

The Chairman said that the defence had to cover a person selling and importing airsofts as well as bona fide players who would wish to buy the guns. [REDACTED] asked whether the concept of membership cards could be included in the regulations. The Chairman considered that it was important to have a general term in the regulations setting out the defence. A definition of membership in the regulations might not be the most appropriate way of achieving this.

Insurance

In the view of the Home office, the expense of insurance was likely deter the vast majority of people from holding one-off games. [REDACTED] pointed out that airsoft insurance was specific to airsoft guns and that a more significant problem came from street traders.

The Chairman wanted to ensure that non-genuine airsofters would be unable to set up an organization/group to benefit from the regulations and asked whether the cost of insurance would prevent this. [REDACTED] confirmed that only four insurance companies made provision for airsoft insurance and that he could speak to these to stress the importance that only bona fide clubs/sites should be insured.

[REDACTED] asked how much it cost to skirmish. [REDACTED] said it was in the range of £30-100. [REDACTED] added that Car Boot Sales and market stalls were the sort of places that genuine airsofters were concerned about. The Chairman clarified that a market stall trader would be able to sell airsoft guns under the regulations providing that they were sold to bona fide airsofters.

Membership scheme

The Chairman suggested it would be helpful to support the Regulations through a well-regulated membership scheme. [REDACTED] suggested that a database might be made available to retailers so that they could check whether a buyer was legitimate – this would cover all players affiliated to it. The intention was to have a recognizable membership card with security features which would contain a photograph (for face to face sales), club details and the membership number so it could be checked against the database.

[REDACTED] also suggested that when an adult bought an airsoft gun on a child's behalf via the internet that the gun should be sent to the club and picked up by the adult, 'face to face', then transferred to the child.

The Chairman asked when the membership scheme could be put into practice and [REDACTED] said that ideally he would wait for the regulations but understood that it was something that he and the ABA could work towards in the next couple of months.

The Chairman asked how widely the database could be made available to non-affiliated retailers. [REDACTED] replied that he wanted the database to be neutral and not controlled by one particular group. However, those using the database would have to make sure that they were doing so for the right reason – i.e. to sell to bona fide airsofters. Nonetheless, those who abided by the rules would be able to gain access to it. [REDACTED] reminded those present that the database would have to comply with the Data Protection Act. [REDACTED] assured him that he would keep this in mind.

The Chairman asked how a market trader would be able to get access [REDACTED] confirmed that he would probably have to be a permanent member of a trade body to gain access and comply with the ABA. Membership cards would be issued at sites and would be laminated, contain details of sites, photographs, the membership number, state whether the person was a full or junior member and contain security features. Those affiliated to the scheme would have to be members of site organizations. He estimated that there were twenty thousand airsofters complying with specifications. The Chairman asked if there were any breakaway groups operating outside such specifications. [REDACTED] confirmed that there were none and that the ABA represented a lot of organizations which complied with the airsofting 'code' (approximately 43 sites).

[REDACTED] confirmed that there were over one hundred sites in the United Kingdom, the majority of which, he thought, were insured. [REDACTED] pointed out that it depended how one defined a site. For example, someone running around in the woods without facilities would not be covered. Tim Wyborn added that clubs would be in the scheme provided that they conformed with the definition of airsofting and were insured.

Commencement Dates

[REDACTED] asked if a commencement date had been decided. [REDACTED] said that there was no fixed time frame as such but Regulations would probably comply with April and October Commencement dates. The Chairman went on to clarify that there could be several stages but recognized that implementation was needed to allow retailers to dispose of stocks.

Import and mail stocks

[REDACTED] pointed out that some sites imported airsoft guns and that to do so it was not necessary to be a member of the Retailers' Association. [REDACTED] suggested that a list of UKARA members could be submitted to Customs to confirm whether a person had a legitimate reason for importing airsoft guns.

[REDACTED] asked what would happen to those who wished to import but were not affiliated to a database set up by ABA. The Chairman suggested that they would have to show that they were providing to members of a particular site and the site would have to show that it was a legitimate airsoft site. [REDACTED] stated that Customs would be more concerned about mail order and

those bringing back guns from abroad. Commercial imports were not too much of a concern as those involved would usually be aware of the sanctions against them (which could be 10 years' imprisonment) were they to try and circumvent the law. He asked whether an airsoft gun could be considered a toy but [REDACTED] confirmed that they exceeded the EU specifications of a toy's power level.

Membership criteria

The Chairman asked what was the best way to confirm membership and whether an objective test could be established – for example, a requirement that an applicant would have to attend a registered airsoft site on a number of occasions as one condition. [REDACTED] suggested that attendees should present the Home Office with a consensus sometime after the meeting. [REDACTED] suggested that players should take part at least three times before being offered membership. [REDACTED] pointed out that as it was at least £20 a go to play it would be unlikely that non-genuine persons would pursue airsofting in an attempt to secure membership so as to be able to buy an airsoft gun for criminal purposes. [REDACTED] suggested that a potential member should make several appearances at an airsoft site over a period of time; for example three times in three months as a person could go through a fad of airsofting in a short period, become a member and be able to buy an airsoft gun that was a realistic imitation firearm.

[REDACTED] added that some play at a number of sites. So a person may play on three different sites over a three month period (if such criteria were to be used). A system for defining membership should take this into account.


Points to consider include the period of time, the number of visits and an assessment of an applicant's suitability.

Players bringing in equipment from abroad

[REDACTED] asked what provisions should be made to enable a player from abroad to bring an airsoft gun into the UK. [REDACTED] suggested that from Customs' point of view that a letter of invitation and proof of booking such an event would be sufficient. He added that when a profile was put on the Customs' entry system that additional information could be added to suggest to officials what to look out for. Information which related to a specific area, for example Germans travelling to a tournament in Harwich, would be best sent to the nearest port of entry.

[REDACTED] was concerned about people importing airsoft guns from abroad and suggested that people could still bring in a bright pink airsoft gun and paint it black if they wished to commit an offence. He stressed that legitimate airsoft skirmishers wished to distance themselves from such persons. The Chairman acknowledged this position but stressed that the Government had no controls on unrealistic imports used in airsofting.

Unrealistic colours

 asked if there were any guidelines on unrealistic colours. The Chairman replied that these were still be defined, but by and large would include very bright colours such as purple, pink and red, for example. However, it would depend on what would be considered a non-realistic colour.