
NATIONAL FIREARMS AMNESTY

Report of the Chief Constable

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform members, of the Northumbria Police results during the National Firearms Amnesty.

2. BACKGROUND

On 2 March 2003, the Home Secretary announced a National Firearms Amnesty to run between 31 March and 30 April 2003. The last such Amnesty was held in 1996 following the Dunblane murders.

The intention of the amnesty was to encourage people holding firearms and/or ammunition, not covered by a firearm certificate or a shot gun certificate, to surrender them for destruction. It was also intended to allow for the surrender of unwanted guns or ammunition, as well as providing an opportunity to hand in air weapon imitations and blank firers which, while not illegal, may be being held for criminal or anti-social purposes, or no longer be needed.

The Amnesty existed only in relation to illegal possession of firearms, and not offences they may have been used to commit.

People were able to surrender firearms at any police station in the force area, either anonymously or by providing full details of themselves and the weapon. A dedicated team of officers from the Central Support Unit was responsible for liaising with area commands to make-safe, collect and dispose of surrendered weapons.

The Amnesty was preceded by a national media campaign. The force conducted media briefings at the commencement and conclusion of the Amnesty, and area commands working with Media Services, undertook local media and publicity initiatives.

As part of the Amnesty, area commands visited and corresponded with local retail premises which sell air weapons and replica firearms, to request them not to sell such weapons.

3. RESULTS

A breakdown of results is attached at Appendix. 'A'.

The total of 949 firearms surrendered, compares with the total of 466, which were surrendered during the 1996 National Amnesty.

Within the category of '*Other Weapons*', two World War Two hand grenades were surrendered, together with an assortment of bladed instruments, flares and spear guns.

Six firearms have been sent for forensic examination to establish if they have been used in crime. These include two double-barreled sawn-off shot guns, one of which had been adapted to fire a 9 mm pistol round from one of the barrels.

All of the weapons have been, or will be destroyed, with the exception of a small number of rare or old ones which have been offered to museums.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Nil

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Police Authority is asked to note the content of this report