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## **DETECTIVE CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT JO CHILTON HEAD OF NABIS**

This year is the 10th anniversary of the National Ballistics Intelligence Service. Since NABIS was set up the firearms threat has changed and therefore we have needed to evolve to meet the changing demand.

NABIS secured an increase in funding from Chief Constables this year which will enable us to recruit additional staff to meet the changing firearms demand. At the time of writing this NABIS are advertising for additional staff across eight roles, it's hoped that the new staff will be in post towards the end of this year. NABIS will then focus on working more closely with law enforcement to ensure all submissions are made, this will enable NABIS to report the national firearms threat picture in a more timely manner.

NABIS have continued to submit evidence to the Home Office on the threat from antique firearms; the evidence is now with Ministers. It's anticipated that before Christmas a decision will be made on the Obsolete Calibre list. The threat from antique firearms was highlighted in the trial of Paul Edmunds, a registered firearms dealer who manufactured obsolete calibre ammunition that was then sold to organised crime gangs. This ammunition was discharged in crimes across the UK impacting on 10 police forces. Edmunds was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment.

NABIS continue to work with our European colleagues to tackle the movement and supply of firearms. Part of this work has seen the Head of Intelligence for NABIS presenting our approach on firearms tracing at UN workshops. In addition we continue to work with countries in the Western Balkans helping to develop their forensic approach; this work has included visits to the UK to see the NABIS facilities and training first hand. The European and International work we support is to enable a greater understanding of the firearms threat. This will identify measures that can be taken to prevent firearms entering the UK and enhance the safety of UK citizens here and overseas.

This will be my last annual report, as a new Head of NABIS will be appointed in 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the NABIS team; it has been a privilege working with such dedicated and enthusiastic people who go above and beyond to provide a world class service that puts public safety at the heart of all they do.





## Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Cann (West Midlands Police) – NABIS Senior Responsible Officer

ACC Cann became NABIS SRO last year for the second time in its history. His previous tenure as NABIS SRO ran from June 2009.

He chairs the Governance Board which meets twice a year and is the link between the host force (WMP) and NABIS. He also chaired the project board and now oversees the project implementation work (Project 2021). This project will see NABIS grow to assist forces to deal with the rising demand.

ACC Cann said: “I am supportive of the work of NABIS during the last decade and proud of the team’s achievements as they mark their 10 year anniversary.

“They will continue to develop to meet the demand from the changing firearms threat and carry out the vital work with law enforcement partners to keep the public safe.”



## **NABIS** values:

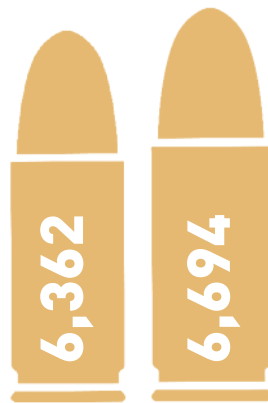
- Public Safety First
- Continuous Improvement
- Act With Integrity
- Work In Partnership
- Communication Is Key



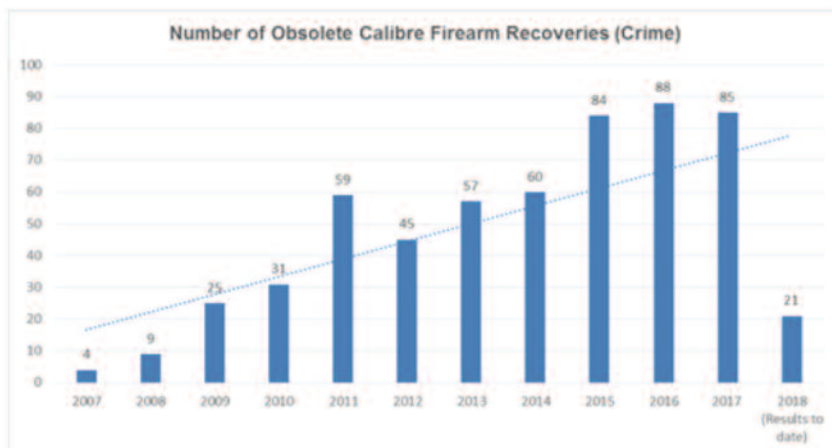
## CRIME stats

- Recorded levels of gun crime in the UK remain one of the lowest in the world.
- This is due in part to border controls and strict legislation for firearms offences.
- NABIS works in conjunction with law enforcement partners such as the National Crime Agency, Border Force and Home Office to share intelligence, stop the flow of illegal firearms and help bring offenders to justice.

ONS crime stats for England and Wales, year ending June 2018 compared to same 12 month period the previous year (published Oct 2018).



Recorded offences involving firearms (not just discharges) decreased by 5% (to 6,362) in the year ending June 2018 compared with the previous year (6,694 offences). The fall in offences is in contrast with recent years where there has been a rising trend. This overall decrease was driven by a fall in the number of offences involving less serious weapons such as imitation firearms (down 18% to 1,409). However, there have also been small drops in more serious weapon categories such as shotguns (down 4% to 626).



### According to NABIS data:

- The review for 2017/18 shows a small decrease of 4% on the previous year. There was also a reduction in fatalities from firearms discharges compared to the previous two years.
- As in most crime types there are seasonal spikes and firearms discharges are no different. August seeing the highest number of discharges throughout the performance year. The second highest spike in discharges usually occurs around the Christmas period.
- Firearms discharges result in more damage to property than injuries to people.
- Obsolete Calibre firearms, otherwise known as Antiques, continue to be discharged but there has been a reduction on the previous year (see graph)
- On average every year police forces recover around 1000 firearms, the majority of these have not been discharged.
- The majority of firearms identified in crime have only been used once.
- Shotgun incidents have increased over the last two fiscal years, with 182 identified in 2017/18 and 175 in 2016/17. 303 firearms were traced this period, 39 per cent (117) were shotguns or rifles. Sixty-six per cent (77) of shotguns and rifles traced were found to have been previously stolen from UK firearm certificate holders.



In total during the November 2017 campaign,

## 9,496

items were surrendered during the two weeks, including thousands of items of ammunition. This is an uplift of 74 per cent in surrendered items compared to the 2014 national campaign which saw 5,468 items surrendered.

### Op Aztec National Surrender

NABIS co-ordinated Operation Aztec, the national firearms surrender campaign in November 2017. All police forces in England and Wales, as well as the Island forces of Jersey and Guernsey, committed to participate in the surrender initiative which was headed up by National Police Chief's Council lead for Criminal Use of Firearms (CUF) ACC Helen McMillan.

Police Scotland took the decision to delay their main firearm surrender campaign until summer 2018; they had undertaken an air weapon surrender campaign in 2016.

NABIS commissioned a short film to reinforce the key messages of the national surrender campaign (still available to watch via the NPCC Youtube channel) and provided posters to police forces.





**Did you know?**  
 We use a water tank to test fire hand guns. The water slows down the speed of the bullet and makes sure it is left intact for our experts to examine

The two forensic hubs directly managed by NABIS are in Birmingham and Manchester. In these two locations our experts deal with ballistic items sent from all UK police forces apart from the Metropolitan Police Service in London and Police Scotland who have their own ballistics labs. We receive items collected from crime scenes or perhaps firearms or ammunition seized during police operations.

Due to the heavy workload for NABIS labs we are currently recruiting extra staff to manage the demand.

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) audit inspections for both hubs took place this Autumn which allowed our ballistics experts to retain their official validation for the vital work they carry out.

**Total submissions for 2017/18 (Birmingham & Manchester hubs only) are**  
**1194**  
 Each submission contains an average of two and a half exhibits. This compares to 1166 for the previous 12 months, an increase of 28 submissions or 2.4%.



**Did you know?**  
 An exhibit could be a whole firearm, a component part or just a fragment of ammunition from a crime scene.



## Keeping The Public Safe

This year has been another busy one for the NABIS team and our ballistics experts have given testimony at court, as well as advice and guidance to police forces and other law enforcement partners. Here are a few examples of cases we have been involved in. Other examples are available via our website news pages [www.nabis.police.uk](http://www.nabis.police.uk)

**OP GOLDDUST** - In December 2017 rogue Registered Firearms Dealer Paul Edmunds was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment after trial at Birmingham Crown Court. Our Birmingham hub manager Gregg Taylor was instrumental in linking the homemade ammunition coming into the lab from different crime scenes across the country and assisting West Midlands Police with a complex conspiracy investigation. He and his team have been recognised with an award from West Midlands Police. This case hit the news headlines and featured on a BBC Panorama documentary in 2018. The Golddust guns and ammunition linked to serious crime, including homicides. Police anticipate some of the ammunition made by Edmunds may continue to turn up at crime scenes in the future.



Paul Edmunds

Gregg Taylor and DC Phil Rodgers were invited to Albania by the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearing House for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) to share their learning from the Golddust operation.

**OP VINDEL** - Carlington Grant was jailed for 26 years after a conspiracy to buy blank firing pistols and convert them to sell on to criminals. His accomplice Khianna Lewis was sentenced to 17 years imprisonment following a trial at Birmingham Crown Court. Grant was arrested in 23 December last year, while Lewis was detained on 16 January 2018 at Gatwick Airport following a holiday to Jamaica. The court heard Grant used the money he made from the 43 blank pistols to fund a luxury lifestyle.

**OP WATER** - Members of the Bates family, from Kitts Green, Birmingham, were jailed in March 2018 after supplying homemade ammunition to criminals. Dad Kevin, a firearms certificate holder, was jailed for 23 years and his son Connor was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. Kevin's daughter Trudy was jailed for two years for selling ammunition and his nephew Nathan got 42 months for conspiracy to supply ammunition.

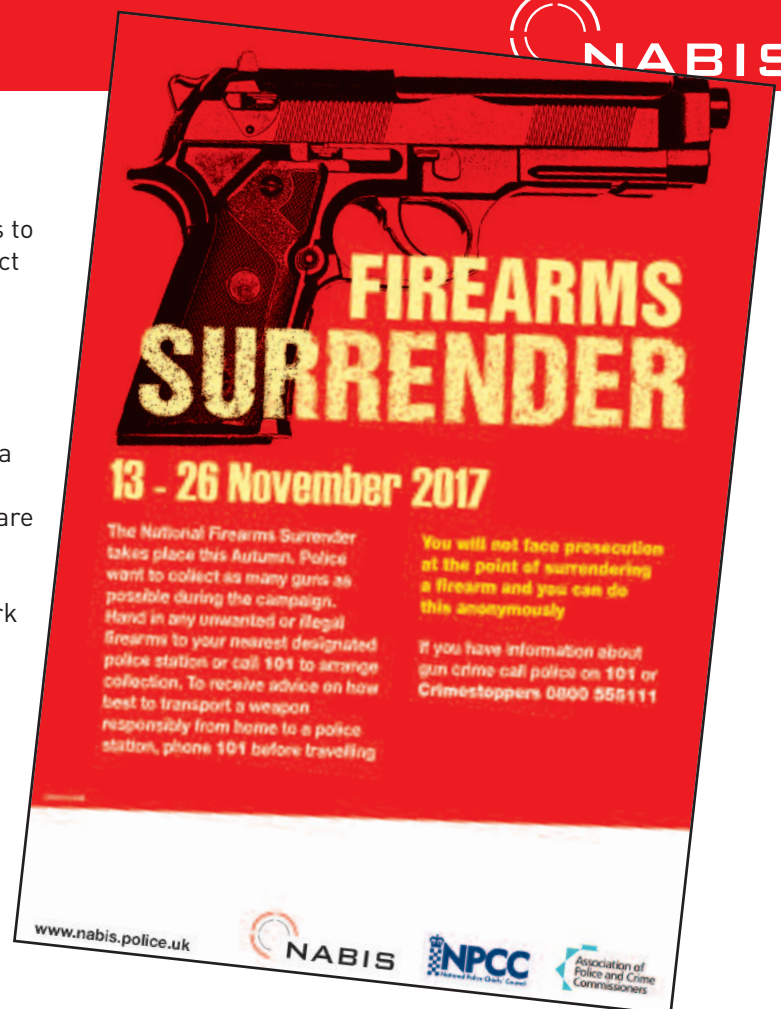
Analysis of guns, ammunition and workshop equipment by NABIS revealed a scientific link to 24 incidents across the West Midlands area, including the murder of Carl Campbell on West Bromwich High Street in December 2016.





## OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

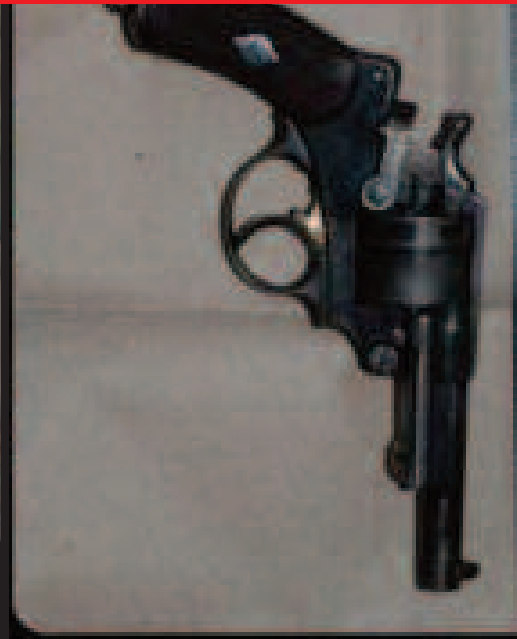
- During this year NABIS has made submissions to the Home Office towards the Police & Crime Act for updates to the obsolete calibre list. This is part of the on-going work to stop criminals exploiting the rules around 'antique' firearms and ammunition.
- Op Support Manager Clive Robinson attended a prestigious firearms conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, in February to share best practice around gun surrenders. This followed the UK national gun surrender a few months before when NABIS supported the work of NPCC Criminal Use of Firearms (CUF) lead ACC Helen McMillan.
- **Liaison officer** – NABIS is recruiting an additional two officers to assist our current Liaison Officer with his workload which covers all forces in the UK. We visit various geographic areas to give advice on the NABIS MOU and provide training inputs for police staff and officers.
- **NABIS Database** – police forces log all seized firearms and ammunition on the national database to create an enhanced intelligence picture. Our database manager has carries out numerous training sessions this year with forces and partners such as the National Crime Agency. As of this year, our colleagues at the Police Service of Northern Ireland now have access to the database and are the newest users of the system.



- **Media Communications** – NABIS has hosted several television companies for filming this year and featured in several high profile programmes including BBC Panorama which examined the issue of criminals exploiting antique guns and the conviction of Registered Firearms Dealer Paul Edmunds (Operation Golddust). Edmunds was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment in December 2017.



- Eastenders star Ross Kemp was with our Birmingham lab team in January 2018 for filming. Ross And The Armed Police aired on ITV in September. NABIS also assisted with a documentary by The Garden TV company regarding a weapon known as 'Gun No 6' which has been used in various crimes in the West Midlands area but never recovered. Watch out for this on BBC2 later this year.
- NABIS has appeared in various national newspapers this year, as well as on national and local TV and radio stations.



## INTELLIGENCE CELL

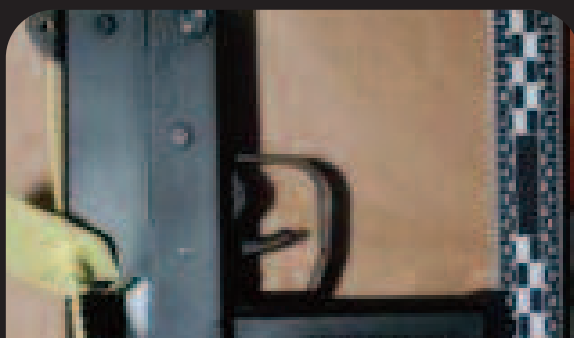
Our Intelligence team provide vital firearms information packages to police forces and are seen as world leaders in the field of firearms tracing.

They produce a National Strategic Assessment document for firearms each year and track trends in crime such as County Lines issues.

New staff on secondment have joined the team from National Crime Agency and Border Force in the last 12 months. We also have a new role of Deputy Intelligence Manager to support the work of the Head of Intelligence for NABIS, Ian Head.

Ian chairs the European Firearms Experts group which encourages best practice across all member states. The EFE work has been endorsed by the EU Commission. In addition Ian leads on global action plans for the European firearms EMPACT; one relates to firearms focal points and the other looks at ballistic identification systems.

Ian also chairs a regular national meeting at NABIS HQ for Intelligence Managers from across the UK to discuss gun crime issues and share important information.



## WESTERN BALKANS

The important Western Balkans work co-ordinated by NABIS is designed to develop capability and capacity in the region to combat the firearms threat with support from the UK Home Office.

- Western Balkans staffing put in place and deployed to the region for scoping missions.
- Scoping Missions now complete.
- NABIS engagement with ballistics facilities to support their advancement towards ISO 17025 Accreditation.
- Work alongside SEESAC (The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons).
- On-going informal mentoring and support to labs and analytical staff.
- Encourage further partnership working between member states of the Balkans to build in the fight against the criminal use and spread of illicit firearms.
- Project end date March 2020.



**NABIS International Development Manager for Western Balkans, Paula Parker, said: "We have had a busy but satisfying year liaising with our partners in the Western Balkans countries. It is great to share working practices and pick up new skills from each other. Intelligence sharing across Europe is key to keeping one step ahead of firearms criminals and ensuring our communities are safe. We plan to host more visits from colleagues later this year."**

In May 2018 NABIS hosted visitors from seven WB countries: Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. They were given tours of our lab facilities and demonstrations of systems, as well as a trip to the Royal Armouries in Leeds.

**Paula Parker and NABIS Chief Scientist Martin Parker attended the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes conference in Copenhagen in Autumn 2018, alongside colleagues from the Western Balkan countries.**

## A message from the chair

**Roy Saatchi:** Gun crime in the UK today may be lower than when NABIS was formed ten years ago but as ever, the figures don't tell the complete story. For a start, over the past four years the number of incidents has been rising again and we, as a group, are still considering many of the issues we discussed when the IAG was initially set up.

Of course, the threats will always be there. But looking back at my notes from ten years ago, some of the key questions still remain unanswered too. It was interesting for me to re-read Bernard Hogan-Howe, then Chief Constable of Merseyside, on young people and crime and how to break the vicious circle of gang related gun crime. He wanted to engage young people more, so they understood the dangers and the consequences of picking up a gun. We heard a similar plea from one of our group this year, ten years further on. There are though newer and significant issues influencing violent crime today, especially social media and the illegal drugs trade.

The argument that "we could have done more to prevent this" continues to rage and spotlights continue to be focused on funding and resources. Any new money allocated is usually a response to a single event and this eventually gets removed, meaning that the underlying causes do not always get addressed either consistently or continuously.

Concerns are still being raised at recent meetings on the effectiveness of gun licensing and its management by the police and on cuts to the police service across the country. The Law Commission recommended the codification of firearms legislation, currently scattered in more than 30 pieces of legislation, to clarify it and make it easier to apply, but no Parliamentary time is available. We continue to examine the movement of illegal weapons, although the ways guns are coming in to the country are changing – often purchased on the so-called dark web and transported as hard to find component parts by legitimate shipping businesses.

**Antique firearms consultation launched**

**Public invited to give views on new laws**

**To consider making law a new definition of antique firearms**

**1900 or 1939**

**If guns manufactured after 1900 or 1939 must be licensed**

The police, Border Force and Customs have been very successful in closing down illegal sources, but criminals will find another way, if necessary by making firearms, as demonstrated by the recent discovery of an illegal gun factory in Sussex describing itself as a gearbox repair business.

**The National Criminal Use of Firearms Independent Advisory Group meets four times a year and is made up of members from law, shooting groups, education and local government amongst others. The group offers guidance, scrutiny and accountability.**

One of the most prominent issues of the moment is the use of antique weapons in crime. Their use was first confirmed by NABIS in 2010. They are not (for the majority of people) illegal to possess without a firearms certificate within the UK. And so, it seems sensible that any change in the law should target people who acquire them with criminal intent and not penalise law-abiding collectors, who are interested in their heritage value.

My view is that current firearms laws and sentencing policy are broadly fit for purpose. Guns are not out of control, but we must forever be vigilant. Furthermore, as a society, we need to spend time reflecting on why Bernard Hogan-Howe's words still have resonance today and why the underlying community issues have not been adequately tackled.

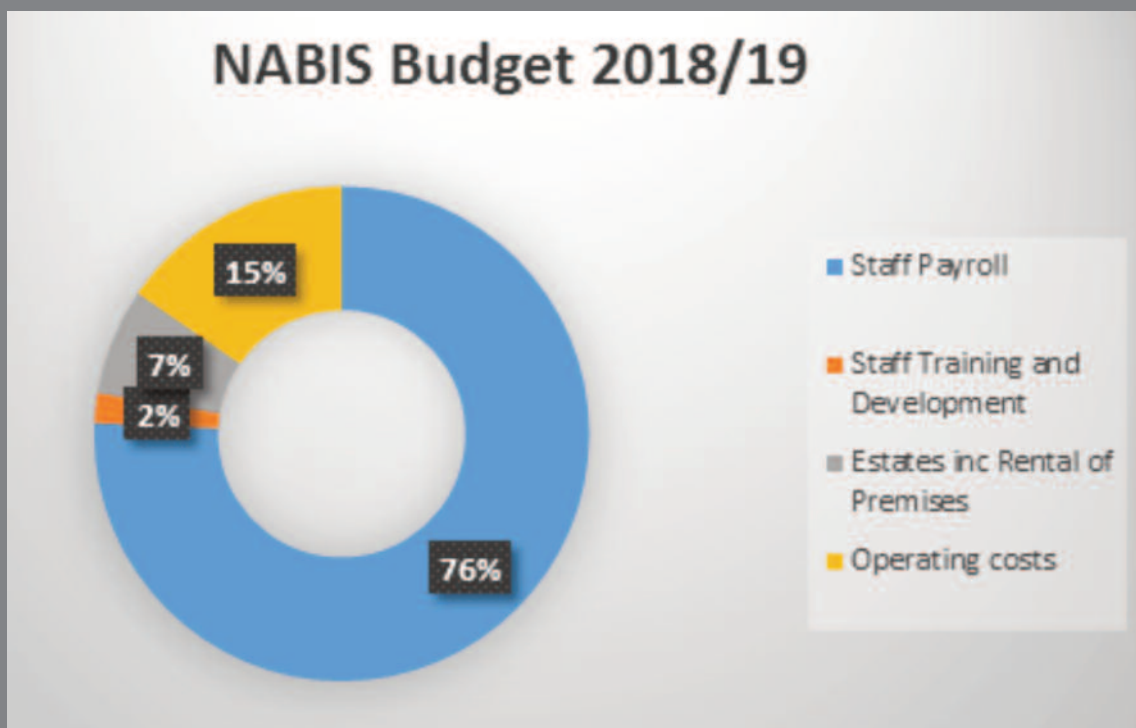


## BUDGET

To increase efficiency NABIS funding agreements were varied at National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in January 2016 with funding adjusted from a one to three year funding cycle. The funding amount for 2018/19 was agreed at £1,986,448 (to include an uplift in Forensic staff and IT systems) with the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) supplying an additional £50,000 per annum.

In addition to this a funding proposal, 'NABIS 2021', was agreed at Chiefs' Council in April 2018 for an uplift of £1.2 million to meet the current increase in firearms demand and complexity. For 2018/19 this has been pro-rated to £522,517 to reflect recruitment timescales.

This brings the NABIS annual funding level to £2,558,965.



## The Future – coming up for NABIS

### Project 2021

As we reach our tenth birthday this is an exciting time for NABIS. The NABIS 2021 Project proposal with an £1.2 million uplift to the NABIS budget was approved at Chiefs Council in April this year.

The extra funding will allow NABIS to move forward to cope with the changing firearms demand, modernise working practices and ensure NABIS is in a strong position to support the Policing Vision 2025.

If you want more information about NABIS visit [www.nabis.police.uk](http://www.nabis.police.uk) or follow us @NABIS\_UK





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