

Air weapons in schools

A forthcoming change in the law will affect any school whose physics department owns an air rifle. Section 2 of the Air Weapon and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015, which comes into effect on December 31st 2016, makes it an offence for a person to use, possess, purchase or acquire an air weapon without holding a certificate.



Image: thebarrowboy (AJB Photography) at www.flickr.com.

Schedule 1 of The Act provides exemptions to this.

The law states:

- 1) It is not an offence under section 2(1) for an individual ("A") to:
 - (a) borrow an air weapon from the occupier of private land, and
 - (b) use and possess the weapon on that land, without holding an air weapon certificate, if the conditions in sub-paragraph (2) are complied with.

The conditions are:

- (a) A uses and possesses the air weapon under the supervision of the occupier of the land or an employee or agent of the occupier ("the supervisor"),
- (b) the supervisor holds an air weapon certificate,
- (c) A complies with any conditions attached to the supervisor's certificate so far as relevant to the use and possession of the air weapon by A, and
- (d) where A is under the age of 14, the supervisor is aged 21 years or more.

In a school situation, this means that someone should hold an air weapon certificate for the rifle. It would make sense for this to be a member of the physics department. This person should always supervise its use. At the time of writing, we believe that the cost of a license is likely to be around £72 for a 5 year permit. The license is not transferrable- if the holder moves to a new school, a new license will be required. In order to assist Police Scotland administration processes, certificates that are issued as a result of applications received between the 1 of July 2016 and the 31st of December 2016 will last between 18 and 26 months. The cost of the certificate applied for during this period will be pro rata based on £72. Certificates issued as a result of applications received after the 31st of December 2016 will last for the full 5 years. You can find out more here - <http://airweapon.scot/how-to-apply>.

If you have an air rifle and no longer want to keep it, you can hand it in to a police station. Instructions for the safe (and ethical) use of an air rifle in class can be found in SSERC Bulletin 190. ◀