

Minutes

NPCC FELWG, DURHAM (VIRTUAL), THURSDAY 22ND OCTOBER 2020.

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Portfolio:	FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES LICENSING WORKING GROUP
Attachments @ paragraphs:	<u>None</u>

1. ATTENDANCE

1.1 Apologies –

James O'Donnell (Essex)

1.2 Present

Dave Orford, Durham Constabulary - Chair
Neal Bickford, Durham Constabulary
Terry France, Durham Constabulary
Mark Groothuis
Tim Madgwick, Mowbray Partners
Zoey Evans, TVP
Jonathan Cumberbatch, Staffs Police
Alisson Higgins, Police Scotland
Martin Parker, NaBIS
Darren Miller, Hampshire Police
Chris Downs, Met Police
Louise Seabrook, Eastern Police Region
Tony Hill, Hampshire Police
Suzanne Hassall, Merseyside Police
Joe Cooke, Devon and Cornwall Police
Bridget Hodgson, Northamptonshire Police
Mathew West, Scottish Government
Graham Widdecombe, Home Office
Fiona Smith, West Yorkshire Police
Sara Williams, South Wales Police
Karl Eenmaa, South Wales Police
Richard Kennett, Norfolk / Suffolk
Michelle Moore, D & C Police



2. Action Log

DO – Welcome and opened the meeting, thanking those present for attending. Outstanding actions to be covered as part of the main meeting.

Main Agenda

Lead Update

DO gave updates on;

Initial Medical Screening – Home Office accept the FELWG recommendations. British Medical Association (BMA) to update their IT systems enabling markers with GP's to put the markers on.

BASC & BSSC – following recent meetings with both, they are supportive and appreciative of everyone's efforts during the current COVID environment.

Home Office Personnel – DO had spoken with new staff within the Home Office (HO). They have been made aware of the areas of concern and risk which include – Borders and their governance, S5 Dealers and the want for regionally trained staff to have responsibility for inspections.

FEO Training Package

DO introduce TM. HMICFRS recommendation that training package developed and delivered to FEO's. College of Policing (CoP) to provide accreditation but not able to provide platform or delivery. The package produced by TM company is owned by FELWG and will provide national minimal standards for FEO's.

TM introduce produce and short presentation given to the group.

Group discuss several points raised;

FS - who had tested the new training, made reference that the level of learning was far superior than previously ran courses and provides more than a basic foundation and accreditation.

MG - who has advised TM throughout the process, described the course as being 'experienced based', and all of the examples are real and come from actual incidents. The practical weapon handling skills aren't covered in the package and will still remain with each force but the student will gain an understanding of APP priorities which are core to business and safety. It is designed to take someone with no knowledge to being competent.

Accreditation – College of Policing, accredited learning. TM looking to gain CMI approval and the user being able to gain points towards an NVQ.

The group agreed that there should be clarity via the CoP and acknowledged CPD / PDR.

TM – the platform will generate feedback to the supervisor, confidentially, so that the progress and learning of the FEO can be monitored.

Home Office Updates

GW gave brief updates from HO;

Antiques – regulations to be laid in parliament soon (since the meeting this has been set as the 4th November). Should there be any cartridges be removed from the obsolete list then an update will be provided.

Firearms Safety Consultation – published next month. Dealing mainly with Air weapons, Miniature Rifle Ranges, Ammunition (intent to manufacture illegally)

Fees – will be reviewed in 2021

Weapons Directive – any requirements will be practical and will be minimal to meet the UK's obligations this will include brokers. Domestic (within UK borders) brokering may be subject to additional controls but it is intended that the commission be advised that existing controls are adequate.

NFLMS – Adjustments being made to capture the unique markings on firearms and component parts. For individual certificate holders there will be an amendment to the table section on the new style license to include the serial number & unique markings.

This is currently subject to legal review and once agreed, the new style certificates will be trailed and live in December.

Offensive Weapons - Request from the group that the planned surrender of weapons and compensation launch be put back till spring '21?

GW – acknowledged this and will make the request.

NB – Gave clarity that the list of exact weapons to be reconciled and holders will be generated from the HO. This had been a specific request.

European Firearms Permits (EFP) – These will no longer be needed but until such time the on-going negotiations are completed then it's hard to give a definitive. Northern Ireland will continue to issues permits.

Statutory Guidance Going Live – CD asks if there is any timeframe that could be given when anticipating going live?

GW - No publication date yet. Hopefully before the end of the year.

Statutory Guidance, Medical – MG made observation regarding medical information & military personnel, who should be considered as 'resident' when stationed abroad on the basis of having access to an MOD GP. These personnel are just as likely to come off the rails as anyone else. How do we monitor their behaviour when they are overseas? Would the reporting process from the MOD capture the things that we would pick up they if were within the uk?

NB – Will feedback into HO.

Registered Firearms Dealers (RFD's)

TH – Raised the issued relating to S34 & what is meant by 'substantive' in relation to trade following lost appeal in 2018. The reference within the legislation to 'trading to a substantial extent' is only mention upon grant and cannot be taken into account upon renewal.

GW – The court was right in its interpretation and application of the legislation. This is an issue that has be around for a number of years and has been mentioned within this group previously. It's not something that couldn't go into the statutory guidance any change could only be achieved by change in the legislation.

