Weapons Act surrender process. Police representatives updated the meeting on

progress with licensing arrangements following the relaxation of Covid restrictions. A meeting was held at the Farmers Club on November 23, being the first 'in person' meeting of the group since the outbreak of the pandemic, and members of the group were warmly appreciative of the opportunity to get together. The Home Office updated the meeting on the newly published Statutory Guidance which would be kept under close review for 12-18 months post Plymouth, to ensure that it worked in practice. The Home Secretary had written to each Chief Constable asking them to check where certificates had been revoked/refused and subsequently returned or issued. It was reported that 6,434 certificates had been revoked/refused of which 908 had been subsequently returned. Following the review, in 8 cases certificates had been removed again. There was discussion over the transfer of the FELWG portfolio to CC Debbie Tedds of Warwickshire Police who would be meeting the Home Office and the College of Policing to address police training and learning standards. The intention with training was to look wider than FEOs, to other licensing department staff members.

Scottish Practitioners Group

The Secretary was invited to join a meeting of the Scottish Practitioners Group on April 30. Police Scotland acknowledged mistakes made over incorrect seizures of multi-shot handguns for humane dispatch from existing certificate holders who had appealed against partial revocation. The matter had been settled out of Court and the guns were returned. There was a discussion on the proposed Statutory Guidance, which would result in Scottish certificate holders, who currently were required to submit to one-off medical checks, being required to have repeated checks made upon them at renewal. This was likely to cost Scottish certificate holders an additional £2.5m over the next 5 years.

A meeting on December 14 was preceded by a presentation by Daryn Hutton-Rees of Medcert, who outlined his company's policy and objectives. A new leaflet to shooters on mental health was agreed and signed off, for which Police Scotland agreed to lead the publicity with a press release. There was a backlog in grants of around 600, but very few temporary extensions had had to be issued to renewing applicants. Visitors permits were well short of the number which would normally have been issued pre-Covid. Post Plymouth, 232 files had been reviewed and there had been no change in decision making on any of them.

Shooting and COVID-19

With the effective closure of all recreational shooting under the Covid lockdown regulations, all ranges, shooting grounds and live quarry shoots remained shut during the early part of the year, although pest control activities and deer management continued. The Secretary liaised with the Chairman over the possibility that limited local and individual shooting opportunity could be maintained under the exemption allowing daily exercise, and this was confirmed by DEFRA.

Stakeholder meetings

BSSC attended stakeholder meetings with both the Thames Valley and Metropolitan forces. TVP was appointed the co-ordinating force in England & Wales for wellbeing and mental health,

and was co-ordinating figures on suicides and attempted suicides. The force was working on the production of campaign literature which would be directed to the rural community in particular.

United Nations

Arms Trade Treaty

The Secretary attended a WFSA briefing on the ATT Conference of State Parties and joined the series of UN CSP meetings in Geneva (online) from April 26-30. The focus was the illicit trade in and diversion of small arms and light weapons, the aim being to prevent and eradicate illicit trade and achieve stockpile management and security. Many national delegations spoke in support. The UK struck a slightly different note, saying that SALW have a legitimate role in defence and security. The FCO delegate spoke in support of well-regulated legal trade, saying that it would contribute to dealing with the problem of illicit arms. There was a discussion about the need to build IT in order to help state parties communicate more effectively and improve the control of exports. There were further sessions on shipment and trans-shipment and on transparency and reporting of arms transactions. In a session on finance, the ATT's parlous finances were laid bare. The 2021 budget was US\$ 1,068,200, of which only US\$920,000 (86.15%) had been received, only 51% of states having paid. There was a slow decline in the percentage of states that paid their dues and the total accumulated deficit was US\$522,845, reducing the amount of cash available for planned operations.

14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

The Secretary attended (online) this UN Congress in Kyoto, in which one of the workshop sessions dealt with current crime trends, including new technologies associated with crime and crime prevention. Much of the committee's agenda covered issues such as cryptocurrencies, the dark net, trafficking of migrants and online child abuse. However, a section of the agenda dealt with firearms issues. This included 3D printing of firearms, the use of technology in control and tracing of firearms, and the use of technology for managing stockpiles and security, including biometric ID for access control, new technology for inventory monitoring and protection of weapons in transit. At the conclusion of the Congress, a text was adopted inviting Member States to assess the need for a policy on the possession of, and trafficking in, blueprints for 3D printing, to keep pace with technological developments to prevent the unlicensed production of firearms or their illicit conversion and reactivation, and to consider new technologies for stockpile management and security.

Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons

A meeting was held from July 26-30 at which four pro-shooting groups delivered statements to the meeting, including the WFSA president. It was felt that the PoA was becoming a vehicle for pushing for international standards for the management of ammunition, with the suggestion that there should be some form of international management, with basic marking of every round, plus batch number records, increased record keeping by manufacturers and non-transferable end user certificates which would prevent the gifting of civilian ammunition.

There had been mooted an international standards body specifically to address ammunition, which would hold a database of shippers, trading companies and details of individual vehicles and ships used for transferring ammunition.

Value of Shooting survey

As a member of the assessment and selection panel, the Secretary held preliminary discussions in January and then participated in the process of interview and selection of the contractor which would be responsible for the survey, the successful tenderer being the University of Northampton. The Secretary was also involved with ensuring that BSSC shooting associations participating in the survey completed necessary financial and data protection documentation. The BSSC Secretary engaged with project co-ordinators from the University of Northampton to provide general information about member associations and UK shooting. A draft questionnaire produced by the university was reviewed and amendments were made, especially in the area of target shooting. Acknowledging that the questionnaire required more work, the VoS Secretariat subsequently convened two focus groups, one on live quarry shooting and the other on target shooting, with the BSSC Secretary chairing the latter. A meeting of the target shooting focus group was held, with further detailed comments being fed back to the VoS Secretariat.

World Forum on Shooting Activities

With all international travel at a standstill and the annual IWA trade Fair in Nuremburg cancelled for a second year running, the spring WFSA Executive Committee meetings were held online. It was reported that the UN Programme of Action continued to focus on ammunition which was seen as 'the oxygen and the lifeblood' of the problem of small arms proliferation. They were looking for members States to maintain information and records over the life cycle of ammunition and to tighten international regulation. Marking and tracing remained a major strand of discussion.

The BSSC Secretary attended WFSA's autumn conference in Lisbon in September, where it was decided to convene a sub-committee to consider WFSA communications and outreach. The BSSC Secretary was a member of the committee which met three times by videoconferencing during October and November. One of the principal objectives was to consider the possibility of running a side event at a future meeting of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, where discussion had centred upon the marking of ammunition. Research was undertaken by BSSC into the technical difficulties of marking and the likely effectiveness of marking as a means of combatting criminal or terrorist use of ammunition. In a discussion on lead in ammunition, it was noted that the assessment by ReachLaw for FACE had suggested that 69% of ammunition production in the EU was dependent upon the EEA market, of which 82% of products by turnover currently contained lead. At risk was €1bn of profit and 5,000 jobs. The firearms industry would be required to switch to production suited to non-lead within 5-10 years. In a survey of 80,000 European hunters and shooters, 1 in 4 hunters said they would stop hunting in the event of a lead ban, and 30% said they would hunt less often. One-off costs related to the replacement of firearms could reach €14.5bn.

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