Thankyou 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 #awlbill.

*1. Please supply your name and contact details:

Name: Morag & Tim Liddon

Organisation:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City/Town:

Postcode:

Country:

Email address (if no email leave blank):

Phone Number:

Submission Number: 113
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
Local Government and Regeneration Committee – Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill

Name/Organisation:

1. Equalities, Climate Change and other Scottish Government objectives

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).

8. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications for meeting Scotland’s climate change commitments? Please explain.

9. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications for meeting Scotland’s equality and/or human rights commitments? Please explain.

10. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications for preventative spending and/or public services reform? Please explain.
11. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications in relation to European Union issues? Please explain.

12. Do you have any other comments on the impact of the proposals contained in the Bill relation to Scottish Government objectives?
2. 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?

We don’t think it will, as there are sufficient laws in place already to deal with those misusing airguns. Further legislation will not stop criminals being criminals!

We would assume that over stretched police resources having to take the time to process tens of thousands of applications from airgun users may put a strain on their ability to keep up with the ownership and suitability of shotgun and firearm certificate holders and be unavailable for reactive police duties
It will initially increase crime by way of criminalising many airgun owners who benignly fail to apply for a certificate or visitors permit.

There is a risk, that the increased use of airgun pellets(lead) in club premises may increase participants exposure to a more heavily lead contaminated environment – this would be counter to public health policies

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?
There is currently a significant shortage of club premises where there would be sufficient range time and space available for airgun sessions. Current approved clubs cater for several target shooting disciplines, mainly .22 and due to the difference in distances of each discipline they cannot be shot concurrently. Given the lack of club premises in many parts of Scotland, consideration of the time taken to increase the number of approved premises must be factored in, especially as planning application may prove to be a slow process. The right to shoot safely on private property with the landowners permission should be retained as current legislation already allows for prosecution if the “missile” is not retained within the landowners own boundaries. This existing law could be more frequently applied to those abusing their airguns without further impact on the responsible shooters.

15. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for personal/recreational use?
Without doubt the proposed legislation will eventually reduce the number of people using airguns and whilst this may eventually reduce the number of guns in circulation it will impact only on those who do use airguns responsibly, as the associated cost and bureaucracy will make many leave the sport or not even start, but will probably have little significant impact on those wishing to abuse airgun use.

Given we are a "United Kingdom" with no border controls it will be all too easy for those wishing to use airguns inappropriately to acquire them in south and bring them "unaccounted for" into Scotland, whilst those law abiding citizens wishing to come to Scotland for competition and training will have to apply for a permit and so in all likelihood will just not come, to the detriment of the sport and the Scottish economy.

Airgun shooting is a sport accessible to all ages and many disabilities. The elite sportsmen and women in target shooting, started as recreational shooters, learning respect and responsibility for all guns, very often at a young age, starting off with low powered guns i.e. air rifles and pistols, before being allowed to graduate to more high powered firearms. The reduction in a recreational shooting fraternity due to this bureaucracy will narrow the pool of potential talent that may well provide the next Scottish Olympic or Commonwealth medallists in all shooting disciplines and Modern Pentathlon.

The proposed legislation appears to require all repairs and testing of airguns to be carried out by a registered firearms dealer, which means basic running repairs cannot be done onsite at home, at a competition or during practice/training by owners and coaches who are more than capable, without incurring delays and dealership costs. This means at a practical level many coaching sessions and competitions will not be able to run as there are insufficient RFDs available/interested to service the need.

This section of the document may be better if referring to "significant modifications need to be carried out by a registered firearms dealer."

16. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those aged 14 to 17 who use air weapons?
As an organisation we are involved and follow youngsters shooting performances at Scottish Tetrathlon events with a view to talent spotting. These youngsters start shooting air pistols from 8 years old in many farm barns etc under the supervision of knowledgeable adults, so premises licencing and airgun certification will be another hurdle for both parents and the youngsters and may well be the straw that breaks, so they never even give it a go/start.

Currently Scottish Tetrathlon set up their shooting ranges in sport centre gyms and the like, where they can cater for over 100 competitors/day. Currently there are really no permanent club premises that can accommodate these events so premises licencing will have a devastating effect on this sport and therefore all the youngsters concerned, unless Scottish Tetrathlon is granted ongoing event licences that may cover all their competition and training ranges.

Currently air pistol shooting among the youth is flourishing - the Scottish Junior Pistol squad only recently formed, has performed amazingly well already, bringing home 2 bronze and 2 silver medals from a Junior International match at Bisley attended by approximately 175 competitors all shooting airguns.

1 junior boy came 2nd at the British 10m air pistol Championships and won gold in the Junior Rapid Fire championships.

These results bode well for the future of competitive air pistol shooting in Scotland and this deserves not to be strangled just as it is starting!

They will not be able to repair their weapons without a registered firearms dealer, again adding cost and time. In addition as they are 14-17 they will probably be unable to drive and therefore find it difficult to access a firearms dealer especially in the more remote areas of Scotland, this then leads to how the gun is to be transported – possibly through Royal Mail/couriers and so giving untold numbers of uncertificated people access to the guns being transported!

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.)?

Not applicable to our organisation

18. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for competitive sporting purposes?
Once at the level where they are shooting competitively we feel sure the individuals will readily comply re obtaining an airgun certificate, however our concern is for the future of the sport as we feel there will be significant resistance/apathy to either the cost or hassle of obtaining a certificate by potential newcomers to the sport and their parents.

Pistol shooting in particular is only just starting to recover from the post Dunblane legislation with regard to number participation. The risk of this legislation further stigmatising a bone fide Commonwealth and Olympic sport justifies a light hand, making it easy for newcomers to the sport being covered by club/event licences and then being eased through the certification system by virtue of being a member of an approved club/association.

Visitors permits having to be granted for those attending competitions may well, as previously mentioned, deter them from entering Scottish competitions, meaning our elite athletes lack meaningful competition on home soil. We feel that carrying an invitation and acceptance letter to an event in Scotland involving airguns should suffice. The police authorities may then have the power to check with the event organiser that any individual non-certified "visitor "is indeed a registered competitor so negating the need for a permit.

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?

We believe that a minimum, administration only fee should be payable for unsuccessful applications so long as the applicant is given a just reason for the failure of the application and that if it is due to a mere technical error in the paperwork, that it is waived.

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.)?

We think that the air weapons licensing system will have a negative effect on the public sector in Scotland. Given that the Firearms teams are already over stretched, resourcing this requirement for licensing of air weapons, clubs, permits will place unprecedented demand on already slim resources.

Whilst we feel sympathy for police when faced with criminals who may “flaunt” an airgun, we believe the legislation should be aimed more specifically at that level.
and not impact quite so much on the responsible airgun fraternity.

21. What, if any, might the unintended consequences of introducing an air weapons licensing system in Scotland be?

The risk of introducing a requirement for an airgun certificate may encourage applicants to go the full hog and apply for a shotgun/firearms certificate that will thereby increase the number of more high powered weapon ownership and so the number of those guns in circulation.

We do not believe that it is the aim of this legislation, but very much fear that more people will swap low powered airguns for something more powerful.

The number of girls in sport will also decline as within Scotland our junior development squad is now dominated by girls, coming mainly through Scottish Tetrathlon. Some who acknowledge they will never be elite runners/swimmers/pentathletes, but still have the interest to continue with a sport that they have enjoyed and will help their personal as well as sporting development in so many ways.

22. Do you have any other comments to make on air weapons licensing aspects of the Bill?

We respect the bill and are keen to try and work with it. However as it is currently drafted it will strangle the grass roots development of sporting talent. We therefore seek amendments to ensure the bill can be angled more towards penalising the minority misusing airguns by having them banned from owning any potential weapon, rather than wasting police time investigating the majority.

With no border controls in place, anyone visiting from England, Northern Ireland or Wales should be exempt from visitors’ permits.
Personally I would rather use the term *airgun* rather than air weapon as the definition of weapon in:

Oxford dictionary is

1. A thing *designed* or used for *inflicting bodily harm* or *physical damage*

Collins Dictionary;

1. an object or instrument used in fighting

Using emotive words such as “weapon” therefore has a negative impact on our sport.