

# The British Shooting Sports Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

**2008**

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## FOREWORD

The past twelve months have been a busy time for the British Shooting Sports Council, and especially for our Secretary. To him we owe a considerable debt of gratitude for his hard work and diligence.

As you will glean from reading this annual report, the Council's work has covered a multitude of subjects both at home and abroad. This situation is unlikely to alter during the foreseeable future. As ever we must remain ceaseless in our efforts to protect and promote our sport.

One of the highlights of the year, to my mind, was National Shooting Week 2008. It is an excellent initiative which serves to promote and enhance public and political perception of shooting in general, whilst encouraging new faces into the sport. I offer my congratulations to all concerned in the organisation and delivery of this worthwhile event.

Another bright spot, I believe, is the increased cooperation between the Council and ACPO. This has to be an essential component for the future.

The mere fact that our chosen sport involves the use of guns invites adverse comment from sections of society, and a good ongoing relationship with the authorities is paramount.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our past President, Sir Patrick Lawrence. Sir Patrick has done so much to support the work of Council. It is indeed a great honour to step into his shoes.

I wish the new Chairman, Lord Glentoran, every success. In him we have a great enthusiast with much experience of sport, politics and commerce.

Finally, the BSSC could not survive and operate without the member organisations. I am most grateful to them for their vital and continuing support.

The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL

**THE COUNCIL'S OFFICERS**

PRESIDENT	The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot DL
VICE-PRESIDENT	Brian Carter
CHAIRMAN	The Lord Glentoran CBE
VICE-CHAIRMEN	Martyn Jones MP Bill Wiggin MP
TREASURER	Graham Downing
SECRETARY	David Penn

*“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 CLAY TARGET SHOOTING GROUNDS	Ian Clifton
ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Christopher Miles
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION	Bill Harriman TD
COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE	Graham Downing
CLAY PIGEON SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Phil Boakes
GUN TRADE ASSOCIATION	John Batley
INSTITUTE OF CLAY SHOOTING INSTRUCTORS	Roger Hill
MUZZLE LOADERS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN	Ken Hocking
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Glynn Alger
NATIONAL SMALLBORE RIFLE ASSOCIATION	Geoff Doe
SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND	Alan Westlake
UNITED KINGDOM PRACTICAL SHOOTING ASSOCIATION	Graham Gill

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers (England and Wales)  
 ACPOS: Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland)  
 AECAC: European Association for the Civil Commerce in Weapons  
 AFEMS: Association of European Manufacturers of Sporting Ammunition  
 ANPAM: Associazione Nazionale Produttori Armi e Munizioni sportive  
 ATEO: Airgun Training and Education Organization  
 ATT: Arms Trade Treaty  
 CASA: Coordinating Action on Small Arms (a UN organization)  
 CEO: Chief Executive Officer  
 CUF: Criminal Use of Firearms, an ACPO Secretariat  
 EU: European Union  
 FAC: Firearms Advisory Committee (not yet appointed). Also firearm certificate.  
 FACE: Federation of Associations for Hunting & Conservation of the European Union  
 FELWG: Firearms and Explosives Licensing Working Group, an ACPO body  
 FESAC: Foundation for European Societies of Arms Collectors  
 GGE: (United Nations) Group of Government Experts  
 HSE: Health and Safety Executive  
 IANSA: International Action Network on Small Arms  
 IEACS: Institut Européen des Armes de Chasse et de Sport  
 ISACS: UN CASA's International Small Arms Control Standards  
 MAG: Manufacturers Action Group  
 MEP: Member of the European Parliament  
 MSP: Member of the Scottish Parliament  
 NFLMS: National Firearms Licensing Management System  
 NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation  
 NIAG: National Independent Advisory Group, now Themed National Independent Advisory Group  
 PACE: Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984  
 REACH: EU Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals legislation  
 RFD: registered firearms dealer  
 SGC: shotgun certificate  
 TNIAG: Themed National Independent Advisory Group  
 UN: United Nations  
 VCR Act: Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006  
 WFSA: World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities

## Changes

At the end of December 2007 the Shooting Sports Trust merged with the Gun Trade Association, so ceased to be a member association of the BSSC.

