

Title: Amendments to Schedule 1A of The Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 [2004 Order]	Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)		
	Date: March 2026		
	Type of measure: Secondary Legislation		
Lead department or agency: Department of Justice	Stage: Initial, pre-consultation		
	Source of intervention: Domestic NI		
Other departments or agencies: PSNI Firearms and Explosives Branch (PSNI FEB)	Contact details: FEB@justice-ni.gov.uk		

Summary Intervention and Options

What is the problem under consideration? Why is government intervention necessary? The Department has been asked to consider a proposal to amend Schedule 1A of the 2004 Order to add additional calibres of firearms that may be exchanged in a one-off-one-on transaction carried out by a registered firearms dealer (RFD), commonly referred to as the “banded system”. The 2004 Order gives the Department power to make regulations amending Schedule 1A. These regulations would be subject to the Assembly’s draft affirmative procedure.	
What are the policy objectives and the intended effects? There is no policy change associated with this proposal – it is adding to the existing list of calibres in Schedule 1A.	
What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation? Please justify preferred option (further details in Evidence Base) Amendments to Schedule 1A can only be made by means of secondary legislation and it therefore falls to the Department to make any changes. These amendments do not involve policy change.	
Will the policy be reviewed? Yes	If applicable, set review date: January 2028

Cost of Preferred (or more likely) Option		
Total outlay cost for business £m	Total net cost to business per year £m	Annual cost for implementation by Regulator £m
N/A	N/A	N/A

Does Implementation go beyond minimum EU requirements?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Is this measure likely to impact on trade and investment?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Are any of these organisations in scope?	Micro Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Small Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Large Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The final RIA supporting legislation must be attached to the Explanatory Memorandum and published with it.

Approved by: Date:

Summary: Analysis and Evidence Policy Option 1

Description: To amend Schedule 1A of the 2004 Order to add additional calibres of firearms that may be exchanged in a one-off-one-on transaction carried out by a RFD.

ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (Option 1)

Costs (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Cost (Present Value)
	(constant price)	Years		
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	N/A		N/A	N/A

Description and scale of key monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

This may increase the number of one-off-one-on applications, generating more administrative work for PSNI FEB, for which the current fee of £15 does not meet the cost of providing this service.

Other key non-monetised costs by 'main affected groups'

There may be a cost to RFDs if there is additional administrative burden associated with an increase in transactions.

Benefits (£m)	Total Transitional (Policy)		Average Annual (recurring) (excl. transitional) (constant price)	Total Benefit (Present Value)
	(constant price)	Years		
Low	Optional		Optional	Optional
High	Optional		Optional	Optional
Best Estimate	N/A		N/A	N/A

Description and scale of key monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

RFDs may see an increase in business and footfall in their dealerships.

Currently the cost (£15) of a variation by a RFD to substitute a firearm is 50% less than a variation by the Chief Constable. Variations to the Chief Constable are more costly to the PSNI and the full costs are not recovered by the current fee (£30).

Other key non-monetised benefits by 'main affected groups'

Benefit to PSNI FEB of a reduction in the number of variation applications, which will free up valuable resources to undertake other work.

Benefit to firearm certificate (FAC) holders who can carry out one-off-one-on transactions faster and at a lower cost, rather than making a variation application through PSNI FEB.

Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks

Assumption is that FAC holders are made aware of the amendments and utilise the service at RFDs. RFDs participate in the new model and provide timely notifications of transactions to PSNI FEB. Risk of misinterpretation of the "banded system".

BUSINESS ASSESSMENT (Option 1)

Direct Impact on business (Equivalent Annual) £m		
Costs: N/A	Benefits: N/A	Net: N/A

Cross Border Issues (Option 1)

How does this option compare to other UK regions and to other EU Member States (particularly Republic of Ireland)

In Ireland, the substitution of one firearm for another can be made on a like for like basis by applying to the Garda Síochána and does not require a fee. In Great Britain, a one for one variation process applies and is usually processed free of charge by a local police firearms licensing team.

Problem under consideration

1. The Department has been asked to consider a proposal to amend Schedule 1A of the 2004 Order to add additional calibres of firearms that may be exchanged in a one-off-one-on transaction carried out by RFDs, otherwise known as the “banded system”. “Banded system” transactions cost £15, compared to, a variation being carried out by the Chief Constable which costs £30 and involves an application process.

