

Firearms Purchase Scheme

1. The Firearms Purchase Scheme (FPS) was originally introduced as a non-statutory arrangement in 1973 following the introduction of the Firearms (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 and the subsequent prohibition on Firearms dealers from stocking bullet-firing firearms – except in limited numbers and for a period not exceeding 72 hours.
2. The original intention of the scheme was for the NIO to purchase dealers existing stocks of firearms but it was extended to include second-hand firearms which were being relinquished by private individuals. This scheme was as a result of firearms owners having no ready outlet for the sale of their firearms since dealers would not buy them in a diminished resale market. Any surrendered bullet firearm qualified for payment under the scheme. In order to assess the level of payment the Department employed an expert to assess each firearms submitted for payment.
3. Following a review in 1985 it was accepted that the FPS should be retained but that it should be restricted to those firearms which were given up and not replaced. Firearms dealers were under no obligation to sell to the NIO and they could dispose of the firearms as they saw fit providing of course, that it was in a legal fashion and that they complied with the 72 hour rule.
4. In 2000/01 another review was carried out and it was agreed that the scheme should be restricted to the purchase of personal protection weapons which were being given up, that the role of the firearms dealers as an outlet to the NIO for buying weapons (which involved taking possession of the firearm, conveying it to police custody and acting as agents for our payment to the sellers) should be done away with and that the weapons should only be purchased by the NIO after being valued by the assessor.
5. Following a further review in July 2010 it was concluded that:



Security & Legacy Group

- Ending the scheme would see the main responsibility for the disposal of firearms move to the dealers and would allow market forces to determine the manner of that disposal. An additional option would be for PPW owners to sell their weapon to another FAC holder.
- Some 38 years on, and in a much more normal Northern Ireland, the Scheme which was designed to purchase firearms from dealers is no longer considered relevant.

6. In July 2011 the Northern Ireland Office decided to close the Firearms Purchase Scheme and that the last day should be 31 December 2012.