

6th meeting of the Firearms Expert Committee
6th December 2022
51 St Stephens Green
Minute

Attendees

Chair Emma Meagher Neville

Paul Walsh

Fabian Connolly

John Guinane

Superintendent Emma Doyle)

John Griffin NPWS (for discussion of agenda point 2 only)

Secretary Aoife Byrne

1. Introduction

The agenda was adopted

The minutes of the fifth meeting were agreed.

The report of the fifth meeting for the Department's website was agreed.

1. Discussion with the NPWS

The Committee discussed the types of firearms suitable for hunting and animal control with the representative from the NPWS. The NPWS advised the following:

The NPWS would prefer not to see air rifles being recommended as a beginner's firearm. The NPWS suggests air rifles may be suitable for experienced shooters to use for rats and possibly rabbits. The NPWS recommends beginners acquire a bolt-action rifle as it will handle all .22lr ammunition suitable for different purposes.

The NPWS would support the provision of more structured and expansive training in firearms.

The NPWS suggests that there would be merit in reformatting the firearms certificate to make it more durable and include the holder's photograph.

The NPWS advises that recommending an inexperienced shooter be issued the lowest powered firearm available could result in the unnecessary suffering of animals, as the smaller the caliber the more accurate the shot must be to insure humane dispatch.

The NPWS advises of the change in equipment used for hunting at night, with thermal imaging and night vision replacing the use of lamps. The NPWS recommends that thermal imaging devices should be handheld only and their use should be limited to searching for animals. A "safe shot" cannot be confirmed by relying on a thermal imaging device alone.

The NPWS recommends the use of sound moderators to reduce the risk of hearing loss. The NPWS advises the staff of the NPWS are issued with sound moderators to use during the course of their duties. The NPWS supports the use of sound moderators by all hunters.

The NPWS advises that in its view the humane dispatch of deer can be impeded by the restrictions placed on the licencing of short-firearms. The NPWS suggests that a .22wmr pistol would be a suitable firearm to use in these circumstances and would support amending the legislation to permit the use of .22wmr pistols for this purpose.

The secretary will redraft some of the Committee's recommendations to take into account the position of the NPWS.

2. Review of text of Report One – Chapter 3: Purposes

The Committee discussed the observations made on the draft of report one by An Garda Síochána.

The secretary will redraft some of the Committee's recommendations to take into account the views of AGS.

3. Review of text license conditions

The Committee discussed the draft consideration of the proposal to condition licences with locations and purposes. The Committee agreed that it would not recommend that licences should be conditioned and instead suggest an alternative to introduce different types of licences.

4. Text of report one Firearms available to be licenced.

The Committee reviewed the draft text on gas-operated firearms and assault rifles and agreed the recommendations and positions to be reflected in the report.

5. Engagement with the Northern Irish Authorities.

The Committee agreed questions to submit to the Northern Irish Authorities.