Rationale for intervention

2. In conjunction with the proposed amendments to Schedule 1A, there are proposals to increase firearms licensing fees in order for PSNI to achieve full cost recovery. Variation applications are processed by PSNI FEB on behalf of the Chief Constable and by adding to the calibres included in Schedule 1A, it is hoped that this will further reduce the administrative burden on PSNI FEB and FAC variation applicants.

3. Article 11(9) of the 2004 Order gives the Department power to make regulations amending Schedule 1A. These regulations would be subject to the Assembly’s draft affirmative procedure.

Policy objective

4. There is no policy change associated with this proposal – it is extending the scope of the “banded system” in Schedule 1A.

5. It is anticipated that firearms licensing fees will be increased to address the PSNI’s budgetary shortfall in providing a firearms licensing service. Therefore, it is likely that the current £15 fee for a one-off-one-on transaction through a RFD will also be increased to cover the administrative costs of the process, which includes PSNI FEB administration and payment processing. There are at least 400 one-off-one-on transactions processed by PSNI FEB every month.

Consideration of proposal

6. The Department recognises that the firearms market has evolved since the banded system was first introduced and has considered the proposed additional calibres and their suitability for the different types of quarry. A copy of the proposed amended Schedule, to include the additional calibres (**in bold**), is shown below.

BAND	CALIBRE
1. Small quarry air rifles	.177 .20 .22 .25
2. Small quarry	.17 Mach 2 .17 HMR (Hornady Magnum Rimfire) .22 LR (Long Rifle) .22 WMR (Winchester Magnum Rimfire) <u>9mm/.357 air rifle</u>
3. Medium quarry	.17 Hornet .17 Remington .17 Remington Fireball .22 Hornet/5.6x36Rmm .222 Remington .204 Ruger .223 Remington/5.56x45mm .220 Swift .22-250 <u>.17 Winchester Super Magnum</u>
4. Large quarry	.243 Winchester .25-06 6.5mm x 55/.256 7mm x 08 Remington .270 7.62 x 51mm/.308 Winchester <u>6.5 Creedmoor</u> <u>6.5x47 Lapua</u> <u>.260 Remington</u> <u>7x57 Mauser</u>

Costs and Benefits

7. There are no direct monetised costs of making the proposed amendments. There will be a monetised benefit to RFDs, as the amendments may lead to a higher number of one-off-one-on transactions being carried out and in turn they may see an increase in business and footfall in their dealerships. Currently the cost to the applicant for a variation by a RFD is 50% less than a variation by the Chief Constable. Variations by the Chief Constable are more costly to the PSNI. The full costs for either application are not covered by the current fees.

8. There may be a non-monetised cost to RFDs, in that additional one-off-one-on transactions could create an additional administrative burden. The amendments will have non-monetised benefits to PSNI FEB of a reduction in the number of variation applications, which will free up valuable resources to undertake other work and in turn reduce costs. FAC holders will be able to carry out one-off-one-on transactions faster and at a lower cost, rather than making a variation application through PSNI FEB.

9. The main businesses that will be impacted by these amendments will be RFDs as discussed above, and farmers, who may use firearms for pest control to support their livelihoods. The amendments should make it easier and quicker for a farmer to have access to more calibres within a band, without having to make a variation application.

Key Assumptions, Sensitivities, Risks

10. It has been assumed that FAC holders will have been made aware of the amendments and how one-off-one-on transactions using the “banded system” operate. RFDs will continue to participate in the new model and provide timely notifications of transactions to PSNI FEB.

11. There is a risk of misinterpretation of the “banded system” and RFDs and FAC holders should be aware of which calibre is best suited for a particular quarry. The risk would be that FAC holders could use the “banded system” to acquire firearms that may be of a different calibre or exchange a firearm for another one even if it is conditioned for a different use.

12. It is difficult to predict what the continuing numbers of FAC holders will be if firearms fees are increased to the proposed levels. Transactions through the “banded system” are currently cheaper and quicker than applying for a variation and it has been assumed this will continue to be the case as it requires less resource from PSNI FEB.

13. The Department will seek evidence of any impact during the public consultation. The Department welcomes any information or views during the consultation period that may assist the assessment of any future or potential impacts.