## Overview of the year

In April, The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot stood down as Chairman, but was elected as President, succeeding Sir Patrick Lawrence. Lord Glentoran was elected Chairman. In May, an extremely successful National Shooting Week was held, organized on the Council's behalf by the Countryside Alliance, with much good media exposure as well as many visitors to club-organized events. The year saw progress, if sometimes slow, on many of the matters that had occupied the Council during 2007. Work continued on discussions with the Home Office and police on potentially beneficial amendments to the Firearms Act 1968, either by means of changes to the Firearms Rules or a Regulatory Reform Order. The Secretary continued to chair the Practitioners' Group, at which the Council meets with representatives of police firearms licensing officers, the Home Office and the Forensic Science Service in order to discuss matters of current concern relating to firearms. The political stage of the Amendments to the European Union Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons was completed, and detailed discussion on its implementation has begun with the Commission. It became clear that the United Nations' interests were growing in the control of the international movement of small arms, in firearms crime as well as in the use of small arms in conflict and in the subject of civilian possession. Progress towards an Arms Trade Treaty now enjoys widespread support within the UN. An ATT would control the international trade in, and movement of, a wide range of conventional weapons but from the beginning is likely to be particularly focused on small arms. The BSSC continued to work closely with the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities not only on UN related matters but also on its work on environmental aspects of the sport and on public relations. With regard to domestic legislation, there has been no progress with regard to further controls on deactivated weapons announced in January 2008. The devolution of firearms legislation, at least where air weapons are concerned, continues as a live political issue in Scotland. Very useful and potentially beneficial discussions took place with the Health & Safety Executive on aspects of controls on explosives, mainly concerning commercial trade, although these did not progress as quickly as had been hoped, because of internal reorganization within the HSE. The Council responded to the Home Office's review of PACE, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and made a major contribution to the continuing Home Office review of 'Firearms Law Guidance to the Police' (2002). After a long hiatus, the Home Office Working Party on firearms forms began to meet again. The Council took the lead among a group of interested parties in discussions with the Home Office on controls on the sale of swords with curved blades. The Council provided input on firearms licensing aspects of measures to enable potential British Olympic pistol team members to train for 2012 in the UK and contributed its views on the proposed banning of the use of lead shot over wetlands in Northern Ireland. The Secretary continues to chair the meetings of the Lead and Noise Attenuation Working Group.

## **ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms Themed National Independent Advisory Group**

This Themed National Independent Advisory Group, of which the Secretary is a member, has undergone some changes during 2008, reflecting restructuring of the ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms portfolio. At meetings in September and November the Secretary contributed to the re-drafting of its terms of reference. The Group's work will now be focused on the curbing of the supply of illegal firearms and on measures to prevent or discourage gun crime, rather than on 'post-crime' issues such as witness protection and help for victims. It will work with both the ACPO CUF Steering Group and the Technical Group, and plans to meet four times during 2009.

## **ACPO Firearms Licensing Conference, Royal Armouries, Leeds**

The meeting was well attended by police Licensing Officers and Home Office representatives. The BSSC was represented by John Batley (Gun Trade Association), Graham Downing (Countryside Alliance), Bill Harriman and Matt Perring (BASC) and the Secretary. Themes included efficient co-operation with other Government agencies, the revision of 'Firearms Law: Guidance to the Police' (originally published in 2002), the new national intelligence database to be rolled out in 2010, continuing problems relating to the sale of realistic imitation firearms, firearms law in the Republic of Ireland (of particular relevance as the Scottish Government is interested in using aspects of Irish practice as a model for any new Scottish law, should the Scots be permitted to enact it), an overview of the situation in Scotland and, as the main topic, the possible use of a Regulatory Reform Order to amend the Firearms Act 1968. The Secretary gave a talk outlining the possibilities for change and this was followed by discussions in four workshop groups, each moderated by a BSSC representative. This Conference was interesting, informative and well worth attending. With Adrian Whiting in the Chair, positive co-operation and a willingness not just to talk about reform but to seek ways of achieving it continue to be the order of the day. BSSC's contribution, especially in helping establish policy, was clearly seen as a very significant factor, and indeed the very important session on legislative reform was left entirely in the BSSC's hands. We came away in a much better position to make progress on this important opportunity for legislative improvement.

## **All Party Group on Shooting and Conservation**

The Secretary is a member of this Parliamentary group which is convened by BASC, and participated in meetings on coastal access as an aspect of the Marine Bill and on the shooting events at the 2012 Olympics. This was of great value in making clear to the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games the considerable problems attendant on the decision to site the shooting events at Woolwich, and the strong reservations felt by the shooting Associations about its viability.

