

Dear Sir

On June 24th, 2022, Minister of State at the Department of Justice, James Browne TD, formed the five-person Firearms Expert Committee (FEC) to carry out a comprehensive and potentially far-reaching review of firearms licensing in Ireland.

The make-up of the FEC has changed on several occasions since it was formed and different individuals, not appointed to the original FEC, have attended its meetings from time to time. However, none of the firearm user groups or representative organisations of the almost quarter of a million licensed firearm holders in Ireland have to date been consulted, directly or indirectly, on the matters under consideration by the FEC. Nor has the Minister responded in any meaningful way to representations made or followed through on his early promises to consult with stakeholders.

The stance taken by the Minister and FEC has resulted in Ireland's leading shooting and countryside organisations coming together to address widespread concern on the direction of the Minister and the FEC and its lack of consultation with firearms users and their representatives. Working together as an umbrella organisation, the Firearms Users Representative Group (FURG) will engage in high level campaigning to achieve comprehensive and genuine engagement with firearm users during the review with the ultimate aim of achieving a fairer, more efficient and consistent firearms licencing process.

FURG Member Organisations: National Association of Regional Game Councils, FACE Ireland (representing fourteen field sports organisations), Irish Deer Society, Irish Deer Commission, Wild Deer Association of Ireland, Deer Alliance HCAP, Countryside Alliance (Ireland), Country Sports Ireland, Irish Firearms Dealers' Association, Irish Clay Target Shooting Association, National Association of Sporting Rifle & Pistol Clubs, Irish Country Sports Association, Precision Rifles Ireland.

There is considerable concern regarding increasing bureaucracy and unnecessary delays within the firearms licencing process, inconsistency in application of firearms law, and the perceived exercise of personal views by Garda Superintendents involved in firearm licensing.

The FEC was tasked with making recommendations on which types of firearms should be licensable in the future, whether firearms certificates should be conditioned to limit the locations where firearms can be used or the purpose for which they may be used. FEC was also tasked with making recommendations on whether there should be a limit on the number and type of firearms a person may hold.

We are asking the Minister to immediately engage and consult with the FURG in a meaningful way, our current firearm licensing system ranks as one of the most restrictive within the EU and any attempt to further restrict law abiding firearm holders is unacceptable.

I am asking you to impress upon your political colleagues and other decision makers the need to address our concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely