

# SNP tell those waiting on air weapons licences to store guns at a friend's

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The SNP has told people awaiting a new Scottish Government licence for air weapons to store their guns at a friend's house.

Justice secretary Michael Matheson confirmed 5436 people had applied for a licence under the SNP scheme since November 1.

And he said while police were now processing these "as quickly as possible", those awaiting a decision "must make arrangements to have their air weapons stored in a safe and appropriate place – either with someone who has an air weapon, firearm or shot gun certificate, or a registered firearm dealer".

He goes on to warn they must do this "to avoid committing an offence".

The Air Weapons and Licencing Act made it an offence for anyone to own an airgun without an official licence as of January 1.

The SNP's bid to do this has been consistently criticised, particularly in rural communities where they are necessary for work.

The answer came following a question in parliament by Scottish Conservative MSP Adam Tomkins.

Shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross also posed questions in Holyrood yesterday on the issue, including on why 500,000 air guns were still unaccounted for.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation warned the moves would do nothing to cut crime, and instead place an extra burden on police firearms licencing teams.

It added the six-month timeframe for getting all airguns licenced was too short.

**Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:**

"This unnecessary process has been a mess from the start.

"Now those who complied with the rules are being told to get rid of their

weapon and keep it at a friend's house.

"This is a chaotic approach from the SNP, and hardly provides any confidence that it's on top of this issue.

"It's already a major inconvenience for law-abiding people who need air weapons for work to go through this process, and having to call on the help of a gun-owning neighbour makes it worse still.

"It shows again that the SNP doesn't know rural Scotland, and doesn't stand up for its interests."

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**Below is a copy of the parliamentary answer from justice secretary Michael Matheson:**

Index Heading: Learning and Justice

**Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the air weapons licensing scheme.

S50-00575

**Michael Matheson:**

Air weapons continue to account for almost half of all firearms offences recorded in Scotland – 158 offences in 2015-16. The new licensing regime came into effect on 31 December 2016 and will allow the police to better protect Scottish communities by removing air weapons from those who would misuse them.

Ahead of the new law taking effect, Police Scotland received 6,948 applications for an air weapon certificate by 31 October. Certificates, or refusals, have been issued in all but a limited number of cases, for example where further investigation is required or where payment has not yet been received from the applicant.

A further 5,436 applications were received between 1 November and 31 December 2016. Police Scotland are processing these as quickly as possible, but those who are awaiting a decision must make arrangements to have their air weapons stored in a safe and appropriate place – either with someone who has an air weapon, firearm or shot gun certificate, or a registered firearms dealer – to avoid committing an offence.

In addition, by 31 December, 18,935 unwanted air weapons had been surrendered to Police Scotland for secure destruction since the summer.

**The new legislation come into effect on December 31:**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-38469556>

**The BASC has been critical of the move:**

<https://basc.org.uk/blog/press-releases/latest-news/airgun-licensing-plans-in>

[-scotland-fail-to-secure-all-party-support/](#)