## **Amendment of the EU Directive 91/477/EEC on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons**

While the Amendments to the EU Directive had been agreed by the EU Parliament in 2007, some residual work remained to be done in 2008. There were further meetings of Government experts in Brussels during February to consider the ‘final’ draft prepared by the EU’s ‘lawyer-linguists’, and there were briefly fireworks over textual changes introduced by the aforementioned ‘lawyer-linguists’ which would have considerably hindered unsupervised shooting by under-18s. Thanks to rapid intervention by FACE, the European hunters’ group and by the Home Office, extensively briefed by the BSSC and GTA, plus support on the day from the Nordic nations and France, these changes were dropped and the version approved by the EU Parliament was restored. Between now and January 2010, the Home Office will be working on implementation of the changes. Areas of concern centre on the additional requirements imposed on the gun trade and a potential problem over two not entirely compatible definitions of ‘parts’ in the amended Directive. While no change was made to the status of antique weapons or collectors, nevertheless the UK is a separate signatory to the Vienna Protocol, and this mandates an 1899 break date for the definition of antiques, so this will be considered by the Home Office. Some EU nations, including France, are considering beneficial changes on the antiques issue, now that no change is required by the Directive, and the BSSC will be studying these. The final text of the Amendments, subsequent to the ‘lawyer-linguist’ process, was published on 21<sup>st</sup> May. The only change of significance was to clarify language with regard to components in the case of a firearm in which the chamber was separate from the barrel. This was not controversial. An informal EU Commission meeting on trade issues arising from these Amendments was held in Brussels on the 24<sup>th</sup> November. In attendance were four European Proof Masters, lawyers and representatives from AECAC, AFEMS, ANPAM, BSSC (GTA), FESAC and IEACS. The meeting discussed the formation of a Group of Stakeholders, the definition of ‘replicas’, ‘reproductions’ and ‘imitation firearms’ and a European standard for de-activated firearms. Further points of discussion ranged around dealers’ record keeping, marking and tracing and questions surrounding the four categories of firearms in the Directive. Presentations were given on the Explosives Directive and the transfer of weapons. Discussions will be on-going as Member States must address the Amendments in national legislation by July 2010 and some other issues by 2014.

## **Annual General Meeting and the Council’s new Chairman**

At the AGM held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April, The Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot was elected as President, Brian Carter was re-elected as Vice-President, The Lord Glentoran was elected as Chairman, Martyn Jones and Bill Wiggin were re-elected as Vice-Chairmen, Graham Downing was re-elected as Treasurer, Jim McAllister was again co-opted onto Council and Mark Scoggins was appointed Honorary Legal Adviser. The outgoing President Sir Patrick Lawrence was thanked for all his work for the Council over many years, and Lord Shrewsbury, in taking on his new role as President, assured the Council that he would continue to be active in defending shooting. Our new Chairman, Lord Glentoran, besides being a keen Shot, is Shadow Minister for Northern Ireland and Wales, and Shadow

Minister for the Olympics, in which he takes a strong interest. He won an Olympic Gold for Bobsleigh in 1964 and is also much involved in sailing.

### **Annual Luncheon**

The Annual Luncheon 2008 was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> March. It was a most enjoyable occasion, at which Sir Patrick Lawrence and The Earl of Shrewsbury were presented with silverware marking their long service to the sport by the BSSC's Guest of Honour, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Other guests included the Countess of Shrewsbury, Lady Lawrence, Lord and Lady Glentoran, Lord Dear, Vernon Coaker, Dr Vito Genco (General Secretary, World Forum) and Mrs Maria Genco Tambella, Pat Johnson (former Secretary of the BSSC) and Mrs Muriel Johnson, Mark Scoggins (Honorary Legal Adviser) and Graham Widdecombe (Home Office).

### **British Deer Society and the use of shotguns for deer control**

Council responded to a press release from the British Deer Society in October, which advocated that only rifles should be used for deer control. The BSSC's position is to support the Section 7 'farmer's defence' allowing the use of a shotgun with appropriate cartridges to protect crops or growing timber and the raising of awareness among farmers and landowners of both the law on the use of shotguns and the limits of effectiveness of shotguns in the humane killing of deer.

### **Health and Safety Executive**

A meeting with the HSE took place on 16<sup>th</sup> January to discuss its consultative document entitled 'Proposals for Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments and Revocations) Regulations', including the long-standing proposal that the Firearm (or Shotgun) Certificate become the basis for licensing the possession of black powder by shooters. This was positive in tone, and the BSSC representatives also made a strong case for the simplification of the Regulations regarding quantities of 'shooters' powder' that an individual shooter might possess. A number of other technical points affecting the licensing of the trade and the transport of black powder were also discussed.

A further meeting to discuss the consultative document entitled 'Proposals for Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments and Revocations) Regulations' with the Health & Safety Executive took place on 28<sup>th</sup> April. It was confirmed that the intention had been dropped to supersede the Explosive Licence by recognising the FAC or SGC of the private user as the authority to acquire and hold black powder. Administratively, it had become clear that the existing system was more efficient, and the BSSC accepted the reasoning behind this. There was no intention to start charging for the licence. The HSE is still considering aspects of the BSSC's proposal that all licensing of dealers be undertaken by the police, as well as how best to license businesses which only traded in

shotgun cartridges, and issues relating to selling fireworks. The HSE's investigation of the safety of 1 kilo containers for black powder had been completed and there was an intention to confirm their continuing use. There was detailed discussion of application and renewal forms for both private users and dealers, with agreement that further refinement was clearly needed. Fee levels were discussed, and changes were expected to have an impact on dealers, but not shooters. The meeting was very positive, and the BSSC considers that it has made good progress on both private shooter and trade-related issues, but no further meetings were held during the year, pending the completion of organizational changes within the HSE.

