

Knife sales consultation

Consultation page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/licensing-for-knife-sales>

Consultation document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/693fe8395cc812f50aa42195/Public_Consultation_Document_-Knife_Licensing.pdf

Consultation closes at 11:59pm on 24 February 2026.

Questions 1-3 on the size and scope of the market is intended for sellers, so is not relevant to a Countryside Alliance response.

4. Should businesses which sell knives and bladed articles be required to hold a licence?

No

We are fully supportive of measures to reduce knife crime and ensure that knives do not fall into the wrong hands. However, we do not believe that the case for licensing as proposed in this consultation, covering the sale of all knives and bladed articles, has been made. The issue is not the selling of knives and bladed articles but ensuring that they are not sold to the wrong people. There is already extensive legislation in this area, including further measures in the Crime and Policing Bill before Parliament. There is a need for better education around the current restrictions and controls around sales, and a concerted effort to enforce the law. We believe that this would do more to reduce the misuse of knives than introducing a further legal regime of licensing. Those who fail to obey the current law when selling knives are unlikely to seek a licence, so it is likely that legitimate businesses that already know and abide by the current restrictions and controls on sales will be faced with further bureaucracy and cost without any obvious benefit. The most recent data shows that domestic knives are used in the majority of homicides involving sharp instruments. Given that knives are so widely available, not least in virtually every household in the country, it is far from clear that a licensing regime would deliver a reduction in knife crime.

While the consultation references the knife dealers' licence in Scotland, we would note that the scope of this regime is much more limited than that proposed in this consultation. We have also been unable to find an assessment that shows what, if any, impact this licensing requirement has had on knife crime in Scotland.

We are particularly concerned by the suggestion that Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs), many of whom also sell knives and bladed articles, should require a separate

licence to sell knives despite being already licensed and inspected to sell firearms. A further licensing regime would simply be an addition layer of bureaucracy and further expense, without improving public safety.

5. Should private sellers who sell knives and bladed articles be required to hold a licence?

No

Would anyone selling a knife, even as a one-off sale, require a licence? We cannot see how this could work or be proportionate. If someone is determined to ignore the existing legal framework controlling the sale of knives, they are unlikely to seek a licence. Those in the business of selling knives should already be complying with the law. Private sellers should also be made aware of their responsibilities when selling knives.

6. How long do you think a seller's or importer's licence should be valid for before it needs to be renewed?

Other

We note that one of the requirements in Scotland is for sellers to keep transaction records for a number of years, currently three. If a similar requirement were to be part of any licensing in England and Wales it would make sense that the period of licence and the requirement to keep records are aligned.

7. Who should be required to hold a licence to import knives and bladed articles?

Other

If a person is importing with the intention of selling then they are in effect acting as an importer/retailer. A person buying a knife for personal use that happens to be sourced from outside the UK should not require a licence to do so. If any licensing regime is too broad in scope, it will simply become unworkable.

8. Do you anticipate that this measure will impact your business/business operations?

N/A

9. Have you got any other comments?

As noted above, we do not believe RFDs should be subjected to a further licensing requirement as they are already subject to extensive regulation. We are also concerned about how licensing as proposed would be administered and enforced.

The consultation states that administering and licensing for the sale of knives and bladed articles would fall to the police and their existing firearms licensing departments. Given that many police firearms licensing departments are already struggling to deliver an adequate firearms licensing service, adding licensing of knife sales will simply compound existing problems.

If a licence is to be required of anyone wishing to sell a knife, we doubt that the police would be able to cope with the additional burden. As far as we can see there will be thousands of businesses and individuals who will require to be licensed, from private individuals, antique shops, auction houses, garden centres, country stores and agricultural merchants, as well as those businesses whose sole business is selling knives. We would also suggest, given the scope of licensing being considered, that without additional resources for enforcement legitimate sellers, both individuals and retailers, will simply be subject to additional costs and bureaucracy while those already acting illegally will continue to do so.

It is hard to see how these proposals, which may seem reasonable in theory, will actually result in improved public safety. We would suggest that greater education about the law around the sale of knives and better enforcement of the existing law should be prioritised before licensing.