



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

# Consultation

## Amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

27 May 2025

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## **FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

Thank you for your interest in this public consultation.

The Northern Ireland Office is seeking your views on proposed amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to strengthen the control of explosives precursors in Northern Ireland and bring in similar measures to those found in Great Britain.

The aim of these proposals is to ensure a consistent level of protection against the misuse of explosives precursors across the United Kingdom, while ensuring that those with legitimate uses for these substances are still able to use them.

I have published this consultation to gather your views on these proposals. I invite you to respond by 5pm on 19 August 2025.

**THE RIGHT HON HILARY BENN MP**

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

## ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION

### Purpose

1. The Government is considering introducing secondary legislation to amend the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014<sup>1</sup> (the 2014 NI Regulations) to strengthen the control of explosives precursors in Northern Ireland, bringing in similar measures to those in Great Britain under the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023. The aim of this proposal is to ensure there is a consistent level of protection against the misuse of these substances across the UK.
2. The amendments to the law in Great Britain brought in by the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023 were identified following a detailed review of the legislation relating to controls of explosives precursors and poisons following the Manchester Arena and Parsons Green explosives attacks in 2017, and strengthened the safeguards that are in place to prevent the illicit use of explosives precursors.
3. Furthermore, in order to facilitate dual access to both the UK Internal Market and the EU Single Market, Northern Ireland continues to apply Regulation (EU) 2019/1148<sup>2</sup> (the 2019 Regulation) on the marketing and use of explosives precursors under the terms of the Windsor Framework. The 2019 Regulation, and the duties imposed on individuals and businesses, have applied in Northern Ireland since 1 February 2021, but consequential changes to the 2014 NI Regulations are required to ensure the 2019 Regulation is fully implemented.
4. The Government recognises the need to keep the public informed and to allow people the opportunity to comment on policy proposals.
5. This consultation asks for views on the proposed amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to strengthen the control of explosives precursors in Northern Ireland and bring in similar measures to those found in Great Britain.

### Scope of the consultation

6. The Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 apply only in Northern Ireland. This consultation is open to responses from all of the United Kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> [Read the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2014](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Read Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1148](#)

## **Duration of the consultation**

7. The consultation closes to responses on **5pm on 19 August 2025**

## **How to respond to this consultation**

8. The consultation is aimed at businesses who supply explosives precursors, professional users of explosives precursors, and members of the public who use explosives precursors in Northern Ireland.
9. You can send your consultation responses:
- **By email:** [explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk](mailto:explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk)
  - **In writing:**  
Public consultation:  
Explosives Precursors Consultation  
Northern Ireland Office (SPG)  
Erskine House,  
20-32 Chichester St,  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF
10. When responding, please state whether you are doing so as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled. We will acknowledge your response.
11. All requests for access to the consultation document in other formats will be considered. You can email any queries to:  
[explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk](mailto:explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk)

## **Government response**

12. A summary of responses to this consultation and details of the action that the Government will take, or has taken, will be published on the [Northern Ireland Office \(NIO\) website](#).
13. The NIO will aim to publish this information within 12 weeks of the consultation closing date.

## HOW WE CONSULT

14. This consultation is being conducted in line with the [Cabinet Office consultation principles](#) published in March 2018.

### Equality

15. It is also being conducted in line with the [NIO Equality Scheme](#).
16. In accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the NIO has undertaken an Equality Screening exercise<sup>3</sup> prior to the launch of this consultation to indicate whether there are equality of opportunity and/or good relations impacts associated with proposed amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.
17. The outcome of the screening exercise is that the likely impact of these proposals is “none” in respect of all of the section 75 categories. This is because the policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.
18. An Equality Screening of the impact of the proposals in this consultation has been published alongside this consultation document. Following the conclusion of this consultation we will review the screening exercise to assess any additional potential impacts identified from the consultation responses. This is to ensure that the NIO’s initial assessment of any potential impacts of the proposals remains accurate.

### Confidentiality

19. The information you send us may need to be shared with colleagues within other relevant UK Government departments and relevant Northern Ireland Executive departments. The information might also be published in a summary of responses received and referred to in the published consultation report. The published consultation report will include a summary of responses to the consultation exercise and a list of organisations that responded, but will not include personal identifiers, such as names, unless explicit consent has been granted by the respondent to do so. Other contact details will not be published.
20. All information contained in your response, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure if requested under pieces of

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<sup>3</sup> Read about the [Equality Commission’s Section 75 guidance](#)

information rights legislation, such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. By providing personal information for the purposes of this public consultation exercise, it is understood that you acknowledge and accept the risk of the possible disclosure and publication of this information. Any personal information provided will be stored for six months before being destroyed in accordance with data protection legislation and our retention and disposal policy.

21. To find out more about the general principles of information rights legislation and how it is applied in the NIO, please contact: [foi@nio.gov.uk](mailto:foi@nio.gov.uk)
22. The NIO is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide. The NIO's privacy notice in relation to this public consultation, which sets out the standards you can expect in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at Annex A.

## CONSULTATION

### Introduction

23. This consultation seeks views on proposed amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 NI Regulations). The consultation is aimed at businesses who supply explosives precursors, professional users of explosives precursors, and members of the public who use explosives precursors in Northern Ireland.
24. Explosives precursors are chemical substances that can be used for legitimate purposes, for example in agriculture, horticulture, mining, quarrying, food production, science and education. However, at certain concentrations, they can be misused to manufacture homemade explosives.
25. Since the 1970s, legislation in Northern Ireland has prohibited the supply of certain substances to any person (whether a business or a member of the public) unless that person has a licence. These restrictions were specific to Northern Ireland and were put in place, and have been maintained, in recognition of the security situation in Northern Ireland.
26. The 2014 NI Regulations were introduced so that Northern Ireland implemented Regulation (EU) 98/2013<sup>4</sup> (the 2013 Regulation), while maintaining other specific restrictions in Northern Ireland. Since the 2014 NI Regulations were made, the 2013 Regulation have been repealed and replaced by the 2019 Regulation on explosives precursors, and the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023<sup>5</sup>, applying in Great Britain, were made.

### *Regulation (EU) 2019/1148 (the 2019 Regulation)*

27. In order to facilitate dual access to both the UK Internal Market and the EU Single Market, Northern Ireland continues to apply the 2019 Regulation on the marketing and use of explosives precursors under the terms of the Windsor Framework. The purpose of the 2019 Regulation is to keep the public safe and secure from threats posed by terrorism and other criminal activities.
28. The 2019 Regulation, and the duties imposed on individuals and businesses, have applied in Northern Ireland since 1 February 2021, but consequential changes to the 2014 NI Regulations, such as replacing references to the 2013

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<sup>4</sup> [Read Regulation \(EU\) 98/2013](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Read the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023](#)

Regulation with references to the 2019 Regulation, are required to ensure the 2019 Regulation are fully implemented.

### *The Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023*

29. Following the Manchester Arena and Parsons Green explosives attacks in 2017 the Home Office carried out a detailed review of the legislation relating to controls of explosives precursors and poisons. The subsequent amendments to the law in Great Britain (by the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023) strengthened the safeguards that were in place to prevent the illicit use of explosives precursors.
30. In respect of phosphoric acid, hydrochloric acid, hexamine and sulfur the controls in GB go further than equivalent controls under the 2019 Regulation and the 2014 NI Regulations.
31. We are therefore proposing to introduce similar restrictions in Northern Ireland to those in Great Britain, to ensure there is a consistent level of protection against the misuse of these substances across the UK.

### **Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 NI Regulations)**

32. Under the 2014 NI Regulations, explosives precursors licensing in Northern Ireland is split into two tiers.
  - Tier 1 licences cover a specific set of explosives precursors, limiting access to both professional users and members of the general public. Controls of this nature have been in place in Northern Ireland since the 1970s. The list of Tier 1 substances can be found in Schedule 1 to the 2014 NI Regulations<sup>6</sup>. We are not proposing to make changes to the substances included within Tier 1.
  - Tier 2 licences covered those substances which were in Annex I to the 2013 Regulation (but not where it is a Tier 1 substance). The requirement to have a Tier 2 licence applies only to members of the general public, and not to businesses. We plan to amend the definition of a Tier 2 substance to refer to the substances in Annex I of the 2019 Regulation, and as set out in more detail below to also include hydrochloric acid (above 10% w/w), phosphoric acid (above 30% w/w), and hexamine (at any concentration).

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<sup>6</sup> [Read Schedule 1 of the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2014](#)

33. The fee for granting a Tier 1 licence is currently £100 and for a Tier 2 licence it is £35. A single licence may be granted for more than one substance. A single licence may also be issued for both Tier 1 and Tier 2 substances. A re-grant of both tier 1 and tier 2 licences will cost £35, as long as none of the storage arrangements have changed.

### **Phosphoric Acid and Hydrochloric Acid**

34. We are proposing to amend the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to require members of the general public to have a Tier 2 licence to supply, acquire, possess, import and use:
- hydrochloric acid (above 10% w/w), and
  - phosphoric acid (above 30% w/w).
35. These restrictions would go beyond the controls which already apply in Northern Ireland via the 2019 Regulation, and mirror the position in Great Britain.
36. We also propose to introduce the following three obligations in relation to hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid. These obligations would only apply to these substances above the concentrations specified above, unless stated otherwise.
37. These obligations already apply in Northern Ireland in respect of the substances in Annex I of the 2019 Regulation. Therefore the processes and procedures already put in place in NI to comply with the 2019 Regulation can be extended to cover these additional substances. Furthermore, these three obligations are akin to those which apply to hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid in Great Britain.

