

Consultation guide

Chapter One: Your general details. The consultation does not ask for any personal information such as name or address.

Report one

Chapter Two: Recommendations regarding the suitability of types of Firearms to be licensed.

A review of the five round limit applied to rim-fire short firearms should be undertaken and the Minister should increase the five-round limit to ten rounds.

Strongly Agree

A shotgun whose barrel length is less than 61 centimetres should only be licensable in circumstances where it has been demonstrated that shotgun with a barrel length of more than 61 centimetres will not suffice.

Strongly Disagree

If the barrel length is to be used as a basis for prohibition of certain shotguns, then the minimum length requirement for licensable shotguns should be changed from 61cm min overall to 45cm min barrel length and 90cm overall.

Strongly Disagree

If barrel length is to be used as a determining factor to the level of regulation applied to rifles, then this could be achieved by making certain barrel lengths restricted.

Strongly Agree

The Firearms and Offensive Weapons Act 1990 should be reviewed to allow registered firearms dealers to shorten barrels in order to lengthen their life but a limit (e.g. 45cm) should be imposed.

Strongly Disagree

Chapter Three: Recommendations regarding the changes to the licensing of types of firearms

Consideration should be given to a less onerous form of licensing for gas-operated firearms, while remaining subject to licensing. In this regard, the licensing of these firearms should be made more accessible when compared to higher-powered firearms.

(Note: there are three types of gas-operated firearms: airsoft devices, paintball markers and gas-operated firearms which can use metal projectiles. Gas-operated firearms of over one joule are defined as firearms under the Firearms Act 1925, as a result possession of these devices is subject to the same certification and security framework provided for firearms which use an explosive propellant.)

Agree

The storage requirements for low powered gas-operated firearms provided by the S.I. No. 307/2009 Firearms (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 2009 should be reviewed to make them more proportionate.

Strongly Agree

The definition of an assault rifle should be reviewed with an aim to provide for more prescriptive language that is easier for licensing officers and firearm-holders to interpret.

(Note: Assault rifles are currently defined in S.I. 21 of 2008 as being the following: (a) rifles capable of functioning as semi-automatic firearms and as automatic firearms, (b) firearms that resemble such rifles;)

Strongly Disagree

The definition of an assault rifle should exclude reference to a rifle's visual appearance when the features are purely cosmetic.

Strongly Agree

Chapter Four: Recommendations on the purpose for which the firearm should be licensed

When a firearm is sought to shoot a small mammal, such as rat, hare, rabbit, grey squirrel and other similar sized quarry, the following firearms would be suitable for this purpose:

- Gas operated rifles over 16 joule - these firearms should be between .17 to .35 calibre.

- All types of shotgun, common suitable gauges are 10g, 12g, 16g, 20g, 28g, .410 and 9mm “garden guns”
- All types of rifles of a calibre between .17 rim-fire to 0.22 centre-fire ammunition

Disagree

When a firearm is sought for the purpose of hunting and controlling medium quarry, such as fox, feral cat and other similar sized quarry, the following firearms would be suitable for this purpose:

- All types of rifles of a calibre between; .22” Hornet; .22” WMR .22”lr (at close range only).218” Bee; .22”-250 Swift; .22 Remi; 5.56mm/.223”/.243” 6mm PPC, 6mm/.244”; .220 Swift.
- Rifles of a lower calibre such as a .204 Ruger, or a .17 Remington provided they are used with expanding ammunition.
- Gas operated rifles over 16 joule, provided these firearms are of sufficient power to dispatch the quarry humanely. The Committee recommends that when a gas-operated rifle firearm is sought to dispatch fox sized quarry at a close range, the gas-operated rifle should be of approximately a minimum of 160 joules or 120 foot pounds approximately, in order to dispatch the quarry humanely.
- All types of shotgun, with the appropriate ammunition. In some circumstances, a pump action and/or semi-automatic shotguns with a capacity of over three rounds may be required.

Disagree

When a firearm is sought for the purpose of hunting deer and other large quarry, such as feral goat, boar, and other similar sized quarry, the following firearms would be suitable for this purpose:

- All types of rifles of a calibre between .240 to .308 and of a muzzle energy of over 2300 Joules. For the shooting of larger types of deer, or deer on open terrain rifles of considerably higher muzzle energy. I.e. 3600 Joules should be licenced.
- All types of shotgun with the appropriate ammunition (excluding deer as per S.I. 239 of 1977).

Agree

New applicants for licences for the purpose of hunting deer and other large quarry, such as feral goat, boar, and other similar sized quarry should be directed to higher calibres as a .22 may not be humane.

(Note: S.I. 239 of 1977 provides that deer may only be hunted with a centre-fire rifles of not less than .22 calibre with a muzzle energy of not less than 1,700 foot pounds. The Committee

understands from the NPWS that some hunters in Ireland may still have firearms with these characteristics.

Strongly Agree

When a firearm is sought for the purpose of hunting or euthanising dangerous quarry, such as lion, elephant, buffalo, bear and chimpanzee, the following firearms are suitable:

- All types of rifles - these should be of a calibre above .338”.
- All types of shotgun with the appropriate ammunition such as slug or sabot.

Strongly Disagree

When a firearm is sought for the purpose of shooting bird quarry the following firearms are suitable:

- All types of shotgun.
- Pump-action and/or semi-automatic shotguns should have a maximum capacity of three rounds.
- A rifle or gas-operated firearm if permitted by a declaration or order issued by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (non-game birds only).

(Note: there are two types of bird quarry: “game bird” and “non-game bird”. A “game” species is one that is specified in an Open Seasons Order that the Minister for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage publishes each year. Game birds may only be lawfully hunted by means of a shotgun, whereas, non-game birds may be shot either with a rifle or a shotgun in accordance with a declaration made by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Many birds that are shot each year are not “game” birds. These birds include Hooded Crow, Magpie, Rook, Jackdaw, Feral Pigeon, and Rock Dove. These species of bird will be detailed in a declarations made under the European Communities (Wildlife Act, 1976) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, as amended. The Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage may also grant permits under Section 42 of the Wildlife Act 1976 allowing the shooting of birds that are not specified in a “declaration” but which are causing certain kinds of damage.)

Agree

If a firearms certificate or authorisation is sought solely for gun dog training purposes the applicant should be directed to acquire a blank-firing device that has been purpose built and cannot be converted into a live-firing firearm. These devices should meet the technical specifications contained in Commission Implementing Directive (EU) 2019/69.

Strongly Agree

A rifle, pistol, or shotgun designed or adapted to shoot a net may be used for the non-lethal capture of birds. These firearms may be sought when birds are required to be captured for research purposes or for veterinary treatment.

Strongly Agree

All shotgun types may be suitable for use in clay-target shooting. When a shotgun is sought for the purpose of engaging clay-target shooting, the following be considered:

- That the firearm is appropriate for rules of the competition as set by a national governing body.
- That all firearms should be non-restricted, unless it is clearly demonstrated that only a restricted firearm will suffice.
- That the firearm will be used at an authorised clay-target location, in line with the recommendation that such locations be subject to authorisation.

Disagree

When licensing pistol and revolvers for the purposes of target shooting the following should be considered:

- That the short firearm is appropriate for rules of the competition set by a national governing body.
- That the authorised range the short firearm sought is to be used on is certified for that calibre of firearm.

Disagree

All types of rifles are suitable for use in rifle target shooting. When licensing rifles for the purposes of target shooting the following should be considered:

- That the firearm is appropriate for rules of the competition as set by a national governing body.
- That all rifles should be non-restricted, unless it is clearly demonstrated that only a restricted firearm will suffice.
- That the range the firearm is sought to be used on is certified for that calibre of rifle.

Disagree

All shotgun types may be suitable for use in target shotgun shooting. When a shotgun is sought for the purpose of engaging in target shooting, the following should be considered:

- That the firearm is appropriate for rules of the competition as set by a national governing body.
- That all firearms should be non-restricted unless it is clearly demonstrated that only a restricted firearm will suffice.
- That the range the firearm is sought to be used on is authorised.

Disagree

In future target shotgun clubs should be subject to authorisation.

Strongly Disagree

As crossbows are restricted firearms, they should only be licenced to engage in target shooting.

Strongly Disagree

When a crossbow is sought for the purpose of engaging target shooting, the following be considered:

- That the firearm is appropriate for rules of the competition/discipline as set by a national governing body; and
- That the firearm will be used at an appropriate and safe location, (crossbow ranges do not require authorisation under the Firearms Act).

Strongly Disagree

Crossbow shooting clubs should be subject to authorisation, as they employ restricted firearms.

Strongly Disagree

It would be preferable, when possible, that one firearm is licenced for multiple purposes.

Neither Agree or Disagree

Blank firing devices should be considered suitable to be licenced for the purpose of bird scaring.

Agree

In general, when firearms are required for use in historical re-enactments or for use in film, TV, and theatre productions, only blank-firing or deactivated firearms should be used.

Strongly Disagree

The system of authorisations at Section 2(5) of the Firearms Act 1925, as amended, should be reviewed with a view to providing Chief Superintendents of An Garda Síochána with the authority to authorise the possession and use of restricted firearms in certain defined circumstances.

Strongly Agree

Chapter Five: Recommendations on other matters that might be examined in future

Consideration should be given to aligning the classification of firearms under Irish legislation with the categories with the Firearm Directive.

