Thank you for responding to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee’s Call for Evidence on the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill. All submissions will be examined and considered as part of the Committee’s scrutiny of the Bill.

Please be aware that questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer before you can submit the form.

Follow the Local Government and Regeneration Committee’s Twitter feed - all Committee tweets on this Bill will have the hashtag #aw&lbill.

*1. Please supply your name and contact details:

Name: Dr Graham Wightman
Organisation:
Address 1:
Address 2:
City/Town:
Postcode:
Country:
Email address (if no email leave blank):
Phone Number:
2. Please confirm that you have read and understood the Scottish Parliaments “Policy on the treatment of written evidence by subject and mandatory committees”:

☐ Yes

3. Please confirm whether you are content for your name to be published with your submission:

☐ Yes

☐ No

4. Which of the three categories below best describes your interest in the Bill (please tick only one)?

☐ Personal

☐ Professional

☐ Commercial

5. Do you wish your email to be added to the Committee’s distribution list for updates on progress of the Bill:

☐ Yes

☐ No
6. Invitations to give oral evidence to the Committee on the Bill will be based on the submissions received. If you wish your submission to be included amongst those considered for possible invitation to give oral evidence, please indicate here.

☐ Yes

☐ No

* 7. You may answer questions on the entire Bill, or on any part of the Bill. Please indicate which parts of the Bill you are responding to? (You may select as many options that apply).

☐ All of the Bill

☐ Equalities, climate change and other Scottish Government objectives

☐ Air Weapons

☐ General licensing issues

☐ Alcohol licensing

☐ Civic licensing – taxi/private hire car licensing

☐ Civic licensing – scrap metal dealers

☐ Civic licensing – theatre licensing

☐ Civic licensing – sexual entertainment venues
1. Air Weapons Licensing

You may respond to all the questions or only those you have a specific interest in. (Text boxes have no word limit, they will increase in size accordingly).

13. In what ways will the creation of an air weapons licensing system in Scotland contribute to preserving public order and safety, reducing crime and advancing public health policy?
Whilst the majority of air weapon owners are responsible, accidents continue to happen. In Scotland the number of offences and injuries has been falling, but as a percentage of firearms offences and injuries they have been increasing since 2010. Around half of these injuries occur to youngsters under the age of 20. Whilst fatalities in Scotland from air weapons are fortunately very few, within the UK there can be one or two fatalities a year. Other regions of the UK have from time to time followed legislation developed in one of the other member countries, and well crafted legislation in Scotland could become a model for other regions and hence save lives. Research undertaken at Abertay University has looked at the penetration of air weapon pellets into various materials and pellets can penetrate 10-15 cm into ballistic gel models. Turkish researchers have shown similar results with 8 cm penetration into skin stimulant-ballistic gel models with air weapons below 16 J. Pellets striking bone embedded in gel can deform and may fragment, causing multiple injury tracks. Whilst real life situations are complex due to clothing, skin, muscle, and bone, the evidence so far suggests that air weapon pellets have the potential to penetrate vital organs, and there are published accounts in the literature of accidental and deliberate shootings that confirm the injuries and fatalities that can occur. One problem with any weapon is that it may be perceived as ‘safe’ if there are no restrictions on it. It is difficult to propose a safe limit for air weapons, and statistics from the USA show that there are around 600 cases a year of people reporting to emergency rooms with injuries from paintballs, although this figure is far short of the 20,000 reporting with injuries from air weapons. The limit of 1 Joule for needing a certificate will therefore exempt many paintball and airsoft activities, but it should not therefore be assumed that no injury could occur. The Bill alludes to the Firearms Act 1968 but it may be worth stating the upper limits that a certificate will cover i.e. 6 and 12 foot pounds (8.2 and 16.3 Joules) The aim of this legislation therefore needs to be to limit access to air weapons for potentially irresponsible users whilst causing minimum disruption to those who have legitimate uses for air weapons for vermin control or as a hobby.

14. Is there sufficient provision, or sufficient capacity to provide, suitable numbers of air weapons clubs across all areas of Scotland for use by registered air weapons owners/ users?
15. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for personal/recreational use?

16. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those aged 14 to 17 who use air weapons?

17. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for commercial/professional reasons (for example: for pest control; as part of the tourist/hunting season; as part of fairs, paintballing centre, entertainment sector etc.)?
18. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for competitive sporting purposes?

19. Is it equitable for those applying for an air weapons certificate to pay a fee which cannot be refundable irrespective of whether a certificate is granted or not?

20. Will the air weapons licensing system have a positive or negative impact on other areas of the public sector in Scotland (eg. The work of local government, public agencies etc.)?

21. What, if any, might the unintended consequences of introducing an air weapons licensing system in Scotland be?
22. Do you have any other comments to make on air weapons licensing aspects of the Bill?