## **Home Office**

**Ban on Offensive Weapons:** Following the Home Secretary's announcement on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007 that action would be taken on 'samurai swords', in effect a ban with exceptions, the Secretary led a group including John Batley of the GTA and representatives of the To-ken Society, the auction houses and museums to a meeting at the Home Office on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. It was made clear that the political decision to take some action on 'samurai' swords had been made, and there was discussion of how to protect the collector, the legitimate trade in collectible Japanese swords and the martial arts practitioners while effectively targeting the cheap modern replica 'samurai' swords that were perceived as the problem. Home Office representatives were sympathetic to these aims and appeared receptive to proposals to minimise any legal impact on these groups. To the considerable concern of all interested parties, when the Draft Offensive Weapons Order amending the 1988 Offensive Weapons Act was laid in Parliament on 27<sup>th</sup> February, without any further consultation, any qualifying reference to 'samurai' swords or 'swords in Japanese style' had been omitted, and the Order referred to a ban on the manufacture, import or transfer of swords with a curved blade of 50cm length or more, so caught all such sabres and swords less than 100 years of age, whatever their national origin. The defences incorporated in the Order, however, applied only to swords of Japanese manufacture. This ban took effect on 6th April. This situation was unacceptable, and the Secretary and John Batley asked to see the Minister. A very useful meeting was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April with Vernon Coaker and officials, at which the Home Office agreed that the Order as laid was unfair and should be amended to place swords not of Japanese manufacture on the same basis as swords originating in Japan. The vehicle to achieve this would be an Amendment (No.2) Order to place all swords with curved blades on the same basis with regard to antique status, import, manufacture, transfer and export (essentially to allow import and sale of such swords made prior to 1954, and to allow the manufacture, import and sale of post-1953 swords made by hand using traditional methods). The Home Office would also ensure that swords could be sold or otherwise transferred to serving members of the armed forces, Lords Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants 'for purposes of Crown function', that the sport of fencing was not disadvantaged, and that there was no potential problem regarding the use of swords for religious purposes. The BSSC was given an opportunity to consider the draft, which met its concerns, and the Amendment (No. 2) Order became law on 31<sup>st</sup> July. The swords of the two World Wars have thereby been saved for collectors and the trade in good quality modern hand-made swords can continue.

**Consultation on ‘Guidance’ to the Firearms Act:** The promised revision of the Home Office ‘Guidance’ is now well under way, with the intention of making the next edition a ‘live’ document which can be consulted (and readily updated) on line. In future, the revision process could therefore be gradualist and undertaken at need. Indeed some aspects of the present Guidance will not be subject to detailed review and updating at this point, as they are dependant on yet-to-be-implemented Amendments to the EU Weapons Directive. Two tranches of draft revisions have been received for comment. By and large, in most chapters the changes are minimal, and take account of changes in the law occasioned by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, Violent Crime Reduction Act and Deer Act and also changes to contact details. Most of these are not contentious, but a few sections appear to be in need of careful further revision. Again, the participation of the shooting organizations is clearly seen to be a key element of this process. At the time of writing, draft revisions to seven further chapters are awaited.

**Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill:** This new Bill only proposes to make two minor changes to the 1968 Act, to incorporate references to ‘...or a youth rehabilitation order within the meaning of Part 1 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2007’. At the time of writing, there is no news on any further additions of concern to the BSSC.

**Deactivated firearms:** Following the Home Secretary’s announcement on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008 of her intention to introduce a ‘ban’ on pre-1995 deactivated firearms, the subject was discussed at a meeting at the Home Office on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, and at a meeting John Batley of the Gun Trade Association and the Secretary had with Vernon Coaker, the Home Office Minister, on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. The historical and financial value of collections of deactivated firearms was strongly emphasised, as was the lack of evidence for further controls in police and Forensic Science Service data. At the time of writing there has still been no formal Home Office announcement regarding the Home Secretary’s intention. Considerable concern remains over the impact of any proposals on collectors of deactivated firearms and on the trade in these items, although there is no expectation that simple possession is to be banned.

**Firearms in Scotland:** Despite the Home Secretary’s continuing stance against the Scottish Government’s proposal for the devolution of firearms legislation to Edinburgh and the defeat on the 17<sup>th</sup> January of the Scottish Government’s motion to ban the ownership and use of firearms and air weapons (other than for recognized and legitimate occupational and sporting interests), the Scottish Government remains keen to move its legislative proposals forward. There seemed to be a widespread presumption among MSPs that someone should not be allowed to acquire or possess an air weapon unless good reason can be demonstrated, and there was mention of treating shotguns on the same basis as rifles. To coincide with the recent publication of ‘Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms, Scotland, 2007-08’, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill repeated his call for a Scottish pilot licensing scheme for air weapons, based on the firearms licensing system in Eire. In Eire the system with regard to air weapons is based on a lethality threshold of one joule of muzzle energy, anything in excess of which is classed as a firearm and must be licensed. Licensing is based on good reason and a suitable place to shoot and each firearm requires a separate licence. Mr MacAskill focused on what he considered irresponsible use and ‘unnecessary’ possession. This issue

must therefore remain of considerable potential concern to the BSSC, and the situation will be monitored closely.

The Calman Commission to consider aspects of Scottish devolution is chaired by Sir Kenneth Calman, Chancellor of Glasgow University. Its 'First Report', published on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, was essentially a preliminary report and does cover, among a very wide range of issues, the devolution of firearms licensing to the Holyrood Parliament. It made no recommendation, although it does include firearms licensing as one of a group of issues for which a case could be made for devolution. The Commission is asking for further submissions on this matter. It is expected to submit its final report in the summer of 2009. There will be an opportunity for the BSSC and member Associations to submit comments early in 2009.

**PACE:** The ongoing review of PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) was raised as an issue by the GTA, which had been studying the potential implications in detail. Because of the Council's concern that a minor administrative breach of the Firearms Act 1968, for instance a failure to notify a change of address (should it result in a police caution or a prosecution) could include the taking of a DNA sample, fingerprints and photographs, the Secretary wrote to Alan Brown, Head of Police Powers and Procedures at the Home Office, on the 9th June. He replied that the Government was not proposing that the taking of DNA and fingerprints be extended to all offences. It was suggesting areas which the public, stakeholders and practitioners may wish to consider. On 24th November the BSSC submitted a response to make clear its concern, since the consultation paper had made no precise proposals regarding retention of such data, pending a decision in the European Court of Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights did indeed rule on 2nd December that two British men should not have had their DNA and fingerprints retained by police. The men's information was held by South Yorkshire Police, although neither was convicted of any offence. The unusually strongly worded judgement could have major implications on how DNA records are stored in the UK's national database. The seventeen judges in a unanimous decision said keeping the information "could not be regarded as necessary in a democratic society". Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said she was "disappointed" by the outcome. Under present legislation, the DNA profiles of everyone arrested for a recordable offence in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (but not in Scotland, where they are destroyed if no charges are brought) are kept on the database, regardless of whether they are charged or convicted. The court found that the police's actions were in violation of Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life, of the European Convention on Human Rights. It also said it was "struck by the blanket and indiscriminate nature of the power of retention in England and Wales". The judges ruled the retention of the men's DNA "failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests," and that the UK government "had overstepped any acceptable margin of appreciation in this regard". The court also ruled "the retention in question constituted a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to respect for private life and could not be regarded as necessary in a democratic society". The Home Secretary said: "DNA and fingerprinting is vital to the fight against crime, providing the police with more than 3,500 matches a month." "The government mounted a robust defence before the court and I strongly believe DNA and fingerprints play an invaluable role in fighting crime and bringing people to justice." "The existing law will remain in place while we carefully consider the judgement."

**Review of Firearms Legislation:** During the year there was no further consultation involving the BSSC on the Review of Firearms Legislation instigated in January 2004. The BSSC remains of the view that there is unlikely to be any impetus in Westminster for a 'root and branch' reform of firearms legislation this side of a general election.

**Violent Crime Reduction Act:** At the time of writing, specifications for blank firers were still being working on by the Gun Trade Association and Home Office in the light of the EU Weapons Directive. John Batley is to be congratulated for all his efforts to ensure the practicability of this very difficult piece of legislation.

**Working Party on the revision of firearms forms:** Following a long hiatus caused by changes in personnel and operational duties, a meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> October. This was mainly concerned with revising certificate application forms and with the process for 'variations', by which a FAC holder might change, or add to, the firearms included on his certificate. It is good to report that good progress is again being made in an area where real improvements to the administration of the Firearms Act 1968 can be achieved without either introducing primary legislation or laying an Order.

### **Lead & Noise Attenuation Working Group**

Two meetings were held during the year. That held on the 15<sup>th</sup> April concentrated on technical issues relating to the 2012 Olympics, EU legislation affecting sound moderators, the Proceedings of the World Forum Lead & Noise Attenuation Workshop in Palermo, local authority guidelines regarding noise levels at shooting grounds and the increasing popularity of steel shot for clay target shooting. That on the 1<sup>st</sup> December considered aspects of Olympic shooting and the outcome of the recent World Forum meeting in Suhl.