Strongly Agree

The wording of Section 4(2)(h)(iii) of the Firearms Act 1925 should be reviewed, possibly replacing the phrase “only type” with more flexible language, and providing greater clarity to applicants and licensing officers.

(Note: This provision provides that in order to possess a restricted firearm a person must demonstrate that the firearm is the only type that is appropriate for the purpose for which it is required).

Strongly Agree

Consideration should be given to requiring that, when a firearm is sought on the basis of membership of a shooting club, this club should be subject to authorisation.

Disagree

Consideration should be given to harmonising the requirement for shooters to be a member of a club if they seek a firearm for the purpose of engaging in recreational shooting and the requirement for club membership should be expanded to all types of shooting clubs.

(Note: the requirement for club membership only applies to rifle and pistol/handgun target shooting).

Strongly Disagree

Consideration should be given to improving the regulation of clay target shooting and shotgun ranges (e.g. this could include the range being subject to inspection and authorisation, and that the ranges meet existing international standards.)

Strongly Disagree

Consideration should be given to requiring a higher standard of storage arrangements for when multiple firearms are being transported.

Strongly Disagree

Consideration should be given to introducing electronic registers for use by Registered Firearms Dealers.

Neither Agree or Disagree

The licencing system should be brought online, where possible.

Strongly Agree

The current practice of issuing individual specific certificates for each firearm should be revised and this revision should allow for the substitution of firearms on the certificate on a like-for-like basis by a registered firearms dealer, without the need to make a new application to An Garda Síochána.

Strongly Agree

The firearms certificate should be reformatted to make it more durable and include the holder's photograph.

Strongly Disagree

The duration of firearm certificates and hunting permits should be aligned so that when hunting permits are submitted in support of an application for a firearm they remain in-force for the same period.

Strongly Agree

The efficacy of the current licencing process should be assessed to establish if there are delays or issues with lost paperwork. Mitigating measures should be established, where necessary.

Strongly Agree

Specific firearms training should be provided for all staff involved in overseeing the firearms legislation.

Strongly Agree

Licensing authority should be centralised within AGS, with appropriate input from local districts/division in the licensing process.

Somewhat Agree

A non-judicial appeals mechanism for firearms licensing decisions should be established, in line with the Department of Justice recommendations and to be based on the Private Security Authority Appeals Board.

Strongly Disagree

The process for refusing a firearms license application should be modified to include a letter of intent to refuse that is issued prior to a refusal decision in order to allow the applicant to provide any further relevant information that may impact on a licensing decision.

Strongly Agree

The policy on the reloading of ammunition should be examined with a view to permitting reloading in residential abodes.

(Note: Reloading refers to the process of individuals making ammunition by assembling the components (case/hull, primer, powder, and bullet or shot), rather than purchasing completely assembled, factory-loaded ammunition. This recommendation was the view of only one member of the Committee).

Strongly Agree

Report Two

Chapter Two: Consideration of whether firearms certificates should be conditioned to specify locations and purposes

Firearms licences should not be conditioned under Section 4(2)(g) of the Firearms Act 1925 to specify the location and purposes where/for which the firearm may be used.

(Note: Section 4(2)(g) of the Firearms Act 1925 provides that when a firearms certificate is granted it may be made subject to a condition or conditions by the issuing person in the interests of public safety or security.)

Strongly Agree

Provision for specifying the purposes for which a firearm may be used [should] be achieved by introducing different types of firearms certificates that would be aligned with the purpose for which the firearm has been sought. Such licenses [should] be introduced in a similar format as the “limited certificates” provided by Section 3(6) of the Firearms Act 1925.

Strongly Disagree

The framework for authorisation of shooting clubs by An Garda Síochána should be expanded to all clubs.

(Note: Currently this requirement currently only applies to rifle and short firearm target shooting clubs.)

Strongly Disagree

If the suggestion to expand the authorisation of shooting clubs by An Garda Síochána is accepted, then the provision of insurance by these clubs should be evaluated and

requirements introduced to ensure that such provisions are harmonised and appropriate for all involved.

Strongly Disagree

A harmonised framework for authorisation and inspection of all ranges or where non-certificate holders are engaging in shooting should be introduced.

(Note: all rifle and pistol target shooting ranges are subject to authorisation under Section 4A of the Firearms Act 1925, as amended. While not all shotgun ranges are currently subject to authorisation and inspection in the same manner as rifle and short firearm ranges, persons who do not hold a firearms certificate are prohibited from using a firearm unless they do so at a location authorised by An Garda Síochána. Thus, the range or location must be authorised by An Garda Síochána if a non-certificate holder is to engage in target shotgun or clay target shooting).

Strongly Disagree

A separate authorisation should not be required for certificate holders who wish to engage in clay-target shooting on private property as part of a group of ten persons or less.

Strongly Agree

It should be explicitly clear to certificate holders that firearms may only be used to hunt on land on which the person, or their club, has permission to shoot. Further, it would be preferable that all permissions be evidenced in a written form so they may be easily verified.

(Note: There are existing limits to the locations where hunting may occur. The Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, establishes that it is illegal to hunt on any lands without the express permission of the landowner. The Committee believes there would be merit in providing that to use the firearm at a location without permission or to hunt wildlife in contravention of the wildlife legislation would also be a breach of the corresponding firearm certificate.)

Strongly Disagree

Hunting and game clubs should be subject to authorisation by An Garda Síochána. Authorisation should include submission of maps of lands on which they will hunt, documentation detailing membership, and insurance details.

Strongly Disagree

Club membership should be required when a firearm is sought for the purpose of recreational hunting or game shooting, unless the applicant is seeking a firearm for use on their own land or with the permission of a limited number of landowners.

Strongly Disagree

Chapter Three: Consideration of whether a limit should be introduced on the number and type of firearms a person may hold

A limit should not be applied on the number and type of firearms a person may hold.

Strongly Agree

Statutory Instrument No: 307 of 2009 -Firearms (Secure Accommodation) Order, 2009 should be amended with a view to aligning the security arrangements required when a person owns a significant number of firearms with those required for Registered Firearms Dealers.

(Note: these are currently set out in Statutory Instrument No: 646/2017 - Firearms (Storage of Firearms and Ammunition by Firearms Dealers) Regulations 2017.)

Strongly Disagree

Chapter Four: Consideration of the licencing of add-on devices that are considered firearms under the Act, including silencers and sound moderators, telescope sights with light beams, and telescope thermal-imaging sights

Silencers should remain licensable in the State but applicants should continue to be required to demonstrate “good reason” for their possession to An Garda Síochána for their consideration.

Strongly Disagree

Silencers should be available to be licensable for use by employees who use firearms as part of their legitimate duties.

(Note: the Committee suggests that applications for a silencer for this is purpose should be supported by a letter from the employer outlining that such a device is required and why the use of ear protection is not sufficient.)

Strongly agree

Any person using a silencer outside a range should be required to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of other people who may be in the area. For example, this could include placing warning signs on gates and entrances to advise persons shooting is happening in the area.

Strongly Disagree

Thermal imaging sights designed to be mounted onto a firearm should not be available to be licensed in the State.

Strongly Disagree

Telescopic scopes with light beam (“night scopes”) should only be licensable for professional users who can demonstrate a need for this device and that no other device is suitable.

Strongly Disagree

If a person is authorised to possess a telescopic scope with a light beam (“night scope”) by An Garda Síochána, this should be detailed on the person’s firearm certificate, so that it is clear to firearm dealers who may be permitted to purchase such a device.

Strongly Disagree

Chapter Five: Consideration of whether qualifications and training should be required in order to be eligible to hold a firearms certificate

A more uniform approach should be taken to the demonstration of competence in the use of firearms and this should be defined in legislation.

Disagree

First time applicants for all firearms should be required to undertake appropriate training on an authorised range to an agreed national standard that is aligned with the type of firearm sought and purpose for which it is sought.

Strongly Disagree

A graduated approach to the licensing of first-time licence applicants should be taken in the legislation via the introduction of a provisional firearms certificate.

Strongly Disagree

An Garda Síochána should routinely condition the licences of first-time applicants or applicants seeking to use new calibres of firearms to require them to use the firearm in question under supervision of an experienced shooter of the same type of firearm for a specified period.

Strongly Disagree

A training programme to a national standard should be devised for those that wish to engage in night-time shooting to ensure that persons have the skills to hunt safely in darkness and semi-lit conditions.

Strongly Disagree

A firearm certificate holder should be required to spend a minimum number of hours using that firearm on a range each year in order for the firearm certificate to remain valid or to be eligible for a renewal.

Strongly Disagree

Chapter Six: Consideration of whether qualifications and training should be required to become a registered firearm dealer permitted to repair firearms or make modifications to the functioning of firearms

Registered firearms dealers should be permitted to repair or modify firearms only if they have completed an appropriate training course or gained an appropriate qualification or possess relevant experience.

Strongly Agree

A graduated approach should be taken towards the authorisation of registered firearms dealers, whereby those wishing to engage in repairs or modifications should be subject to further authorisation beyond the authorisation given to RFDs wishing to engage only in the sale and purchase of firearms and ammunition.

Agree

Consideration should be given to insurance requirements for repair work carried out by registered firearms dealers.

Neither agree or Disagree

A broad approach should be taken to the qualifications considered acceptable prior to authorisation to engage in repairs or modifications to firearms.

Strongly Agree