

# Government closes antique firearms loopholes to protect public

Loopholes exploited by criminals to use antique firearms in violent crime will be closed by new laws introduced today (Monday 9 November).

The antique firearms exemption allows collectors and dealers to possess and trade in old firearms which no longer present a danger to the public, but evidence shows this is being exploited for criminal use.

Seven ammunition types will be removed from the definition of 'antique firearm', making up to 26,000 guns that use them illegal to own without a firearms licence.

Policing Minister Kit Malthouse said:

Public safety is our top priority and we cannot allow these dangerous firearms to fall into the wrong hands.

The UK has some of the toughest gun laws in the world – we will do everything in our power to make sure it stays that way.

According to the National Ballistics Intelligence Service, there has been a sharp rise in the number of antique guns being seized from crime scenes in recent years.

In 2007 there were four recoveries, which grew to 97 in 2016 and remain at high levels with 69 recovered in 2019.

Since 2007, six fatalities have been linked to antique firearms.

Existing owners of the firearms that will be affected by these regulations can apply for a firearm certificate.

They can also sell, deactivate or surrender these firearms ahead of the law changing, which will take place shortly after Parliament approves the legislation.

The maximum sentence for the unlawful possession of a firearm is five years' imprisonment.

The regulations will be reviewed every three years so that they reflect any future trends in criminal use and do their job of keeping the public safe.

The regulations apply across England and Wales. The regulations apply to Scotland except in respect of air weapons, which is a devolved matter. The regulations do not apply in Northern Ireland as firearms policy is devolved.

The government continues to do everything in its power to protect the public,

including recruiting 20,000 additional police officers over the next three years, expanding stop and search powers to take knives off our streets and investing in early intervention initiatives to support those at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence.