

125 Firearms Act 1968: meaning of "firearm" etc

(1) The Firearms Act 1968 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 57 (interpretation), in subsection (1), for the words from the beginning to the end of paragraph (c) substitute

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“(1) In this Act, the expression “firearm” means—

- (a) a lethal barrelled weapon (see subsection (1B));
- (b) a prohibited weapon;
- (c) a relevant component part in relation to a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon (see subsection (1D));
- (d) an accessory to a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon where the accessory is designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon;”.

(3) In that section, before subsection (2) insert—

“(1B) In subsection (1)(a), “lethal barrelled weapon” means a barrelled weapon of any description from which a shot, bullet or other missile, with kinetic energy of more than one joule at the muzzle of the weapon, can be discharged.

(1C) Subsection (1) is subject to section 57A (exception for airsoft guns).”

(4) In that section, after subsection (1C) (as inserted by subsection (3) above) insert—

“(1D) For the purposes of subsection (1)(c), each of the following items is a relevant component part in relation to a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon—

- (a) a barrel, chamber or cylinder,
- (b) a frame, body or receiver,
- (c) a breech block, bolt or other mechanism for containing the pressure of discharge at the rear of a chamber,

but only where the item is capable of being used as a part of a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon.”

(5) After section 57 insert—

“57A Exception for airsoft guns

(1) An “airsoft gun” is not to be regarded as a firearm for the purposes of this Act.

(2) An “airsoft gun” is a barrelled weapon of any description which—

- (a) is designed to discharge only a small plastic missile (whether or not it is also capable of discharging any other kind of missile), and
- (b) is not capable of discharging a missile (of any kind) with kinetic energy at the muzzle of the weapon that exceeds the permitted level.

(3) “Small plastic missile” means a missile that—

- (a) is made wholly or partly from plastics,
- (b) is spherical, and
- (c) does not exceed 8 millimetres in diameter.

(4) The permitted kinetic energy level is—

- (a) in the case of a weapon which is capable of discharging two or more missiles successively without repeated pressure on the trigger, 1.3 joules;
- (b) in any other case, 2.5 joules.”

(6) After section 57A (as inserted by subsection (5) above) insert—

“57B Power to amend section 57(1D)

(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations made by statutory instrument amend section 57(1D) so as to make different provision for the purposes of section 57(1)(c) about the meaning of a relevant component part in relation to a lethal barrelled weapon or a prohibited weapon.

(2) Regulations under this section may include—

- (a) incidental, supplementary or consequential provision;
- (b) transitional, transitory or saving provision.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.”