Legislation FAQs

This section is only intended to explain important questions to do with Airsoft legislation within England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

If you feel like you would like to know considerably more about these pieces of legislation and how they all fit together, please feel free to have a look at our Legal Documents section.

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What is controlled by the VCRA?

s.36(1) Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 states that:

> 1. A person is guilty of an offence if—
>   1. he manufactures a realistic imitation firearm;
>   2. he modifies an imitation firearm so that it becomes a realistic imitation firearm;
>   3. he sells a realistic imitation firearm; or
>   4. he brings a realistic imitation firearm into Great Britain or causes one to be brought into Great Britain.

But due to the following piece of legislation, legitimate airsoft skirmishers in the UK have a defence against any prosecution for anything that was listed above:

> 2. Subsection (1) has effect subject to the defences in section 37.
> 3. The Secretary of State may by regulations—
>   1. provide for exceptions and exemptions from the offence under subsection (1); and
>   2. provide for it to be a defence in proceedings for such an offence to show the matters specified or described in the regulations.

What does this mean, I hear you ask?

If you are someone who has played at a location that is insured for third party liability for the purposes of acting out law enforcement or military scenarios – or in simpler terms, you are someone who plays Airsoft, then you can do any of the above.

Legislation differs only slightly for Northern Ireland but for all intents and purposes it is the same.

What do I need to purchase a RIF?

At present, the law places the responsibility onto the seller/vendor to ensure that you, the customer, are legally entitled to purchase a realistic imitation firearm.

There are a few different defences/defence schemes that are available for skirmishes to use – the one we should be primarily interested in is the "permitted activity" defence.

The easiest way to become eligible to purchase a RIF is via the UKARA scheme – although other schemes may be available based on location/franchise.

The rules of the UKARA defence scheme are simple – play no less than 3 times, in no less than a 2 month period, at one site to become eligible for site membership. You can fulfil this requirement either by using the site's "hire guns", using airsoft replicas owned by people that you know, or by purchasing what are colloquially known as "two tones" – which are available to purchase by over 18s only.

Something to bear in mind is that a fair amount of sites charge for this UKARA membership number, sometimes it is purely an administration fee to cover the sites' costs – and sometimes it is only available with a full, with-benefits package with a high price-point to boot.

There are other ways to demonstrate being an active skirmisher, one of them being a skirmishers' diary.

Can under 18s purchase IF/RIFs?

No.

s.40(1) Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 creates an offence for **both** the vendor and the customer in the instance that a minor has purchased an imitation firearm, realistic or not.

Can I convert an IF to a RIF?

Probably.

The question that needs to be asked is: are you someone who has played at a location that is insured for third party liability for the purposes of acting out law enforcement or military scenarios?

(or rather – do you play airsoft?)

If so, you can convert an IF to a RIF legally, regardless of age restrictions.

Can under 18s convert an IF into a RIF?

Probably.

Age is not a concern, all the other laws and regulations regarding manufacturing RIFs apply equally regardless of age. Please refer to the “Can I convert an IF to a RIF?” entry of our Legislation FAQ.

What are the limits on muzzle energy?

The Police and Crime Act 2017 has modified s.57 Firearms Act 1968 to define what is considered a “lethal barrelled weapon”.

As such, these are the absolute maximum muzzle energies that Airsoft replicas must abide by:

Locality	Max FPS for auto		Max FPS for semi	
England, Wales	1.3J	374fps □ 0.20g	2.5J	518fps □ 0.20g
Scotland	1.3J	374fps □ 0.20g	2.5J	518fps □ 0.20g
Northern Ireland	1.0J	328fps □ 0.20g	1.0J	328fps □ 0.20g

Please be aware that these FPS/joule limits are purely legislative in nature, these **do not** represent limits that are in place at Airsoft sites throughout England, Wales and Scotland but **may** represent the maximum site limits in Northern Ireland.

Contact the site you wish to attend for further information on their FPS/joule limits.

Can I play airsoft on any parcel of land?

Eeek.

The official answer to this question is of course “yes” – there is no law regarding exactly where one can play Airsoft. You can even play it in your back garden if you’re stupid enough. However, due to the fact that your back garden, nor your friend’s large-ish parcel of land in the woods more than likely isn’t insured for third party liability, we do not recommend actively skirmishing on uninsured private property.

However, there are laws which criminalise the action of bringing an air weapon or imitation firearm onto land that you’re not supposed to be on – this is called trespass. This variant of trespass is oddly enough one of the few forms of trespass that is criminal – and could result in a criminal record.

There is legislation on the books that prohibits projectiles from air weaponry from leaving the boundary of the land you have permission to shoot on, however airsoft replicas are not air weaponry if they fall into the Airsoft exemption. Notwithstanding the appearance of this section not having been enacted, its enactment appears in a commencement order.

What do I need to do when selling an airsoft replica second hand?

If you’re selling an airsoft replica, then you’ll be in the same position as the retailer you originally purchased the Airsoft replica from, in that restrictions in place from the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 will apply to you.

If you are selling an **imitation firearm** – or as is colloquially known as a “two tone” then you need to ensure that the person you are selling the IF to is above the age of 18.

If it is a **realistic imitation firearm** that is being sold, then you need to be satisfied in the belief that the person who would be purchasing the replica is someone who has a defence/is eligible to purchase said replica, as well as the purchaser being over 18 years old. Notwithstanding any age issues, the liability would more than likely fall on your shoulders if the purchaser did something silly with what he had just bought if you weren’t of the belief that the purchase was in good faith.