Notice of a Proposed Direction for Royal Mail to Prohibit the Carriage of Firearms

A consultation document

December 2004
Executive Summary

1. Postcomm invites comment on the proposal by Royal Mail to prohibit weapons within the postal pipeline. Postcomm sees the issue as one that is essentially a balance between the problems caused on the one hand to Royal Mail’s quality of service and the wish of the police for greater intelligence and on the other to the civil liberties issue involved in prohibiting, from the public post, items that are legal to possess. Responses are requested by midday on 14 March 2005.

2. Royal Mail has applied to Postcomm to prohibit the carriage of sporting, deactivated and replica firearms, munitions and ordnance (hereafter referred to as “firearms”) in its letters network, which covers letter post, Special and Recorded Delivery and the Standard Parcels service. Parcelforce would continue to carry firearms, as would other parcel companies. At present, Royal Mail prohibits the posting of certain items (for a full list see Annex A). However, it does not prohibit firearms, which many users of postal services can lawfully possess.

3. Royal Mail’s first reason for the application to prohibit firearms is the disruption they cause. Because of Royal Mail’s recent transport review, much more mail is being carried by air. Under Civil Aviation Authority rules, all parcels carried by air have to be scanned, so more and more lawful firearms are being detected in the post. Every time a firearm is found Royal Mail’s operations are halted, as the police have to be alerted. If firearms were prohibited, this would happen much less often – the only firearms in the mail would be there by mistake, or improperly. They would be handed over to the police, who would return lawful firearms\(^1\) to their owners.

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\(^1\) By ‘lawful firearms’, Postcomm refers to those firearms being carried by post in circumstances where receipt of the item by the addressee would not cause the addressee to commit a criminal offence. Consequently, ‘unlawful firearms’ has the converse meaning.
4. Royal Mail’s second reason for the application is that the prohibition on the carriage of firearms would help the police prevent crime. Blank-firers that can readily be converted to working firearms can be bought easily over the internet. According to the Association of Chief Police Officers, prohibiting such items from the mail would make it harder for criminals to get hold of them. Royal Mail claims that since all the mail that enters the UK is scanned, the prohibition of firearms would have a real effect on this problem: all replica guns that enter the country could be removed from the mail pipeline, and handed over to the police to deal with. Firearms could still enter the country using other parcel carriers, but this would help the police’s intelligence gathering because other carriers record the names and addresses of senders of parcels.

5. Royal Mail acknowledges that some firearms will still go through its system undetected if the prohibition is allowed, but the number of firearms travelling in the mail would be greatly reduced.

6. Postcomm has discussed the application with Royal Mail and has received comments from Postwatch. We are very grateful for their helpful explanations of the issues involved.
# Table of contents

1. **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1
   - Purpose of this document .................................................................................................. 1
   - Structure of this Document .............................................................................................. 1
   - Postcomm’s consultation ................................................................................................... 1
   - How to make representations ............................................................................................ 2
   - Responses to this consultation ......................................................................................... 2

2. **Background** ................................................................................................................... 3
   - Postcomm and Postwatch ................................................................................................ 3
   - Postcomm’s statutory duties .............................................................................................. 3
   - Royal Mail’s Licence Obligations ...................................................................................... 4

3. **Prohibition of Firearms** ................................................................................................ 5
   - Royal Mail Non-contract Products and Services .............................................................. 5
   - Royal Mail’s Proposed Amendments to the Schemes .................................................... 6
   - Information Provided by Royal Mail in Support of the Proposals .................................. 6
   - Considered Alternatives to Amending the Prohibitions Lists in the Schemes ................ 8
   - Impact on Customers ....................................................................................................... 9
   - Royal Mail’s Proposed Transition Period and Communications Strategy ..................... 11
   - Postwatch’s Views ......................................................................................................... 12
   - Questions on which Postcomm especially seeks comment: ........................................... 12

Annex A: ............ The Original Wording of the relevant paragraphs of the schemes ............ 14
Annex B: Amendments to the schemes .............................................................................. 18
Annex C: Meaning of Terms ............................................................................................... 18
1. Introduction

Purpose of this document

1.1 This consultation seeks the views of interested parties on Royal Mail’s request for consent to prohibit the carriage of real, deactivated and replica firearms, munitions and ordnance (hereafter called “firearms”). Under Condition 19 of its licence, Royal Mail cannot make changes to the non-price terms and conditions of its regulated products that would make those terms and conditions less beneficial to customers without Postcomm’s approval. The responses to this consultation will be considered when deciding whether or not Postcomm should approve the prohibition of firearms from Royal Mail’s letters network.

Structure of this Document

1.2 Chapter 2 explains Postcomm’s duties under the Postal Services Act 2000 and the requirements in Royal Mail’s licence regarding the continued provision of its services.

1.3 Chapter 3 sets out Royal Mail’s proposed changes, the information provided by Royal Mail to support its proposal, Postwatch’s initial views about the proposal and the issues on which Postcomm would particularly welcome comments.

Postcomm’s consultation

1.4 The consultation period for these proposals is three months. If Postcomm decides to consent to Royal Mail’s application to prohibit the carriage of firearms, it will issue a Decision Document explaining its thinking, and a Direction that the schemes governing Royal Mail terms of carriage be altered as appropriate. Any such Direction would take effect three months after its issue date, to give Royal Mail sufficient time to make the necessary changes to its operations. If Postcomm decides not to consent, it will issue a Decision Document explaining its reasoning.
How to make representations

1.5 Representations should be made to Postcomm by midday on 14 March 2005. Early responses and responses in electronic form would be especially welcome. They should be sent to Tom Balogh at:

Postcomm
Hercules House
6 Hercules Road
London
SE1 7DB

Tel: 020 7593 2141
Fax: 020 7593 2142
e-mail: tom.balogh@psc.gov.uk

Responses to this consultation

1.6 Postcomm will make public the responses it receives to this consultation document, subject to respecting any requests for confidentiality. If you do not want all or part of your response to this document to be read by anyone outside Postcomm, please ensure that your response clearly indicates which parts are confidential. If you are content for the substance of your contribution to be made public, but do not want the name of the organisation or the individual who signed it to be revealed, please indicate this by adding the following: “Name of organisation/sender NOT to be published”.
2. Background

Postcomm and Postwatch

2.1 The Postal Services Act 2000 (the Act) established the Postal Services Commission (Postcomm) as the independent regulatory body for the postal services industry in the United Kingdom. Postcomm’s Business Plan, which can be found on its website at www.psc.gov.uk, gives details of its duties, functions, objectives and work plan.

2.2 The Act also established the Consumer Council for Postal Services (Postwatch) to represent the interests of users of postal services.

Postcomm’s statutory duties

2.3 Postcomm is required by the Act to exercise its functions in the manner that it considers is best calculated to ensure the provision of a universal postal service.

2.4 Subject to its universal service duty, Postcomm must exercise its functions in the manner that it considers is best calculated to further the interests of users of postal services, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition between postal operators. In doing so, Postcomm must have regard to the interests of those who are disabled or chronically sick, are of pensionable age, are on low incomes and who reside in rural areas.

2.5 Subject to the duties mentioned above, Postcomm has a further duty to exercise its functions in the manner that it considers is best calculated to promote efficiency and economy on the part of postal operators.

2.6 Finally, in performing all its functions in relation to holders of licences granted under the Act, Postcomm must have regard to their abilities to finance the activities authorised or required by their licences.
皇家邮政的许可义务

2.7 2001年3月23日，Postcomm向Royal Mail Group plc -- 以前的Consignia plc – 授予许可（许可）以提供邮政服务在英国。该许可于2001年3月26日生效，并于2003年4月1日进行了修订。

2.8 根据许可第19条条件第1款，Royal Mail必须在其服务在英国提供的范围和程度上，提供其规制服务，除价格外，用户所得到的条件应不低于2003年3月提供的条件，除非Postcomm在与Postwatch咨询后，指示不同。
3. Prohibition of Firearms

Royal Mail Non-contract Products and Services

3.1 Certain Royal Mail products or services have their charges, terms and conditions detailed in documents called ‘schemes’. The schemes set out the items that are prohibited in the mail. On 3 September 2004, Royal Mail formally requested consent from Postcomm to alter the schemes to prohibit the carriage of real, replica and deactivated firearms, munitions and ordnance in its letters network.

3.2 Royal Mail has given three reasons for its application:

- Firearms cause great disruption to Royal Mail and the police when they are found.
- Prohibiting firearms will help the police with firearms control.
- The ease of access to Royal Mail’s pipeline and the anonymity of the sender makes these services particularly the target for the transport of illegal firearms.

