



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary
The Home Office
2, Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

30 January 2025

Dear Yvette

Increase in firearms licensing fees

As Shadow Home Secretary and Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Shooting and Conservation, we along with our colleagues are writing to you regarding the recent announcement of an increase in firearms licensing fees.

These are hugely exorbitant increases for our constituents and will put pressure on hundreds of thousands of people in rural communities who have already suffered under your government's choices. You are increasing a shotgun certificate grant from £79.50 to £194 – 244% of the current fee, while a shotgun certificate renewal will increase from £49 to £126 – 257% of today's fee. Inflation since 2015 has been 35%, meaning your increases are up to a disproportionate 4.5 times inflation. This is wholly unjustified and only adds insult to injury for the hard-working people in rural communities whose livelihoods your government has already threatened.

The APPG have worked on this issue for many years, meeting Ministers and civil servants during the last government to progress matters. We regret that you did not think it necessary to consult or inform MPs, including the co-chair of the APPG Ben Goldsborough MP, before announcing the increase and laying the order before the House.

We hope that you will therefore be willing to meet colleagues who are members of the APPG to discuss the issue. The next meeting, on the 11th March from 5-6 p.m. in committee room M in Portcullis House, will be considering the increases. We would be most grateful if you were able to attend this meeting.

You will be aware of the gross inefficiencies in firearms licensing and the fact that those applying for a certificate in a quarter of licensing authorities may have to wait up to two years for their applications to be processed. This is appalling service. Moreover, under resourced and overworked departments compromise public safety, the fundamental purpose of firearms licensing.

The representations we have received from those who shoot focus on the following points: they wish to see an effective and efficient firearms licensing system. They accept increased fees to full cost recovery, if the increase is based on consultation and transparent calculations and is used to fund firearms licensing departments. They tell me that none of these have been met.

The rise in fees to full cost recovery was included in the Labour manifesto to fund youth counselling, but this was not the justification used in recent statements to the House or in the papers accompanying the Statutory Instrument. You have repeatedly told parliament that the increased fees will be used to properly fund firearms licensing.

The use of firearms licensing fees is an operational matter for the police. Police budgets are set by Police and Crime Commissioners, not the Home Office. Although we are aware that the indicative amount of money available to rural police forces next year will leave them no choice but to make staff redundant. As far as we are aware, there are no ministerial powers to ensure that fees are used in this way.

We would be grateful to know how you can be sure that the increased fees will go to firearms licensing departments. Did you seek and receive any assurances from PCCs to this effect?

We are also told that consultation with stakeholders was limited and perfunctory, in contrast to the increase in fees in 2015, when a Home Office committee, comprising the police and shooting organisations, came to an agreed set of figures for fees. In this case, a Home Office Working Group met only twice, the last occasion in May 2023, and came to no conclusions. Questions on process put to the Home Office at that point remain to be answered. We understand that you refused to meet the shooting organisations in the months following the election and finally granted them half an hour, two days before laying the order before parliament.

We would be grateful if you could set out how you intend to work with stakeholders on firearms licensing in the future.

The papers accompanying the order state that the new fees are based on data gathered from the firearms licensing departments of thirty-one police forces, but nothing is publicly available which shows the calculations on which the figures are based. We are told that the number of forces involved must include inefficient licensing departments with the effect of increasing the figure for full cost recovery. You will know that there is no consistency in the amounts that firearms licensing departments spend on issuing a certificate. The BASC review of licensing in 2022 found that it cost Warwickshire £90 to issue a certificate but for Durham it cost £500.

We would therefore, in the interests of transparency, be grateful if you could let us know how each new fee was calculated.

There are further issues on firearms licensing which remain to be resolved. These include:

- Removing sound moderators from the firearms licensing system, something supported by both the police and government, which would reduce the number of section 1 firearms by a third and thus reduce the workload for the police.
- Ending the use by some constabularies of non-statutory forms, reducing the burden on licensing departments.
- Ending superfluous land checks for section 1 firearms, reducing the burden on licensing departments.
- Ringfencing the income for firearms licensing fees for firearms licensing departments.
- Annual inflationary rises in fees, removing the need for massive increases, the latest averages 133%.

We look forward to working with you and your department to deliver an effective and efficient firearms licensing system that protects public safety. We hope that you will be in favour of continuing constructive engagement to that end.


Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Shadow Home Secretary



Sir Geoffrey Clifton Brown MP
Co-Chair of the APPG for Shooting and Conservation



Matt Vickers MP
Shadow Minister for Police, Crime and Fire

Co signatories:

The Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP

Peter Bedford MP

Sarah Bool MP

Aphra Brandreth MP

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP

The Rt Hon the Earl of Caithness

The Lord Carrington

John Cooper MP

The Rt Hon Geoffrey Cox KC MP

Gareth Davies MP

Charlie Dewhurst MP

The Rt Hon Mark Francois MP

Richard Fuller MP

The Rt Hon The Lord Garnier KC

The Lord Geddes

Andrew Griffith MP

The Rt Hon the Lord Hamilton of Epsom

Kevin Hollinrake MP

Sir Bernard Jenkin MP

Alicia Kearns MP

Danny Kruger MP

John Lamont MP

Alan Mak MP

The Baroness Mallalieu KC

Kit Malthouse MP

Robbie Moore MP

The Lord Pearson of Rannoch

The Rt Hon Mark Pritchard MP

Shivani Raja MP

Jack Rankin MP

David Reed MP

The Lord Robathan

Jim Shannon MP

Dr Neil Shastri-Hurst MP

The Earl of Shrewsbury DL

David Simmonds MP

Greg Smith MP

Patrick Spencer MP

Gregory Stafford MP

Blake Stephenson MP

Bradley Thomas MP

Nick Timothy MP

Martin Vickers MP

Helen Whately MP

The Rt Hon Sir John Whittingdale OBE MP

The Rt Hon Sir Jeremy Wright KC MP