

TKC118

Dear Sirs,

1. Re: Tackling Knife Crime: A Consultation

Name: My name is Michael Cromarty and I am the Chairman of Aberdeen Swordsmanship Group.

Postal address: Blairs College, South Deeside Road, Aberdeen AB12 5LF.

I am responding to the consultation paper "Tackling Knife Crime: A Consultation" on behalf of the Aberdeen Swordsmanship Group.

Background:

Aberdeen Swordsmanship Group is a not-for-profit organisation which provides training and study into Historical European Swordsmanship (HES). HES is a Western martial art dedicated to the practise of medieval and renaissance martial arts. It involves reconstruction and replication of European fighting skills under realistic conditions, i.e. using blunted steel swords. Currently HES is undergoing an exciting revival and resurgence in the UK and worldwide, we are proud to be part of the re-discovery and reconstruction of a martial art from our very own culture.

However, the legislation put forward by the Executive in the Consultation threatens not only to bring to an end to the positive sporting and cultural practises our group, but would effectively end the reconstruction of Historical European Swordsmanship within Scotland.

The group has been setup for just over 18 months and already we have provided training to over 60 individuals from across the North East of Scotland.

I wish to make responses to the following questions in order to protect the practises of our group:

6. Should shops require a licence to sell swords?

No.

The Executive's consultation paper simply does not justify this option because at no point does the paper give any details on sword crime statistics. Therefore, deciding policies based on unknown facts and figures is prejudice and unlawful.

Detailed statistics of swords crime are needed before any measures can be introduced to tackle knife crime.

Licensing schemes are expensive to implement and retailers are bound to pass any costs onto the end buyer. Therefore the situation might exist that legitimate sword users and collectors are forced to pay higher prices for swords, this is bound to be detrimental to the list of legitimate groups listed in Paragraph 47.

7. Should the sale of swords by shops be restricted to require them to sell only to members of approved organisations?

No.

This option would create an enormous amount of unnecessary administrative pressure on shop keepers, local authorities and the police. Creating the list of approved organisations, vetting them, and maintaining the list would require tremendous work and is largely unworkable. For example, if a legitimate group in Aberdeen wants to buy swords from a shop in Edinburgh, the local authorities there will not be aware of the groups in Aberdeen, therefore this option is unworkable.

The cost may be justified if facts and figures were available regarding sword crime, unfortunately the Executive are unable to provide these figures.

8. Should the sale of swords be banned?

No.

As previously stated in our response to Question 6 & 7, to critically deliberate this question statistics on sword crime must be gathered, since these are not available this option must be utterly rejected.

The banning the sale of swords is out of the question. This would certainly spell the end of a number of legitimate, law abiding groups and to swordmakers in this country, the latter depends on sale of these to make a living and carry on with their ancient tradition.

The end of such groups would lead to an adverse impact on our nation's tourism, cultural, sporting and dramatic activities. This option is completely unacceptable, the legitimate practise of individuals and groups should not be compromised by legislation where no direct proof is made available as to whether it will actually reduce criminal activities.

We are fully supportive of Paragraphs 46 - 48 of the Consultation, and for the reasons listed there we are against a complete ban of the sale of swords.

9. If so, should there be any groups who are exempted from that ban

Yes.

The list of legitimate sword users described in the Consultation on Paragraph 47 must be exempted for the reasons given there.

10. Should the sale of only samurai swords be banned?

No.

Authentic katanas costs in the region of £1,000 to £100,000, it is highly unlikely that criminals will buy these swords at these high prices to commit crimes with them.

11. If so, should any groups of people be exempt from that ban (ie should there be any reasons/uses for which it remains legitimate to sell samurai swords)?

Yes.

Practitioners of martial arts involving Japanese swords are studying and preserving historical and cultural arts, for example Iaido, Kendo, etc. Also, the list of legitimate sword users described in the Consultation in Paragraph 47.

13. Is there a case for individual licences for the purchase of swords?

No.

As previously stated, the omission of any statistics relating to sword crime can not warrant an introduction of new legislation.

This option will only serve to discriminate people who use swords for legitimate, legal sporting and cultural activities.

A system similar to firearms would be expensive to implement, and would prove to be far more costly to purchasers of swords. As many swords collectors will not have just 1 or 2 swords (as might be in the case of firearms), but some are known to own over 30 swords.

This would also harm legitimate sword makers in Scotland who would not be able to sell swords to the rest of the UK and worldwide.

2. Closing Remarks

In Paragraph 2 of the consultation it states "And increasingly, the police are reporting the carrying and concealment of fixed blades, lock knives, and other bladed weapons, mainly by young men, particularly in Glasgow and the west of Scotland."

From that we can take the problem of knife in Scotland is the concealable element of these knives and other bladed weapons. The vast majority of swords by their size do not lend themselves to be easily carried or concealable.

Also, in Paragraph 2 it states that the problem exists predominately within the Strathclyde region. Below Paragraph 2 is the shocking statistics for the number of convictions for handling an offensive weapon, with the Strathclyde region having 8 times more convictions than the second highest region.

Restricting the sale of swords nationwide is a desperate solution.

I strongly urge the Executive to seek tackle this problem locally through introducing more by-laws within the Strathclyde region, or introduction legislation restricting the sale on small, concealable, portable knives.

Taking measures to a national level we feel will be inefficient and a misappropriation of tax payers money.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Cromarty

3. Chairman
On behalf of Aberdeen Swordsmanship Group