### **National Shooting Week 2008**

More than 80 shooting grounds and clubs from Northern Scotland to the Channel Islands signed up for National Shooting Week, which ran from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> May. There was notable interest from air rifle and air pistol clubs as well as clay shooting and rifle clubs. This year's National Shooting Week focussed on introducing people of all ages across the UK to target shooting. It was organised and funded by the Countryside Alliance on behalf of the BSSC, with much input from the CPSA and NSRA, and was again a considerable success in terms of both media exposure and public participation. Some 200 open days took place, with a good mix of clay shooting grounds and air rifle and small-bore clubs. The NSW was timed to coincide with the NRA's Open Day and thousands turned up to 'have a go'. Media monitoring demonstrated that at least 22 million people read or heard about National Shooting Week, so many more received a very positive message about shooting. These UK figures do not include world-wide availability of footage via Reuters. Independent Radio News took broadcast material and both BBC News and Sky requested

footage for library use to support broadcasts of the Beijing Olympics. A particular effort was made to highlight the work of the British Paralympic Association to encourage more disabled people to try the sport. At the media launch on the 29<sup>th</sup> April, those present were addressed by the BSSC's new Chairman, Lord Glentoran, a former Olympic gold medal winner for bobsleigh, who has been much involved in the 2012 bid. Politically, the event received support from the Liberal Democrats, from the local MP Humfrey Malins, who attended the media launch, as did Gerry Sutcliffe, the Minister for Sport. Speaking at Bisley, Gerry Sutcliffe said: "I think National Shooting Week is a great testament to the sport because of what it does in Olympic year and as we run up to London Olympics 2012. It is an opportunity for the sport to show itself to the wider community in the UK... So National Shooting Week gives an opportunity for all the misconceptions about shooting to be put to one side but it also gives people an opportunity to understand that this really is a sport that can be for everybody."

### **Olympic pistol shooting**

During the year the Secretary was involved in a series of meetings to discuss how the training of the Olympic pistol squad in Britain could best be achieved. These involved representatives of the Home Office, BSSC, British Shooting, ACPO, ACPOS, the Scottish Executive, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and various branches of MoD with ranges within their purview. The meetings were very positive in tone, and, following detailed consultation with British Shooting, the Secretary drafted and submitted detailed licensing requirements to the Home Office. By the end of the year prohibited weapon authorities were being issued to young women selected for the elite squad for the 25 metre pistol event.

### **Practitioners Group**

The Group is made up of representatives from police firearms and explosives licensing officers, Home Office, Forensic Science service and BSSC. Four meetings of the Group were held during the year at the Divisional Police Headquarters in Derby, St Andrew's House (the Scottish Government offices in Edinburgh), BASC headquarters at Marford Mill and Essex Police headquarters in Chelmsford. These continue to be a very useful means of resolving difficulties relating to firearms and explosives legislation and its practical implementation. Subjects discussed during the year included the application of the Violent Crime Reduction Act to the acquisition of air rifles by cadets and Boy Scouts, transport by authorized dealers of Section 5 prohibited weapons owned by third parties, reasons for the decline in firearm and shotgun certificate numbers, HSE proposals for changes in explosives licensing, changes needed to Section 7 temporary permits, fox shooting with muzzle-loading rifles, the lack of evidence for the use of deactivated firearms in crime, the implementation of recent Amendments to the EU Directive on control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, antique firearms in other EU countries, modifications to conditions on firearm certificates following changes to the

Deer Act, electronic applications for the grant of certificates, pre-certification training, the type and sources of firearms used in crime, possible future changes to the Firearms Act, the notification of transfers by Email or fax *via* an Electronic Communications Order, the legal status of ‘cup’ grenade launchers, appeals, shotgun shooting and Section 11(6), problems caused by ‘peaks and troughs’ in certificate renewals, Olympic shooting and the seeking of medical information when granting a certificate. The Council is most grateful for the work of Matthew Perring (BASC), who acts as Minutes Secretary for these meetings.

### **Proposed ‘ban’ on handguns in Finland**

Following a second school shooting with a licensed .22 pistol in Finland, there was a growing call for a ban on handguns, and a 50,000 signature petition was presented to the Government. There was also a call to ban gun collecting. In response to requests from Finnish shooters and collectors, the Secretary provided information on the experience of bans in Britain, Australia and elsewhere. At the time of writing, discussions between stakeholders were continuing and the Finnish Ministry of the Interior had made no announcement on any legislative change.

### **Proposed prohibition on the use of lead shot over wetlands in Northern Ireland**

During the consultation period for this proposed prohibition, the Council responded, supporting a policy that adhered as closely as possible to the International Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds, i.e. a ban on the use of lead shot over wetlands, rather than a species-based approach. The Council therefore supported the Scottish model for Northern Ireland.

