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:**

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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
Name/Organisation: N/A

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.

The proposed Bill infringes on The Human Rights Act 1998, articles 1 and 8

10. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications for preventative spending and/or public services reform? Please explain.

The proposed Bill as it relates to the introduction of an air arms licensing system has massive implications for preventative spending as it will cost tens of millions of pounds to create, and then several hundreds of thousands of pounds per year to administer. Further costs will include a compensation scheme for the proposed deprivation of lawfully held items, the additional burden on Police Scotland and to the courts.
11. Do you consider that the Bill has any implications in relation to European Union issues? Please explain.

Only in that specified at 9

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

It appears clear that the current Scottish Government has a disproportionate 'issue' with civilian ownership of anything it would describe (incorrectly) as a 'weapon', therefore the proposed Bill relates well 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?

In a very limited way, as indicated by the Committee in its letter to the Scottish Government dated 27th June 2014, particularly questions 1, 2 and 5. Every police force in the UK acknowledges that the majority of air ‘weapons’ crime is committed by persons who are already known to the police and who are incredibly unlikely to/wouldn’t be permitted to apply for a certificate for the air rifle/pistol they use. Even those incidents that do occur outside of the criminal fraternity are rarely ‘innocent accidents’. Once the details of the incidents are realised they almost inevitably seem to involve reckless use of said air rifle and/or a breach of the current legislation (e.g. Not preventing unauthorised access to an air rifle to persons under the age of 18. Air gun crime has been falling fairly rapidly in Scotland for the past half-decade and the proposed Bill is simply not required to continue this trend.

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?

As this information is not readily available (and hence question 10 from the Committee), it is difficult to answer this. From my own experience of my locality, there are very few firearms clubs that also permit the use of air guns and as far as I am aware there are none that ONLY cater for air guns.

15. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for personal/recreational use?
In many cases it will exclude them entirely from the sport/hobby. Air guns are relatively cheap and the ease of use and lack of cost involved in shooting them is one of the most attractive features. If a licensing regime was brought in, in addition to the cost of the application, cost of a cabinet/safe and then the time and cost of travelling to the air gun club many people simply will not be able to afford to continue.

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

The affect on youngsters LEGALLY using air guns will be even worse than it would be on adults as they naturally have less money, and many would not have the means of travel to get to a club.

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.)?

It would depend on the licensing regime implemented, if it was similar to the Firearms Certificate procedure large scale pest controllers etc would likely not be too badly affected, other than the onerous task of making the application, but smaller scale operations would be disproportionately affected and possibly put out of business if they suddenly find themselves an excluded person from air gun ownership.

18. How will the air weapons licensing system affect those using air weapons for competitive sporting purposes?
As less and less people take up air gun shooting due to the increased cost, time and bureaucracy, the pool of people who go onto become competitive sportspersons will also diminish. Hopefully it would never get to the ludicrous situation that exists with the British pistol team having to train abroad.

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?

No it most certainly is not. Just like with a Firearms or Shotgun certificate if the application was to be refused a full refund of the fee should be issued.

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.)?

Only upon the work load of the Police licensing departments which are already overstretched

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

As the intended consequences aren’t entirely clear this is difficult to answer, however as with Firearms legislation, the air gun legislation would have little impact on the criminal use of air guns as it is logical that those wishing to own an airgun for criminal purposes are either unlikely to apply for a certificate, and many will be ineligible anyway due to previous convictions.

The licensing system would increase the cost of airguns in Scotland and possibly the rest of the UK due to the lower demand.

Just like the 1997 Firearms Act an airgun licensing system would criminalise
numerous people without them ever having committed a crime, due to the irresponsible, criminal actions of a tiny minority.

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

It beggars belief that the Scottish government considers this proposal as an efficient use of limited public funds. Air gun crime in Scotland has been steadily falling for a number of years now and there is no indication that this trend will change soon.