



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01485

Name of petitioner

David Ewing

Petition title

Airgun licensing in Scotland

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to drop its proposals to licence air guns in Scotland.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Lobbying MSPs by writing e-mailing my regional MSPs and meeting with my own local MSP.

Annabelle Goldie replied saying that she would not support the proposal. The SNP representatives for my area supported the proposal. The general feeling I got was that most MSPs were more concerned with their careers than the truth of the matter.

With these results and as Kenny MacAskill has also been quoted as saying the subject for a licence is not up for debate. "We are not consulting on the principle of licensing - this will happen." (See BBC link) I felt the need to create a petition to show there is a large amount of public opinion against the move.

I submitted my views against the proposal via the government consultation as well as sending in a copy of the petition and signer's comments with my response.

The signatures on the petition were obtained through support from various shooting organisations such as BASC, SACS, SARPA CA etc as well as online campaigning through the Facebook page and speaking to people through shooting forums.

<https://www.facebook.com/NoToAirgunLicencingInScotland>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-20720203>

Petition background information

This petition was started to combat yet another unjustified attack on the shooting community which has faced constant persecution for many years now. The figures

below show that airgun crime is not a problem in Scotland and that this proposal will affect many more law abiding people than criminals. It will also be a huge burden on the police service. Airgun crime has dropped significantly in the last 5 years and any further actions should be on enforcing current laws and punishing criminals.

The principle issue here is the proposal to licence airguns in Scotland but I would also like to touch upon other firearms use by law abiding citizens to show that it is not an issue or cause of crime in Scotland and/or the UK and is in fact beneficial to the Scottish Economy.

Some key facts and figures

*The proposal is to licence airguns under 12 ft-lbs(rifles) and 6 ft-lbs(pistols).

*Estimated 500,000 airguns in Scotland, 71,860 firearms and 138,939 shotguns – 2012 figures.

* Airgun offences are down 71% to 195 recorded incidents since 2006

*Firearms offences(including airguns+ imitations) down to 514 a 34 year low (note Handguns and Semi- automatic rifles were legal 34 years ago)

* Out of the Estimated 500,000 airguns in circulation if 195 are used in an offence that is 0.039%

*Assuming that out of the 319 offences in which a firearm “was used” were all legally owned that is 0.15%(This figure is no doubt highly inflated as most of the firearms used would be illegally obtained

*If the total number of airguns and legally licenced firearms in Scotland are compared with the figure of 514 incidents then that gives 0.072%(again this figure will be inflated as it doesn't take into account illegally obtained firearms.

Now to offer a clear comparison that airguns and legally owned firearms are not the huge issue that Mr MacAskill and others make out to be.

There are approximately 2,600,000 motor vehicles registered in Scotland and there were 320,282 recorded offences which is 12.32%

There were more incidents of dog bites admitted to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary with a figure of 200 than airgun incidents in the whole of Scotland.

It should also be noted that an offence could be a pellet straying into a neighbour's garden and that no actual injury or harm has been caused.

These statistics show that Airgun crime and indeed Firearms crime is practically non-existent in Scotland therefore I have to ask the question what is the point of this proposal? It will ultimately punish law abiding citizens who have no desire to commit crimes. The laws have always been in place to punish the misuse of any item. We do not need to complicate this already overcomplicated system anymore.

I cannot think of any positive aspects about a licence for airguns as I believe it will not have any effect on criminals as criminals by their very nature do not obey the law they will not buy a licence or surrender any airguns they have.

Below I have prepared a list of many negatives.

*It will increase the workload of police firearms licencing departments this will in turn increase costs, tie up manpower and produce delays in processing applications.

*It could potentially criminalise many law abiding citizens despite having committed no harm to anyone or intent to commit a crime simply because of this newly created and pointless offence.

*Many people will be forced to give up an enjoyable hobby because they cannot afford a licence or cannot gain access to a club. Those that do obtain the licence are still being unfairly punished financially.

*Airguns are quite a common introduction to shooting and it is where a lot of people first learn gun safety and indeed take up this hobby as a professional sport. If licencing is introduced it may have a negative effect on any potential future sporting champions.

*It will have a major effect of pest and vermin control leading to increased populations of feral pigeons, rats and rabbits etc

*The proposal also includes a wish to ban target shooting(plinking) in peoples own back gardens which is carried out safely by the many hundreds of thousands of airgun

owners yearly. It is also an unacceptable intrusion into people's private property.

Shooting and the Economy and Environment in Scotland

*100,000 people shoot live quarry

*Shooting supports the equivalent of 11,000 full-time jobs

*Shooting is worth £240 million to the Scottish economy

*Shooting is involved in the management of two-thirds of the rural land area of Scotland

*700,000 hectares are actively managed for conservation as a result of shooting

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*Shooters spend many work days on conservation - the equivalent of 2,000 full-time jobs in Scotland

I do not believe these figures represent the money spent by target shooters so the benefit to the economy is probably even greater. The reason I have included all firearms is that many people are introduced to shooting cheaply and easily through airguns and learn the basics of safety and use before moving onto licenced firearms. This is relevant as an airgun licence would mean less people take up airgun shooting and this would have a domino effect on other firearms ownership.

I feel I have represented the importance of airguns and firearms however some people may question this and say there really is no need for them. I do not believe this is a valid argument as many people do not need cars, golf clubs or television but their right to enjoy a hobby or interest is rarely victimised and certainly not to the extent of the shooting community. As tragic as a case can be we should not let emotion blind us to the fact or to lead us to demonise good people. I believe this is the only time someone has been convicted of murder by an airgun in the UK. There was a similar incident where a woman killed her son with a golf club yet there are no calls to ban golf clubs or to restrict them to licences. Airguns do not make people more prone to violence or crime and it is a travesty that it should be made to appear so especially in light of the figures I have shown.

In conclusion I feel I have represented a strong case that this is an unfair and unwarranted attack on law abiding citizens. The shooting community is a minority but it faces a lot of persecution and bigotry than would be unacceptable to any other minority group. If the Scottish Government is serious about tackling crime and anti-social behaviour it should be looking at the social factors involved and punishing those that do wrong instead of using a cheap political points scoring against a hugely law abiding section of society.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/airgunlicensinginscotland>

Related information for petition

<https://www.facebook.com/NoToAirgunLicencingInScotland>

<https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/scottish-government-to-drop-all-proposals-to-licence-airguns-in-scotland>

http://www.basc.org.uk/en/media/key_issues.cfm/cid/5D1AF869-D20A-446E-9564AECD44780137

This web link also offers compelling discussion against the scaremongering and sensationalism

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmhaff/95/95ap25.htm>

Sources

<http://www.basc.org.uk/en/media/pressreleases.cfm/prid/CB1353A0-479D-4B2E-98C7E9CBB27B631C>

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/justice-secretary-launches-consultation-on-licensing-1489332>

<http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmhaff/95/95ap25.htm>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/05/firearms29052012>

[http://www.cjscotland.co.uk/2012/05/firearm-certificates-statistics-scotland-published/ \]](http://www.cjscotland.co.uk/2012/05/firearm-certificates-statistics-scotland-published/)

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

14193

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

Comments to stimulate online discussion