



Firearms Act 1968

1968 CHAPTER 27

PART IV

MISCELLANEOUS AND GENERAL

57 Interpretation.

- (1) In this Act, the expression “firearm” means a lethal barrelled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged and includes—
- (a) any prohibited weapon, whether it is such a lethal weapon as aforesaid or not; and
 - (b) any component part of such a lethal or prohibited weapon; and
 - (c) any accessory to any such weapon designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon;

and so much of section 1 of this Act as excludes any description of firearm from the category of firearms to which that section applies shall be construed as also excluding component parts of, and accessories to, firearms of that description.

[^{F1}(1A)]

- (2) In this Act, the expression “ammunition” means ammunition for any firearm and includes grenades, bombs and other like missiles, whether capable of use with a firearm or not, and also includes prohibited ammunition.

[^{F2}(2A) In this Act “self-loading” and “pump-action” in relation to any weapon mean respectively that it is designed or adapted (otherwise than as mentioned in section 5(1) (a)) so that it is automatically re-loaded or that it is so designed or adapted that it is re-loaded by the manual operation of the fore-end or forestock of the weapon.

- (2B) In this Act “revolver”, in relation to a smooth-bore gun, means a gun containing a series of chambers which revolve when the gun is fired.]

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2013. This version of this provision has been superseded.

Changes to legislation: Firearms Act 1968, Section 57 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 06 August 2023. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

(3) For purposes of sections 45, 46, 50, 51(4) and 52 of this Act, the offences under this Act relating specifically to air weapons are those under sections 22(4), 22(5), 23(1) [F³, 24(4) and 24ZA(1)] .

(4) In this Act—

“acquire” means hire, accept as a gift or borrow and “acquisition” shall be construed accordingly;

“air weapon” has the meaning assigned to it by section 1(3)(b) of this Act;

F⁴ [“another member State” means a member State other than the United Kingdom, and “other member States” shall be construed accordingly;]

“area” means a police area;

F⁵ [“Article 7 authority” means a document issued by virtue of section 32A(1)(b) or (2) of this Act;]

F⁶ [“British Transport Police Force” means the constables appointed under section 53 of the British Transport Commission Act 1949;]

“certificate” (except in a context relating to the registration of firearms dealers) and “certificate under this Act” mean a firearm certificate or a shot gun certificate and—

(a) “firearm certificate” means a certificate granted by a chief officer of police under this Act in respect of any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies and includes a certificate granted in Northern Ireland under section 1 of the ^{M1}Firearms Act 1920 or under an enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland amending or substituted for that section; and

(b) “shot gun certificate” means a certificate granted by a chief officer of police under this Act and authorising a person to possess shot guns;

F⁷ [“civilian officer” means—

(a) as respects England and Wales—

(i) a person employed by a chief constable established under section 2 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011,

(ii) a person employed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, or

(iii) a person employed by the Corporation of the City of London who is under the direction and control of the Commissioner of Police for the City of London;

(b) as respects Scotland, a F⁸ member of police staff within the meaning of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012];]

F⁹ [“European firearms pass” means a document to which the holder of a certificate under this Act is entitled by virtue of section 32A(1)(a) of this Act;

“European weapons directive” means the directive of the Council of F¹⁰ the European Union] No. 91/477/EEC^{M2} (directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons);]

“firearms dealer” means a person who, by way of trade or business,

(a) F¹¹ manufactures, sells, transfers, repairs, tests or proves firearms or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies or shot guns; or

(b) sells or transfers air weapons.]

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“imitation firearm” means 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) whether or not it is capable of discharging any shot, bullet or other missile;

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“premises” includes any land;

“prescribed” means prescribed by rules made by the Secretary of State under section 53 of this Act;

“prohibited weapon” and “prohibited ammunition” have the meanings assigned to them by section 5(2) of this Act;

“public place” includes any [F13highway][F13road within the meaning of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984] and any other premises or place to which at the material time the public have or are permitted to have access, whether on payment or otherwise;

“registered”, in relation to a firearms dealer, means registered either—

- (a) in Great Britain, under section 33 of this Act, or
- (b) in Northern Ireland, under section 8 of the M3Firearms Act 1920 or any enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland amending or substituted for that section,

and references to “the register”, “registration” and a “certificate of registration” shall be construed accordingly, except in section 40;