#### *Obligation 1 - Informing the Supply Chain (applying Article 7 of the 2019 Regulation)*

38. Economic operators supplying hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid to another economic operator would have to inform them that the acquisition, introduction, possession or use of hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid by members of the general public is subject to restrictions and reporting obligations.
39. Economic operators providing hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid to professional users or members of the general public (at any concentration) would have to ensure that personnel are aware of which products contain hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid, and are instructed on their obligations.

### *Obligation 2 - Verification Upon Sale (applying Article 8 of the 2019 Regulation)*

40. Economic operators would have to check, each time they supply hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid to a member of the public, proof of the individual's identity and licence, and complete the record of transactions on the licence.
41. Economic operators supplying hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid to professional users and other economic operators would also be required to request proof of ID; their trade, business or profession; company name, address; VAT number; and intended use. The supplier should assess whether the intended use is consistent with the trade, business or profession. If in doubt, the sale can be refused but must be reported as a suspicious transaction.
42. Economic operators would be required to record each transaction of hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid and retain that information for 18 months from the date of transaction.

### *Reporting (Article 9)*

43. Economic operators, professional users, and licence holders would have to report significant disappearances and thefts of hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid (at any concentration) within 24 hours to the police.

## **Hexamine**

44. We are proposing to amend the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 to require members of the general public to have a Tier 2 licence to supply, acquire, possess, import and use hexamine at any concentration, to match the position in Great Britain.
45. Unlike hydrochloric acid and phosphoric acid, hexamine is included in Annex II of the 2019 Regulation. This means that the following obligations currently apply in Northern Ireland:
  - Economic operators and professional users must report suspicious transactions and significant disappearances and thefts of hexamine.
  - Economic operators who make hexamine available to another economic operator must inform that economic operator that hexamine is subject to reporting obligations.
  - Economic operators, when providing hexamine to professional users or members of the general public, must ensure that its personnel are aware of which products contain hexamine and are instructed on their legal obligations.

46. We also propose to extend the following three obligations which apply to Annex I restricted explosives precursors in the 2019 Regulation to hexamine at any concentration. These obligations already apply in Northern Ireland in respect of the substances in Annex I of the 2019 Regulation. Therefore the processes and procedures already put in place to comply with the 2019 Regulation can be extended to cover hexamine. Furthermore, these three obligations are akin to those which apply to hexamine in Great Britain.

*Obligation 1 - Informing the Supply Chain (applying Article 7(1 and 2) of the 2019 Regulation)*

47. Economic operators supplying hexamine to another economic operator would have to inform them that the acquisition, introduction, possession or use of hexamine by members of the general public is subject to a restriction.
48. Economic operators when providing hexamine to professional users or members of the general public would have to also ensure their personnel are instructed on these additional obligations.

*Obligation 2 - Verification Upon Sale (Applying Article 8 of the 2019 Regulation)*

49. Economic operators would have to check, each time they supply hexamine to a member of the public, proof of the individual's identity and licence, and complete the record of transactions on the licence.
50. Economic operators supplying hexamine to professional users and other economic operators would also be required to request proof of ID; their trade, business or profession; company name, address; VAT number; and intended use. The supplier should assess whether the intended use is consistent with the trade, business or profession. If in doubt, the sale can be refused but must be reported as a suspicious transaction.
51. Economic operators would be required to record each transaction of hexamine and retain that information for 18 months from the date of transaction.

*Obligation 3 - Reporting (Article 9(6) of the 2019 Regulation)*

52. Hexamine licence holders would have to report significant disappearances and thefts of hexamine at any concentration within 24 hours to the police.

**Sulfur**

53. As well as the two tiers of substances which are subject to licensing, in practice there is a third category of substances. These are the substances included in Annex II to the 2019 Regulation. There are no licensing requirements for these substances, but they are subject to a requirement for certain users to report suspicious transactions, and significant disappearances and thefts.
54. We are proposing to make sulfur a reportable substance. This goes beyond the controls which already apply in Northern Ireland via the 2019 Regulation, and mirrors the position in Great Britain.
55. To achieve this, we propose to extend the following two obligations which apply to Annex II regulated explosives precursors in the 2019 Regulation to sulfur at any concentration. These obligations already apply in Northern Ireland in respect of the substances in Annex II of the 2019 Regulation. Therefore the processes and procedures already put in place to comply with the 2019 Regulation can be extended to cover sulfur. Furthermore, these two obligations are akin to those which apply to sulfur in Great Britain.