NB – Within the joint NFTC meeting there is a strategic action point for FELWG to highlight vulnerabilities where it will be recorded and minuted.

Practitioners Update

TF - gave update from practitioners groups. This cantered around extending their thanks and gratitude to everyone for their understanding for both license holders and traders during the current COVID restrictions. The new security manual (version control of the 2019 manual, will be circulated with these minutes) will be published soon with some positive amendments especially around CCTV and dealerships.

NB – Echoed the above and an appeal from the shoot fraternity that 'we' would not be too pernickety when it comes to the amount of ammunition people had spent.

Innovations

DO – reiterated the thanks and support from the shooting groups around how alternative means and practices have been implemented to assist licence / certificate holders during the current restrictions. Encourage forces to find the best way to manage the situations but not being too prescriptive.

FS – North Yorkshire have been using video calls as an alternative to home visits for low risk shot gun grants.

DO – the ownership of the risk sits with each Chief Constable. It is positive that people are challenging existing practices and taking a holistic approach to managing the risk vs demand. Happy to support people's ideas in principle but by, not doing so, it will stifle innovation and will not manage demand.

NABIS

MP gave updates

Antiques – With the HO have been producing a list of all the antique weapons involved in recovery, discharged and obsolete ammunition recovered in the last 3 years. This will be presented to ministers to gain impetus to get the relevant changes made to the legislation.

Increased use of Shotguns in crime, primarily to intimidate with handguns being used to kill or injure
Shotguns – 84% of recovered shotguns pre date 1988 (reference was made to the change in 1988 re listing of weapons on certificates), with the majority of these not being stolen guns. The vast majority

of guns used in crime come from the 'illegal arms pool' rather than being stolen, that's not to say that stolen shotguns don't get used in crime.

NFLMS

DM gave updates

Attached slides will show the timeline for change, consultation and implementation of the updated NFLMS including the Hendon Virtual Environment.

DO – Update, conversations with Blue Prism. They are supporting some forces with technology, smart robots – moving and pushing data between systems as if a human was doing it, which is quite common in some areas of policing. This could be something to interface with NFLMS in the future. Historically there have problems with trying to introduce a nation Firearms Licensing system due to everyone using different record management systems, different IT strategies and the huge financial investment the benefit wouldn't be there.

Anyone wanting further details please speak to the company via the below email address;

TH – We are 1 of the forces that has the Blue Prism product in place since April 2020. Is currently being used for the NFLMS single online home applications. It has developed to both grants and renewals with success rates of 95 – 98% without glitch for renewals and 70% for grants, this is a significant efficiency saving and there definite tangible results.

DM – Have linked Blue Prism with the HO as there are opportunities. There has also been a request that the HO look into the single online home straight into NFLMS.

Explosives

FS – Pyrodex / 0499, it is a solid propellant (black powder substitute) and needs an explosive certificate – NO EXEMPTION if people want to purchase it either individually or RFD then an explosive certificate is needed. Storage, can be classed as a shooters powder storage can be kept with those limits.

AOB

Drones

TH – Reports of landowner shooting down drones. Two incidents of note 1) worrying livestock, 2) privacy / voyeurism.

At the time of this meeting there was no known test case to measure the aforementioned examples. Each force need to take risk based / NDM approach to each incident, with an expectation that they are subject to a chief officer review. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) legislation to be considered re possible prosecution.

Misuse of Weapons

ZE – summary of document circulated. Reminder to forces to provide timely updates to allow the document to be circulated prior to the meeting.

COVID - Tier 2 Lockdown

CD – How are forces managing face to face / home visits during Tier 2?

Majority of forces still carrying out face to face / home visits. Ensuring all involved are adhering to social distancing and wearing PPE.

DO – The balance of the duty of care to staff v's public. The risk of suspending process will create a back log which may create other risk elsewhere. Individual forces are to make their own risk based decisions.

COVID – Issuing of Permits

SH - North Wales, should visitor permits still be issued now that Wales is in 'firebreak' lockdown?

DO – We have to comply with the law. Acknowledgement that permits may be required for sporting or business purposes. No firearms licensing should issue permit that facilitates law breaking.

Additional Update

From HO

The latest position on EU Exit and the European Firearms Pass.

It is now clear that EFPs will not feature in any agreement with the EU. This means that from 1 January 2021, GB certificate holders will no longer be eligible for an EFP and will no longer be able to use one to travel to the EU with their firearm or shotgun. The situation will be different in Northern Ireland where, in line with the NI Protocol, NI certificate holders will still be able to benefit from EFPs.

EU visitors will still have to apply for a visitor's permit in order to bring their firearm or shotgun into the UK, but it will no longer be a legal requirement for them to produce their EFP in support of their application. When we spoke about this a little while ago, you said you would nevertheless expect police forces to continue accepting EFPs in support of applications as a form of evidence of an EU citizen's suitability to bring a firearm into the UK. Can I check that is still the case?

The Law Enforcement and Security (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 will make the necessary changes to remove EFPs from firearms legislation from 1 January.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/742/contents/made>

Next meeting – New Year 2021, Durham Constabulary