3.3 Royal Mail is proposing to prohibit the carriage of firearms by:

- Adding items to the list of prohibited items as detailed in paragraph 15 of the Successor Postal Services Company Inland Letter Post Scheme 2001.
- Adding items into the prohibitions lists detailed at paragraph 7 of the Successor Postal Services Company Inland Parcel Post Scheme 2001.
- Adding items into the prohibitions lists detailed at paragraph 11 of the Successor Postal Services Company Overseas Letter Post Scheme 2001.
- Incorporating a similar prohibition into the Successor Postal Services Company Overseas Parcel Scheme.

3.4 Copies of the schemes can be found on the Royal Mail website (www.royalmail.com – type “Non-contract T&Cs” into the search box) and the relevant parts are reproduced in Annex A.
Royal Mail’s Proposed Amendments to the Schemes

3.5 Royal Mail has proposed that any firearm, shotgun or component thereof or any item that gives a realistic appearance of being such when examined, should be prohibited from being carried in the mail. This includes but is not limited to articles that may be sent as ornaments or decorative items, as well as replicas, imitation and disabled guns, starting pistols and realistic-looking toys. The prohibition will also apply to real, fake, disabled or replica ordnance (e.g. replica hand grenades) because of the difficulty of being able to distinguish these from the real items.

3.6 Because of the nature of the schemes, a number of technical changes are required. These are set out in Annex B.

3.7 A “Meaning of Terms” can be found in Annex C.

Information Provided by Royal Mail in Support of the Proposals

Delays to Royal Mail’s operations and use of police time

3.8 Royal Mail has been approached by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). ACPO’s members wish to reduce the number of firearms entering and being circulated in the country. In general, they are concerned about the ease with which firearms and components can be moved through the mail system and used for criminal and terrorist activities.

3.9 The police have asked Royal Mail to report all suspicious items found in the mail. In practice, this means that the police are called whenever firearms, lawful or not, are found, and Royal Mail has to hold the items until the police arrive.
3.10 Royal Mail’s operations have always been delayed when firearms are found, but the recent transport review has meant that a much greater volume of mail now travels by air and is therefore scanned at airports (as required by Civil Aviation Authority rules), so more firearms are being found. When they are found, Royal Mail’s operations at the airport are halted, and the police are called. The police and Royal Mail are concerned about the number of firearms that are being found and the amount of time taken in responding to each incident.

3.11 Information on the number of reported firearms-related incidents at Royal Mail from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004, and on the locations of the incidents, is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites*</th>
<th>Firearms in 12 month period</th>
<th>Ammunition in 12 month period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Int.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlisle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAMU (Gatwick)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWDC (Langley)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>352</strong></td>
<td><strong>254</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some of these sites have only been operating since October 2003, so a full year’s data is not available.

Deactivated and replica guns entering the UK
3.12 The police are especially concerned about foreign, deactivated and replica firearms entering the country. This is because many of these are more easily converted to working firearms than their British equivalents. They claim that the system of anonymous posting of mail makes it harder to trace those sending such items. If all items are prohibited the police will be able to separate out legitimate ones and return them to their owners while illegitimate ones will be confiscated. There are alternatives to sending firearms in the mail, including Parcelforce and over 300 other courier companies, but the sender is obliged to make a personal transaction when using these services to send international mail which makes them more traceable.

3.13 The fact that Parcelforce and other alternative courier services will continue to provide postal services to legitimate holders of firearms and shotguns is welcomed by the police. It means that lawful owners will still be able to use postal services to transport these items, and it will aid the police when items that are suspected to be illegal are found in an alternative company’s pipeline, as these alternative companies require the addresses of both sender and recipient before they will carry parcels.

3.14 Postcomm would welcome the views of consultees on whether these alternative services (see chart on p.9) meet their needs.

**Considered Alternatives to Amending the Prohibitions Lists in the Schemes**

3.15 A number of alternatives were considered by Royal Mail before the decision to make an application to prohibit the carriage of firearms was taken. Some of these are listed below:

- *Introduce a dedicated mail stream, avoiding the air network, to handle these particular items* – Royal Mail considered that this option would be too expensive to implement. As Royal Mail would pass these costs to the customer, it would be cheaper to use the Parcelforce products. Further this option would not allow customers
to send items to Northern Ireland, as all that mail is transported by air and guns are prohibited on planes.

- **Introduce a labelling or tagging regime for these types of goods** – Royal Mail considered that this would not impede the proliferation of firearms across the country. Labelling an item as a firearm doesn’t help as a loaded semi-automatic machine gun could be labelled as a sporting rifle. It would also fail to address the main aim of the proposal. It is the anonymity of those accessing Royal Mail’s pipeline that causes the problems.

- **Ensure Royal Mail sends all these items by road** – Royal Mail considered that this option would negate some of the efficiency gains brought about by the transport review if they were to be separated and specially handled. Further some parts of the UK cannot be reached by road (for example Northern Ireland).

- **Contract out the carriage of firearms and ammunition to a third party** – Royal Mail considered this option too expensive as it would be cheaper for the customer to use the third party directly. It also does not address the issue of anonymity.

**Impact on Customers**

3.16 There are over 300 other companies who could potentially carry firearms if the prohibition is agreed. Parcelforce will continue to carry them. Some of Royal Mail’s customers have been approached to ascertain what impact, if any, Royal Mail’s prohibition of the carriage of firearms would have on their businesses. Mail Order firms Otto (Grattans / Debenhams Direct) and Redcats (Empire Stores / Vertbaudet / The Store / Daxon / Laredoute / Finaref) have been consulted by Royal Mail and have raised no issues.

3.17 The table below shows pricing comparisons between Royal Mail, Parcelforce and other carriers’ services. Prices are given as of September 2004. If the proposed prohibition takes place the top two services on the chart will be discontinued.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Weight 1</th>
<th>Weight 2</th>
<th>Weight 3</th>
<th>Weight 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RM 1st Class² (Next Day)</td>
<td>£3.45</td>
<td>£10.33</td>
<td>£17.21</td>
<td>£24.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM Standard Parcel (3 Days)</td>
<td>£3.46</td>
<td>£7.20</td>
<td>£7.86</td>
<td>£8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcelforce 24 (Next Day)</td>
<td>£17.30</td>
<td>£17.30</td>
<td>£17.30</td>
<td>£17.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcelforce 48 (2 day service)</td>
<td>£13.00</td>
<td>£13.00</td>
<td>£13.00</td>
<td>£13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNT (Next Day)</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
<td>£32.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPS (Next Day)</td>
<td>£15.50</td>
<td>£15.50</td>
<td>£15.50</td>
<td>£17.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHL (Next Day)</td>
<td>£37.10</td>
<td>£43.50</td>
<td>£49.10</td>
<td>£54.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.18 There appear to be considerable differences between some of these prices. Royal Mail believes, but cannot provide evidence to prove, that most of the affected packets will lie around the middle weight-steps where the differences are less. It should also be noted that any items sent in the ordinary post are only covered for loss or damage up to a maximum of £28 which would not be adequate for the majority of items affected. Enhanced compensation up to £500 can currently be purchased for £2.25 without having to inform Royal Mail of the contents of the parcel. Since most affected packages would lie within this amount of compensation or above it the price would be higher than the table above suggests. This means that the change in price for most senders should be minimal.

² The RM Second Class product is not available at these weight-steps.
3.19 The police have stated that, if a prohibition comes into force, they are happy to organise a process with Royal Mail to ensure that all firearms found in Royal Mail’s pipeline are handed over to them at mutually agreeable times in a safe and secure manner. Royal Mail has informed Postcomm that the police will return lawful firearms to their owners.

3.20 Postcomm would welcome comments from consultees on these points.

Royal Mail’s Proposed Transition Period and Communications Strategy

3.21 Royal Mail has proposed that it should have a transition period of three months from the Direction to introduce the new prohibition. During this time, firearms would be still be transported and Royal Mail would write to the recipients, and such senders as can be identified, of items found by scanners informing them of the coming changes to the schemes.

3.22 If agreement is given to prohibit the carriage of firearms, Royal Mail intends to carry out a communications campaign, including alterations to its website. Royal Mail says that specific groups of companies (those who deal in these types of goods) identified by its account teams will be targeted to ensure the message is relayed effectively and advice is given.

3.23 During the transitional period, Royal Mail also plans to work with the media to publicise any changes and to raise awareness of the new rules. Royal Mail hopes to conduct this jointly with the police. Posters advertising the change will also be put in Post Offices and staff will be briefed to inform those customers likely to be affected.

3.24 If the prohibition comes into force, Royal Mail will also contact international postal providers to inform them of this fact so that senders of parcels outside the country can be made aware of the changes.

3.25 Postcomm would welcome comments from consultees on the adequacy of this proposed campaign.
**Postwatch’s Views**

3.26 Postwatch has provided initial views on Royal Mail’s proposal. It supports the principle of banning all firearms, ammunition and replicas from the pipeline provided that customers who send what are currently legitimate items have sufficient time to move to alternative suppliers which are reasonably priced, and the cessation of service is well publicised by Royal Mail. In forming this view, Postwatch has consulted internally but has not been able to consult external stakeholders in the limited time available. It has therefore reserved the right to alter its position or comment further at a later stage.

3.27 Postwatch has stressed that customers would have to be made aware of the change, and that information about alternative carriers should be readily available.

3.28 Postwatch has said that the definition of excluded items is very important and needs to be workable. Otherwise they believe that, as with airlines, the ban may cause more disruption than it resolves.

3.29 Postwatch notes that some of the prices charged by other companies are significantly higher than Royal Mail’s (see pricing comparison table at 3.17), but recognises that many prohibited items fall into the higher weight categories where the difference between Royal Mail’s and other carriers’ prices is not as great.

3.30 Postcomm would welcome comments from consultees on these points.

**Questions on which Postcomm especially seeks comment**

3.31 Consultees are asked to comment on whether they believe it to be appropriate for Postcomm to issue a direction enabling Royal Mail to prohibit the carriage of real, deactivated and replica firearms, munitions and ordnance within its pipeline.
3.32 Consultees are also asked to comment on the definition of excluded articles (see Annex B). In particular, if a prohibition were to be put in place, is the scope of the prohibition as proposed appropriate and clear? How could it be improved?

3.33 Furthermore, comment is invited on whether there is sufficient competition, at a reasonable price, to meet the needs of legitimate users.

3.34 Finally, comment is invited on the adequacy of Royal Mail's proposed transition period and publicity campaign.

3.35 Comments are particularly invited from all those who will be directly affected by the changes or represent those who will be.
Annex A: The Original Wording of the Relevant Paragraphs of the Schemes

The Inland Letter Scheme 2001

Paragraph 15 of the Inland Letter Scheme 2001 as it currently stands has been set out below.

15. PROHIBITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

15.1 Royal Mail Group plc will not accept a letter that contains any of the following:

15.1.1 Aerosols
15.1.2 Alcoholic liquids with alcohol content higher than 70 per cent
15.1.3 Asbestos
15.1.4 Batteries that are classed as dangerous goods by the latest edition of the International Civil Aviation Organization’s Technical Instructions
15.1.5 Butane lighters and refills
15.1.6 Clinical and medical waste
15.1.7 Flammable, non-flammable, toxic compressed gases
15.1.8 Corrosives
15.1.9 Counterfeit money or counterfeit postage stamps
15.1.10 Drugs of any description, except those permitted under paragraph 15.2 below
15.1.11 Dry ice
15.1.12 Environmental waste
15.1.13 Explosives
15.1.14 Filth
15.1.15 Flammable liquids or solids
15.1.16 Lottery tickets except for United Kingdom lottery tickets
15.1.17 Indecent, obscene or offensive material
15.1.18 Infectious substances listed by the World Health Organisation to be in risk group 4 and the group 3 substances listed in Schedule 3 Part 5 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 (COSHH)
15.1.19 Magnetised material with a magnetic field strength of 0.159A/metre or more at a distance of 2.1 metres from the outside of the package
15.1.20 Matches
15.1.21 Oxidising materials or organic peroxides
15.1.22 Pesticides
15.1.23 Toxic liquids, solids or gases
15.1.24 Poisons
15.1.25 All radioactive material and samples that are classified as radioactive using Table 2-12 of the latest edition of the International Civil Aviation Organisation’s Technical Instructions
15.1.26 Weapons of war, except as permitted by paragraph 15.2 below
15.1.27 Ammunition
15.1.28 Solvent-based paints, varnishes and enamels
15.1.29 Water-based paints, varnishes and enamels with volume over 150 millilitres
15.1.30 Any other item prohibited by law or that in the opinion of Royal Mail may be harmful or dangerous to Royal Mail employees.
15.2 A letter containing any of the following items may be posted provided that the sender meets all Royal Mail Group plc’s requirements for acceptance of the item, including, but not limited to, packaging requirements.

15.2.1 Alcoholic liquids with alcohol content lower than 70 per cent
15.2.2 Batteries, other than those prohibited in paragraph 15.1
15.2.3 Battery operated goods, excluding the batteries if prohibited under 15.1
15.2.4 Drugs sent in emergencies for medical or scientific purposes
15.2.5 Guns for sporting use
15.2.6 Diagnostic substances listed in the World Health Organisation’s risk groups 1-3 inclusive (except as mentioned in section 15.1.18)
15.2.7 Living creatures
15.2.8 Magnetised materials, other than those prohibited under paragraph 15.1
15.2.9 Water-based paints, varnishes and enamels with volume less than 150 millilitres
15.2.10 Perishable goods
15.2.11 All radioactive material and samples that are not classified as radioactive using Table 2-12 of the latest edition of the International Civil Aviation Organization’s Technical Instructions
15.2.12 Vaccines

The Inland Parcel Scheme 2001

Paragraph 7 of the Inland Parcel Scheme 2001 as it currently stands has been set out below.

PART 3
General Conditions

7. PROHIBITIONS
(1) Save as the Post Office may either generally or in any particular case allow, there shall not be conveyed or delivered by post any postal packet of a description referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of section 11(1) of the Act.

(2) Subject to section 8(3) of the Act, there shall not be posted or conveyed or delivered by post any postal packet:

(a) containing:

(i) except as may be permitted by the Post Office either generally or in any particular case, any living creature, or blood, or any blood product, or serum, or urine, or semen, or any pathological specimen, or any vaccine, or asbestos, or any corrosive, flammable or oxidising material, or any organic peroxide, or matches, or any radioactive material, or any gas compressed, liquefied or dissolved under pressure, or any paint, varnish or enamel, or any poison, or dry ice;

(ii) any imitation of a bank note, if such bank note is one within the meaning of section 38 of the Criminal Justice Act 1925 and is for the time being legal tender in the country of issue;
(b) containing or bearing any fictitious stamp (not being a fictitious stamp made with the approval of the Post Office in accordance with the conditions of such approval), or any counterfeit of any impression authorised by or under this Scheme to be used to denote payment of postage or fees;

(c) having thereon, or on the cover thereof, any words, letters or marks (used without due authority) which signify or imply, or may reasonably lead the recipient thereof to believe, that the postal packet is sent on Her Majesty's Service;

(d) of such a size, form, substance or colour or so made up for transmission by post as to be likely, in the opinion of the Post Office, to embarrass the officers of the Post Office in dealing with the packet;

(e) having anything written, printed or otherwise impressed upon or attached to any part of the postal packet or showing through the cover of the packet which, either

(i) by tending to prevent the easy and quick reading of the address of the packet or

(ii) by inconvenient proximity to the stamp or stamps used in the payment of postage or to any such impression as is referred to in paragraph II (3)(c) so used or

(iii) in any other way, is in itself, or in the manner in which it is written, printed, impressed, or attached, likely in the opinion of the Post Office, to embarrass the officers of the Post Office in dealing with the packet;

(f) whereon the payment of any postage or fees purports to be denoted by any stamp or franking mark or other impression which has been previously used to denote payment of the postage or fees on any other postal packet;

(g) whereon the payment of any postage or fees is denoted by an adhesive stamp or stamps, and where the stamp or stamps have not been securely affixed in such manner as the Post Office may require.

(h) containing or bearing any franking mark which has been made by franking equipment used otherwise than in accordance with the terms of the Post Office Scheme for Franking Letters and Parcels 2000 as amended from time to time or any franking mark which does not in any other respect comply with that Scheme.

The Overseas Letter Scheme 2001

Paragraphs 11(1) and 11(2)(a) of the Overseas Letter Scheme 2001 as it currently stands have been set out below.
PART 3

General conditions

11. PROHIBITIONS

(1) Save as the Post Office may either generally or in any particular case allow, there shall not be conveyed or delivered by post any postal packet of a description referred to in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of Section 11(1) of the Act.

(2) Subject to the powers of the Post Office under paragraph 18, there shall not be posted or conveyed or delivered by post any postal packet:

(a) containing:

(i) opium, morphine, cocaine, or other narcotic provided that such narcotics may be sent for medical or scientific purposes in insured letters to countries which admit them when sent for those purposes;

(ii) any living creatures, except bees, leeches, silkworms, or parasites or destroyers of noxious insects used for the purpose of controlling those insects and exchanged between officially recognised institutions;

(iii) anything which, by the law of the country or place in which the packet is posted or to which it is addressed, or of any country or place through which it may pass, it is unlawful respectively to send, import or convey by post or otherwise than by parcel post;

(iv) any counterfeit of a currency note within the meaning of section 27 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981;
Annex B: Amendments to the Schemes

(i) Amendments to the Inland Letter Scheme 2001

In order to prohibit the carriage of firearms as mentioned in 3.5, Royal Mail has proposed three alterations to the Inland Letter Postal Scheme (see Annex A for the relevant paragraphs of the scheme):

- Delete line 15.2.5, headed “Guns for Sporting Use”, which allows the posting of firearms, provided that the sender meets all Royal Mail’s requirements for acceptance of the item.
- Alter line 15.1.26 to read: “Weapons, to include any firearm shotgun or component thereof or any item that gives the appearance of being a realistic firearm shotgun or component thereof when examined, to include, but not limited to, articles that may be sent as ornaments or decorative items, as well as replicas, starting pistols and realistic looking toys”.
- Alter line 15.1.27 to read: “Ammunition, including fake, disabled or replica ordnance because of the difficulty of being able to distinguish these from real items”.

(ii) Amendments to the Inland Parcel Scheme 2001
Royal Mail has proposed to amend the Inland Parcel Scheme 2001 (see Annex A for the relevant paragraphs of the scheme) by inserting a new paragraph 7(3) to read:

“(3) Subject to section 8(3) of the Act, there shall not be posted or conveyed or delivered by any Royal Mail services any postal packet containing any firearm, shotgun or component thereof or any item that gives the appearance of being a realistic firearm, shotgun or component thereof when examined, including but not limited to articles that may be sent as ornaments or decorative items, as well as replicas, imitation and disabled guns, starting pistols and realistic looking toys. This prohibition also applies to ammunition both real and realistic and includes but is not limited to fake, disabled or replica ordnance (e.g. replica hand grenades) because of the difficulty of being able to distinguish these from the real items.”

(iii) Amendments to the Overseas Letter Scheme 2001

Royal Mail has proposed to amend the Overseas Letter Scheme 2001 (see Annex A for the relevant paragraphs of the scheme) by inserting a new paragraph 11(2)(a)(v) to read:

“(v) any firearm, shotgun or component thereof or any item that gives the appearance of being a realistic firearm, shotgun or component thereof when examined, including but not limited to articles that may be sent as ornaments or decorative items, as well as replicas, imitation and disabled guns, starting pistols and realistic looking toys. This prohibition also applies to ammunition both real and realistic and includes but is not limited to fake, disabled or replica ordnance (e.g. replica hand grenades) because of the difficulty of being able to distinguish these from the real items.”
Annex C: Meaning of Terms

A 'section 1 firearm' is any firearm to which section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968 applies.

'Section 1 Firearm' means any firearm and/or ammunition for it EXCEPT:

(a) shotguns
(b) normal air weapons
(c) certain shotgun, air weapon & blank ammunition
(d) prohibited weapons

Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968 created two lists of weapons and ammunition which are prohibited and therefore referred to as 'prohibited weapons' or 'prohibited ammunition'.

- The first list itemises weapons and ammunition which cannot be possessed without the written authority of the Defence Council. A prohibited weapon also includes stripped-down weapons.

- The second list itemises those which cannot be possessed without the authority of the Secretary of State.

The term imitation firearm is defined in three different statutes.

- In the Theft Act 1968 – section 10(1) (aggravated burglary) – an imitation firearm is described as ‘anything which has the appearance of being a firearm whether capable of being discharged or not’.

- The Firearms Act 1968 section 57(4) describes an imitation firearm as ‘any thing which has the appearance of being a firearm (other than such a weapon as is mentioned in section 5(1)(b) of this Act (Firearms Act 1968) whether or not it is capable of discharging any shot, bullet or other missile’.

- Section 1 of the Firearms Act 1982 provides that this Act applies to an imitation firearm if:

(a) it has the appearance of being a firearm to which section 1 (firearms requiring a certificate) of the 1968 Act applies AND
(b) it is so constructed or adapted as to be readily convertible into a firearm to which this section applies.