*Informing the Supply Chain (applying Article 7 of the 2019 Regulation)*

56. Economic operators supplying sulfur to another economic operator would have to inform them that sulfur is subject to reporting obligations.
57. Economic operators when providing sulfur to professional users or members of the general public would have to ensure that its personnel are aware of which products contain sulfur, and are instructed on their obligations.

*Reporting (Applying Article 9(1 to 5) of the 2019 Regulation)*

58. Professional users and suppliers of sulfur would have to report significant disappearances and thefts at any concentration within 24 hours to the police.

**Suppliers of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Substances: Instructing Personnel**

59. We are proposing to put an obligation on suppliers of both Tier 1 and Tier 2 substances to instruct their employees of their obligations under the control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.
60. This supplements Article 7(2) of the 2019 Regulation, which already applies in Northern Ireland, and places an obligation on suppliers of substances found in Annex I or Annex II of the 2019 Regulation to instruct their personnel of their

obligations under the 2019 Regulation.

61. This is similar to the duty on suppliers to ensure that their workers are provided with relevant information about the requirements that apply in relation to certain explosives precursors, which applies in Great Britain under the Control of Explosives Precursors and Poisons Regulations 2023.

**Reporting of Significant Disappearances and Thefts: Members of the General Public holding a Tier 1 licence**

62. We are proposing to place an obligation on members of the general public who hold a Tier 1 licence to report significant disappearances and thefts of that substance within 24 hours to the police.
63. This supplements the obligation to report significant thefts and disappearances found in Article 9 of the 2019 Regulation, which already applies in Northern Ireland, which applies to economic operators and suppliers (including those with Tier 1 licences), and Tier 2 licence holders.

**Consultation Question**

64. The NIO welcomes your views on the following question:

**Do you have any views on the proposed amendments to the Control of Explosives Precursors etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014?**

65. Please give reasons for your answer, providing evidence where possible. As part of your response, it would be helpful to know whether you are a member of the public who deals with explosives precursors, a professional user of explosives precursors, or supplier of explosives precursors. The deadline for

responses is **5pm on 19 August 2025**.

66. Please send your consultation responses to the Northern Ireland Office:

- **By email:** [explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk](mailto:explosivesprecursorsconsultation@nio.gov.uk)
- **In writing:**  
Public consultation:  
Explosives Precursors Consultation  
Northern Ireland Office (SPG)  
Erskine House  
20-32 Chichester Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF

## **ANNEX A: Public consultation privacy notice**

The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your information. This notice informs you how we collect and process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation when you respond to this consultation.

You can respond to this consultation:

- by post
- by email

The way in which your data is handled varies depending on how you submit your response, but all information submitted to us will be treated in accordance with data protection principles.

This privacy notice sets out:

- how we process your personal data when you respond to this consultation
- the rights you have under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

### **Purpose**

We collect your personal data as part of the consultation process:

- to contact you regarding your response or related matters
- to produce anonymous statistical data, for example about the types of individuals and groups participating

### **The data we collect**

We collect and process the following personal data:

- your name
- your email or postal address
- any personal data you volunteer by way of evidence or example in your response to the consultation

### **Lawful basis for processing your personal data**

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in the exercise of our official authority.

### **What we do with your data**

The information you send us may need to be shared with colleagues within the NIO, other relevant UK Government departments and relevant Northern Ireland Executive departments. The information might also be published in a summary of responses received and referred to in the published consultation report

We will not:

- sell or rent your data to third parties
- share your data with third parties for marketing purposes

We will share your data if we are required to do so by law, for example by court order, or to prevent fraud or other crime.

### **How long we keep your data**

Any personal information provided will be stored for six months before being destroyed.

### **Your rights**

With respect to the processing of your personal data described in this notice, you have the right to request:

- information about how your personal data are processed
- a copy of the personal data you submitted in an accessible format
- that anything inaccurate in your personal data is corrected immediately
- that any incomplete personal data are completed, including by means of a supplementary statement
- that your personal data are erased if there is no longer a justification for them to be processed
- in certain circumstances (for example, where accuracy is contested) that the processing of your personal data is restricted

You can also:

- object to the processing of your personal data
- lodge a complaint with the Independent Information Commissioner (ICO) if you think we are not handling your data fairly or in accordance with the law

### **How to contact us**

Contact our Data Protection Officer (DPO) with any concerns about how we or our services handle your personal information:

Darren Stewart

Data Protection Officer  
Northern Ireland Office  
1 Horse Guards Road,  
Westminster,  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Email: [foi@nio.gov.uk](mailto:foi@nio.gov.uk)

## **Independent advice**

You can contact the Information Commissioner for independent advice about data protection issues or to make a complaint:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Email [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Telephone 0303 123 1113

Textphone 01625 545860

Monday to Friday 9am to 4:30pm

If you make a complaint to the Information Commissioner, it does not prejudice your right to seek redress through the courts.