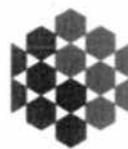


FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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Our ref: SUB/1344/2015

David Robinson

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24 November 2015

*Dear David*

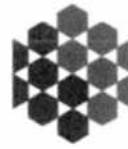
## **FIREARMS**

Thank you for your email to my official Robert Kidd on 19 November. I thought it appropriate for me to reply.

I noted from your evidence to the Committee on 17 November that you, CAI and BASC would be prepared to move to age 12. You have now e-mailed to bring this age issue formally to the Department's attention along with your view (and that of CAI and BASC) that all lawful quarry and all inanimate targets should be covered – not just clay.

While I thank you for your correspondence and suggestion, I do not believe that a move on the nature of shooting at such a young age is appropriate.

My conclusions on this issue were reached after extensive consultation. The age of 12, down from 16, for clay target shooting was chosen as the age at which a young person will have reached secondary school (it is also the lowest age that the Chief Constable recommended although he was in favour of no change) and 12 is the age which most other firearms stakeholders accepted. (Some other respondents wanted no change). I have taken account of the position in GB as well as the greater age restriction which



applies in the Republic of Ireland. You will also be aware that I agreed to include in the legislation the ability to further amend the provision by regulation in order to facilitate a future change, if any.

In addition, I propose to extend the scope for young people aged 16 and 17 to participate in pest/vermin as well as sporting uses with a shotgun under supervision where they have obtained a firearm certificate. (Article 7 of the Firearms (NI) Order 2004).

Further, I am proposing to broaden the exemptions in Schedule 1 of the Firearms Order to permit a young person aged 16 or 17 who does not possess a firearm certificate to avail of the same shooting opportunities as an adult who is not an FAC holder, again under supervision.

The area where your view differs significantly from mine is in respect of quarry versus clay target use for those aged 12 to 15. I recognise that it is the view held by your organisation, CAI and BASC that you would wish to have young people shooting live quarry including vermin over the fields from the age of 12. I do not agree with this stance. I want to take a cautious approach and my aim is to enable young shooters to be able to undertake competitive shooting opportunities while developing safe firearms handling skills as they would in a target club at present. This is a clearly controlled environment. You will be aware that a number of other stakeholders support my proposals as they stand.

I want to take a measured approach to these changes in the interests of public safety, with scope to review them in due course.

**DAVID FORD MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**