# PPS reviews appeal as loyalist Winston Irvine receives reduced sentence amid community funding scrutiny



The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) is currently deliberating whether to appeal the sentence given to Winston "Winkie" Irvine, a notable figure within loyalist circles, who was handed a two-and-a-half-year prison term for firearms offences. This decision followed a controversial ruling by Judge Gordon Kerr KC at Belfast Crown Court, where Irvine, along with co-accused Robin Workman, was found in possession of firearms and ammunition discovered in the boot of Irvine's car.

The backstory of this incident dates to June 8, 2022, when police intercepted Irvine’s vehicle, uncovering a significant cache of weapons, including several firearms, magazines, and ammunition. Both men had pleaded guilty to multiple charges, such as possessing a firearm without a certificate and possessing ammunition in suspicious circumstances. Notably, Workman received the statutory five-year sentence, indicating a stark contrast in the judicial approach towards the two defendants.

The judge's decision to reduce Irvine’s sentence stemmed from what were deemed “exceptional circumstances,” including his purported contributions to peace-building and charity work within the community. This rationale has drawn considerable criticism, particularly from political figures like Ulster Unionist MLA Doug Beattie, who expressed confusion over how the judge could conclude there was no terrorist link to the cached weapons, especially amid the heightened tensions in Northern Ireland linked to Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol.

In her remarks, the PPS spokesperson emphasised that while sentencing falls under the discretion of the judiciary, the Director of Public Prosecutions holds the authority to challenge sentences deemed unduly lenient. The spokesperson elaborated that an unduly lenient sentence is defined as one that deviates significantly from the range considered reasonable by the presiding judge. The PPS is now weighing whether to bring this case forward for appellate review, an application that must be filed within 28 days of the initial sentencing.

The implications of these charges extend beyond judicial proceedings; they touch on broader community and political sentiments in Northern Ireland. Recent discourse reveals concerns regarding the relationship between Irvine and funding organisations supporting community projects. A cross-border funding body, responsible for allocating nearly £900,000 to initiatives linked to Irvine, has faced scrutiny after his conviction. While it has yet to disclose its future funding strategy, the group’s silence has amplified discussions about the implications of supporting community efforts led by individuals with such serious convictions.

The case also raises questions about the perceptions of loyalist figures in Northern Ireland in today's political climate. With the backdrop of historic tensions and ongoing societal challenges, many are closely monitoring how the legal system will respond to and navigate these multifaceted concerns. As the decision by the PPS looms, it embodies not just a legal matter, but a significant moment of reflection on the interplay between law, community interests, and peace-building efforts in a region still grappling with its past.

With a definitive stance yet to be established, the situation remains fluid, particularly for Irvine and Workman, whose futures not only rest on the upcoming judicial decisions but also on the societal implications that span far beyond the courtroom.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/), [[3]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/leading-loyalist-winston-winkie-irvine-pleads-guilty-to-guns-and-ammunition-charges-NFTEYF6HYFG4XBDOMCXHS2BK6A/), [[7]](https://www.sundayworld.com/news/northern-ireland-news/uvf-gunrunner-winkie-irvine-faces-wait-on-sentence-for-arms-charges/a348384812.html)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/), [[6]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/winston-irvine-conviction-funding-body-aware-of-link-to-community-groups-but-wont-say-if-it-will-take-action-HMCUUJNDGVHCZKZACNTKHKTB7Y/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/belfast-volkswagen-b1226392.html)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/)
7. Paragraph 7: [[6]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/winston-irvine-conviction-funding-body-aware-of-link-to-community-groups-but-wont-say-if-it-will-take-action-HMCUUJNDGVHCZKZACNTKHKTB7Y/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/pps-to-consider-if-winston-irvine-sentence-should-be-appealed-GVTVO4ZEERCEDGA3447JPNS7K4/> - The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) is considering whether to appeal the sentence of leading loyalist Winston Irvine, who received a two-and-a-half-year term for firearms offences. Irvine's sentence was reduced due to 'exceptional circumstances,' including his peace and charity work. Ulster Unionist MLA Doug Beattie plans to write to the PPS regarding the sentence. A PPS spokesperson stated they are evaluating if the sentence is 'unduly lenient' and may refer it to the Court of Appeal if necessary.
3. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/leading-loyalist-winston-winkie-irvine-pleads-guilty-to-guns-and-ammunition-charges-NFTEYF6HYFG4XBDOMCXHS2BK6A/> - Winston 'Winkie' Irvine, a prominent loyalist, and co-accused Robin Workman have pleaded guilty to firearms and ammunition offences. The charges stem from an incident on June 8, 2022, when police discovered weapons and ammunition in Irvine's car. Both men admitted to possessing firearms and ammunition in suspicious circumstances, along with other related charges. They are scheduled to be sentenced on January 23, 2025. The court heard that Workman transported the weapons to the Glencairn area, where they were placed in Irvine's vehicle.
4. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/new-date-for-loyalist-winkie-irvine-sentencing-for-possession-of-firearms-BTBMUM26XFGFPAS56W3V7KZCGQ/> - A new sentencing date has been set for leading loyalist Winston 'Winkie' Irvine and co-accused Robin Workman for firearm and ammunition offences. The sentencing, initially scheduled for January 23, was postponed due to a strike by criminal barristers. Judge Gordon Kerr KC has now set the new plea and sentence hearing for March 11. Both men have pleaded guilty to possessing firearms and ammunition in suspicious circumstances, with the offences committed on June 8, 2022.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/belfast-volkswagen-b1226392.html> - A court has been informed that no explanation has been provided for why firearms and ammunition were found in the boot of loyalist Winston Irvine's car. Irvine and co-accused Robin Workman are set to be sentenced for firearms offences. During the court hearing, Irvine's barrister highlighted his 'long-term commitment to peace-building in Northern Ireland' and urged this to be considered during sentencing. Both men have admitted to possessing firearms and ammunition in suspicious circumstances.
6. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/winston-irvine-conviction-funding-body-aware-of-link-to-community-groups-but-wont-say-if-it-will-take-action-HMCUUJNDGVHCZKZACNTKHKTB7Y/> - A cross-border funding group, which provided close to £900,000 to 'peacebuilding' organisations linked to leading loyalist Winston Irvine, has refused to comment on whether it will continue to fund them after his firearms conviction. Irvine, along with co-accused Robin Workman, pleaded guilty to firearms and ammunition offences committed on June 8, 2022. The funding body's refusal to disclose its future funding plans has raised questions about the implications of Irvine's conviction on community projects.
7. <https://www.sundayworld.com/news/northern-ireland-news/uvf-gunrunner-winkie-irvine-faces-wait-on-sentence-for-arms-charges/a348384812.html> - UVF gunrunner Winston 'Winkie' Irvine faces a delay in discovering his fate regarding arms convictions. Judge Gordon Kerr KC has set a new date for the sentencing of Irvine and co-accused Robin Workman for March 11. Both men had previously pleaded guilty to possessing firearms and ammunition in suspicious circumstances. The sentencing was postponed due to a strike by criminal barristers, and the new hearing aims to address the delay in the case.