### **Scottish knife legislation (Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Bill)**

Consultation on the licensing of knife dealers ending on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, and covered the timescale for implementation, exceptions, conditions on display, identification required to buy a non-domestic knife, levels of security in shops, establishing good reason to buy a sword and record keeping. By and large the proposed measures were disproportionate and likely to be of little value either in preventing knife crime or in providing a useful audit trail. It is not anticipated that there will be much in the way of concessions made as a result of the consultation process. Licensing will be undertaken by local authorities, so registered firearms dealers will need to obtain a separate licence for the sale of knives. At the time of writing, discussions were continuing on ‘proof of age’ (i.e. to confirm that the prospective purchaser is 18 or over). It is hoped that dealers will be allowed to display their stock. At the time of writing, there were unresolved problems over the timing of the

introduction of these controls. Consideration appears not yet to have been given to the selling of swords.

### **Standing Conference on Countryside Sports**

The Secretary attended the 60<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> meetings during the year. The theme of the 60<sup>th</sup> meeting was 'Future opportunities for uplands management' while that of the 61<sup>st</sup> was 'Maintaining a flow of young entrants to countryside sports'. This Conference continues to provide a very valuable forum where a wide range of rural, conservation and field sports organisations can meet, discuss matters of mutual concern and find common ground. At the 61<sup>st</sup> meeting Gary Richardson, CEO of the Countryside Foundation for Education, gave an amusing and upbeat presentation on opening urban minds to the countryside. 20% of the country's 8.5 million children had never visited the countryside. The Foundation took 'Countryside Live' events to deprived urban areas and organized estate days and a 'Farms for Schools' programme, both of which brought children to the land. The scheme was influencing 320,000 children a year, all of whom were future voters, and was opening up the possibility to them of employment in the countryside. Shooting was very much included as an aspect of country life, and the Foundation worked closely with BASC and the Countryside Alliance. It was noted that today's situation had greatly improved and was very different to 20 years ago, when the League Against Cruel Sports held sway in the educational system. During the open discussion note was made of the work of BASC's Young Shots and its work with Mothers Against Guns; police interest in legitimate shooting outlets for youngsters in conjunction with ATEO (Airgun Training and Education Organization); the introduction of Young Gun Dog Handlers training by the Kennel Club and the success of the National Shooting Weeks run on behalf of the BSSC by the Countryside Alliance. In summing up, John Swift stressed the encouraging situation, the growing appreciation that country sports are a part of the maintenance of the eco-system and the need to co-ordinate and co-operate better with organisations such as Natural England and the RSPB.

### **World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities**

The BSSC is a founding member of the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities (WFSA), a NGO in Roster Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The work of World Forum continues to be of primary importance to shooting in Britain, since so much legislation is now supranational in origin.

**Executive Committee Meetings:** The World Forum held its Executive Committee Meeting, Sub-committee meetings and plenary session on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March in Nuremberg and Executive Committee and Sub-committee meetings on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September in Suhl. In March, Carlo Peroni, of IEACS, who had served with distinction as Chairman since WFSA's foundation, announced his retirement. He was presented with a fine statue, suitably inscribed. Ted Rowe, Chairman of MAG (the Manufacturers' Advisory Group), was unanimously elected in his place. Besides all its work at UN level,

the World Forum is working increasingly at a regional level, particularly the Organisation of American States (where small arms issues are again under discussion and World Forum is seeking to recruit members), the EU and Africa, where hunting issues are to the fore. Indeed, the World Forum is planning to hold a 'Workshop on the Environmental and Economic Benefits of Hunting' during 2009. The publication in 2008 of the proceedings of the 'Lead and Noise Attenuation' workshop organised by World Forum in Palermo in 2007 has been proving of great value. Lead in ammunition had been removed from anti-lead legislation in Vermont because the shooting community had demonstrated a high standard of activity in addressing the problem of lead in shooting. The wide-ranging EU REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals) survey of the use of heavy metals is expected to publish its findings on lead in 2009. Two aspects of concern to shooting are REACH's interest in 'shooting areas' (i.e. areas where hunting took place without clearly defined borders) in contradistinction to 'shooting ranges' where the area of use was clearly delineated, and indirect lead poisoning (raptors and other carnivores). It remains clear that noise, lead and increasingly problems from old clay target fragments containing high levels of toxic hydrocarbons called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) are seen as issues internationally. The meeting in Suhl focused on United Nations issues, including the Third UN Biennial and the Arms Trade Treaty and the impact of CASA's programme, both reported on below. The marking and tracing of both firearms and ammunition were much discussed. Other subjects considered included the updating of both World Forum's leaflet on the economic benefits of shooting and its website.

