



Home Office

Norman Baker MP  
Minister for Crime Prevention

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Mr Barry Copping  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland  
Cleveland Police Headquarters  
Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough  
TS8 9EH

Reference: M2006/14

// March 2014

Dear Mr Copping,

Thank you for your letter of 20 December 2013 and your subsequent letter of 11 February 2014. I am replying as the Minister who now has responsibility for the firearms portfolio. I would like to apologise for the delay in responding.

I have seen the exchange of letters you had with the Rt Hon Damian Green MP and I appreciate your concern that the current fee level for firearms licences does not cover the cost of administration. I also agree with your assessment that it is unacceptable for the fee to be revised only once per decade. I would like to assure you that I am keen for this issue to be addressed. I want the cost and system of licensing guns to be appropriate and fair and work is continuing across government to ensure that happens.

I am sure that you will agree that it is important for us to achieve a balance between an efficient system and fair fee level. This will ensure that the police are able to continue to provide a service that has public safety at its heart and which also has the confidence of its users. Damian Green referred to the new eCommerce system in his letter of 18 September. I will not repeat the detail of that here but it is important to say that eCommerce represents a step change in the way the police handle administrative processes. It will bring efficiencies and any change in the level of the fee will need to reflect that. I should also emphasise that eCommerce is one part of a wider package of work being led by the National Policing Lead, CC Andy Marsh, to introduce greater consistency into the licensing process. This includes the development of Authorised Professional

Practice by the College of Policing as well as the work being undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, which has recently carried out a scoping exercise into how firearms licensing is conducted in practice. We expect to receive the results of those findings shortly and that may include a recommendation for further work to help drive up consistency across the country.

It is likely to take until 2015 for us to understand how all of the work in hand impacts on the licensing process and, therefore, its cost. I realise, though, that police forces cannot be expected to meet any shortfall in the administration of firearms licences. I am therefore considering whether there are interim options although I am sure you realise that this is complex with many different perspectives to take into account.

I would like to reassure you that we are continuing to work towards a fair solution and that this is a priority for me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Baker', written in a cursive style.

**Norman Baker MP**  
**Minister of State**