[F14“rifle”includes carbine;]

“shot gun” has the meaning assigned to it by section 1(3)(a) of this Act and, in sections 3(1) and 45(2) of this Act and in the definition of “firearms dealer”, includes any component part of a shot gun and any accessory to a shot gun designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the gun;

“slaughtering instrument” means a firearm which is specially designed or adapted for the instantaneous slaughter of animals or for the instantaneous stunning of animals with a view to slaughtering them; and

“transfer” includes let on hire, give, lend and part with possession, and “transferee” and “transferor” shall be construed accordingly.

F15[(4A) For the purposes of any reference in this Act to the use of any firearm or ammunition for a purpose not authorised by the European weapons directive, the directive shall be taken to authorise the use of a firearm or ammunition as or with a slaughtering instrument and the use of a firearm and ammunition—

- (a) for sporting purposes;
- (b) for the shooting of vermin, or, in the course of carrying on activities in connection with the management of any estate, of other wildlife; and
- (c) for competition purposes and target shooting outside competitions.]

(5) The definitions in subsections (1) to (3) above apply to the provisions of this Act except where the context otherwise requires.

(6) For purposes of this Act—

- (a) the length of the barrel of a firearm shall be measured from the muzzle to the point at which the charge is exploded on firing; and
- (b) a shot gun or an air weapon shall be deemed to be loaded if there is ammunition in the chamber or barrel or in any magazine or other device which is in such

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a position that the ammunition can be fed into the chamber or barrel by the manual or automatic operation of some part of the gun or weapon.

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 57(1A) repealed (1.2.1998) by 1997 c. 64, s. 2(7), **Sch.**; S.I. 1997/3114, art. 4, **Sch. Pt. II**
- F2** Ss. 57(2A)(2B) inserted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. **25(2)**
- F3** Words in s. 57(3) substituted (10.2.2011) by **Crime and Security Act 2010** (c. 17), **ss. 46(3)**, 59(1); S.I. 2011/144, art. 2
- F4** Definition in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(a)**
- F5** Definition in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(b)**
- F6** Definition of “British Transport Police Force” in s. 57(4) inserted (14.12.2001) by 2001 c. 24, s. 101, **Sch. 7 para. 10**
- F7** Words in s. 57(4) substituted (S.) (16.1.2012) by **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011** (c. 13), s. 157(1), **Sch. 16 para. 91**; S.I. 2011/3019, art. 3, Sch. 1 (with Sch. 2 para. 22)
- F8** Words in s. 57(4) substituted (S.) (1.4.2013) by **The Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2013** (S.I. 2013/602), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 5(4)**
- F9** Definitions in s. 57(4) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 5(2)(c)**
- F10** Words in Act substituted (22.4.2011) by **The Treaty of Lisbon (Changes in Terminology) Order 2011** (S.I. 2011/1043), arts. 2, 3, 4 (with art. 3(2)(3)4(2)6(4)(5))
- F11** S. 57(4): words in definition of “firearms dealer” substituted (6.4.2007 for certain purposes and 1.10.2007 otherwise) by **Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006** (c. 38), **ss. 31(3)**, 66(2); S.I. 2007/858, **art. 2(e)**; S.I. 2007/2180, **art. 4(a)**
- F12** Definition of “indictable offence” repealed by **Criminal Law Act 1977** (c. 45), **Sch. 13**
- F13** Words “road (within the meaning of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984)” substituted (S.) for “highway” by **Roads (Scotland) Act 1984** (c. 54, SIF 108), s. 156(1), **Sch. 9 para. 62**
- F14** Words inserted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. **25(3)**
- F15** S. 57(4A) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(5)**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 57 amended (1.7.2004) by **Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003** (c. 20), ss. 73, 120(1), **Sch. 5 para. 4(1)(a)(2)(b)**; S.I. 2004/1572, **art. 3(ddd)(jjj)**

Marginal Citations

- M1** 1920 c. 43.
- M2** OJ No. L256, 13.9.91, p.51.
- M3** 1920 c. 43.

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