**Third UN Biennial Meeting of States, the Arms Trade Treaty and other United Nations activities:** The third UN Biennial Meeting of States held in New York from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> July continued work on the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the issue of civilian possession of firearms remained firmly on the agenda. Curbing civilian possession as a crime control measure is now seen as a major feature of the UN's small arms activity. In 2006, while this was emerging as an issue, the process was still seen primarily in terms of reducing low-intensity conflict and terrorism. The Secretary was part of the World Forum on the Future of Sports Shooting Activities' team at the Non-Governmental Organizations' presentation day on small arms issues. He gave a statement on the well-established position of shooting within British society which was coordinated with statements from shooting organisations from Canada, New Zealand, the United States of America and World Forum itself to cover different aspects of the legitimate civilian trade in, and possession and use of, firearms. These meetings are of critical importance to the shooting sports, as UN legislation is not negotiable when it is incorporated into EU or national law, so must be addressed at the UN level. The role of 'civil society' in the UN process is increasing, and was acknowledged by the report on the Biennial. Of the 336 Non-Governmental Organizations registered for the Biennial, only two were representing the shooting sports, however. The draft report was approved by a vote of 134, none against, 2 abstentions and a number not voting. To go to a vote in these circumstances is unprecedented, since in the past reports have been consensus documents. This could have profound future implications, since a single contrary vote could no longer effectively prevent a decision, as happened at the Biennial meeting in 2006 when the US vote against meant that there was no report. Pressure is also building for any future UN action on small arms to be 'legally binding' rather than 'politically binding' (which is frequently

seen as aspirational, and so ignored). Other issues with the potential to affect shooters were proposals for the further future consideration of civilian possession, investigation of the 'demand' as well as the 'supply' side of international arms trading, monitoring of air and sea transport, controls on production and supply and mandatory national record keeping of all small arms.

Besides the Biennial which approaches arms control from the point of view of curbing illicit trade, there has been much other UN activity relating to small arms. A Group of Government Experts has been considering military stockpiling and surplus ammunition, although it did not include marking and tracing or civilian aspects. CASA, the hitherto rather inactive UN agency devoted to small arms control, is being re-invigorated to take positive action on both the Programme of Action and the UN Vienna Firearms Protocol (part of a broad UN initiative against transnational crime. The Firearms Protocol impacts mainly on the trade and on collectors, because it defines antiques). CASA's Implementation Support System, which can provide grants for national small arms control systems, may impact significantly on the domestic legislation of some developing countries, as may CASA's two-year ISACS (International Small Arms Control Standards) initiative, intended to improve standards. The ISACS programme is advisory, not prescriptive, but already includes a bureaucratic and restrictive model for national firearms legislation.

The UN Arms Trade Treaty Group of Government Experts formally finished its work on 8<sup>th</sup> August. World Forum was able to make representations. While the Biennial meeting deals (ostensibly) with illicit trade in small arms, so not surprisingly there is by and large a negative attitude to them, the ATT is aimed at regulating the legitimate trade, so there is potential for greater sympathy for our point of view. Critically, the USA was a major player in the ATT GGE. The GGE's report does take note of "... constitutional protections of private ownership..." This is clearly a reference to the USA, but for other countries it could still be a great help.

Very much as anticipated, a UN General Assembly panel on 31<sup>st</sup> October overwhelmingly backed steps to draft a treaty establishing international standards for the arms trade. It endorsed a resolution urging UN member states to consider how to implement "the highest possible standards to prevent the diversion of conventional arms from the legal to the illicit market, where they can be used for terrorist acts, organized crime and other criminal activities." 147 countries in the Assembly's disarmament committee supported the text, 18 abstained while only the United States and Zimbabwe voted against. The British resolution to set up an open-ended working group to meet for up to six one-week sessions starting in 2009 was adopted. There is also a resolution to include international transfers of small arms on the UN Register of Conventional Arms. At the moment the inclusion of small arms is voluntary, but if it becomes mandatory, it could have a significant impact on trade in civilian firearms. Continuing World Forum involvement at UN level remains a certainty for the foreseeable future and the BSSC will continue to play its part.

### **Miscellaneous matters**

The Secretary was invited to lecture to the Finnish Symposium of Military Sciences held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> May. While in Helsinki he took the opportunity to have informal discussions with Heikki Pohjolainen, the President of ASE, the Finnish Arms Collectors' Association, and Runo Kirko, President of the Finnish National Rifle Association.

'Shooting Sports Survey: Conservation and Sport' was published by Merril Press to coincide with the UN Biennial, and free copies were available to national delegations. It includes a chapter on gun collecting by Stephen Petroni, Chairman of FESAC, and the Secretary, a chapter on the relationship between levels of gun ownership and violent deaths by Colin Greenwood (GTA) and another on shooting in the UK by the Secretary.

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