



# Weights and Measures Act 1985

## 1985 CHAPTER 72

### PART I **U.K.**

#### UNITS AND STANDARDS OF MEASUREMENT

#### 1 **Units of measurement.** **U.K.**

- (1) [<sup>F1</sup>Subject to subsection (6) below,]the yard or the metre shall be the unit of measurement of length and the pound or the kilogram shall be the unit of measurement of mass by reference to which any measurement involving a measurement of length or mass shall be made in the United Kingdom; and—
  - (a) the yard shall be 0.9144 metre exactly;
  - (b) the pound shall be 0.453 592 37 kilogram exactly.
- (2) Schedule 1 to this Act shall have effect for defining for the purposes of measurements falling to be made in the United Kingdom the units of measurement set out in that Schedule; and for the purposes of any measurement of weight falling to be so made, the weight of any thing may be expressed, by reference to the units of measurement set out in Part V of that Schedule, in the same terms as its mass.
- (3) Subject to subsection (4) below, the Secretary of State may by order amend Schedule 1 to this Act by adding to or removing from Parts I to VI of that Schedule any unit of measurement of length, of area, of volume, of capacity, or of mass or weight, as the case may be.
- [<sup>F2</sup>(4) Without prejudice to section 8(6)(b) below an order under subsection (3) above shall not remove the pint from Part IV of Schedule 1.]
- (5) An order under subsection (3) above may contain such transitional or other supplemental or incidental provisions as appear to the Secretary of State expedient.
- [<sup>F3</sup>(6) Subsection (1) above shall not have effect so as to authorise the use in the specified circumstances of—
  - (a) the yard as a measurement of length, or
  - (b) the pound as a measurement of mass,

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otherwise than in accordance with Regulation 7 of the Units of Measurement Regulations 1986 (supplementary indications)<sup>F4</sup> . . .

- (7) In subsection (6) above “the specified circumstances” has the same meaning as in the Units of Measurement Regulations 1986, that is to say the circumstances specified in Article 2(a) of Council Directive No.80/181/EEC as limited by the provisions of Article 2(b) of that Directive.]

#### Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 1(1) inserted (1.10.1995) by S.I. 1994/2867, reg. 6(2)(a)  
**F2** S. 1(4) substituted (1.10.1995) by S.I. 1994/2867, reg. 6(2)(b)  
**F3** S. 1(6)(7) added (1.10.1995) by S.I. 1994/2867, reg. 6(2)(c)  
**F4** Words in s. 1(6) omitted (1.1.2000) by virtue of S.I. 1994/2867, reg. 7(2)

## 2 United Kingdom primary standards and authorised copies of the primary standards. **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State shall cause to be maintained standards of the yard, pound, metre and kilogram which shall be the standards (in this Act referred to as “United Kingdom primary standards”) by reference to which, in the United Kingdom, all other standards of those units and of any other unit of measurement derived wholly or partly from any of those units shall be maintained.
- (2) The Secretary of State shall from time to time as may appear to him expedient cause—
- (a) the value of each of the United Kingdom primary standards to be determined or redetermined, and
  - (b) any authorised copy of any of those standards to be compared with, and its value determined or redetermined by reference to, that standard,
- in such manner as he may direct.
- (3) The United Kingdom primary standards shall be—
- (a) in the case of the yard, the bar described in Part I of Schedule 2 to this Act;
  - (b) in the case of the pound, the cylinder described in Part II of that Schedule;
  - (c) in the case of the metre, the bar described in Part III of that Schedule;
  - (d) in the case of the kilogram, the cylinder described in Part IV of that Schedule.
- (4) The copies of the United Kingdom primary standards of the yard and pound which are described in Part V of Schedule 2 to this Act and deposited as mentioned in that Part shall for the purposes of this Act be authorised copies of those standards.

## 3 Department of Trade and Industry secondary, tertiary and coinage standards. **U.K.**

- (1) The Secretary of State shall maintain secondary, tertiary and coinage standards in accordance with the provisions of this section, which shall be known collectively as the [<sup>F5</sup>[<sup>F6</sup>Department for Business and Trade] standards].
- (2) The secondary standards shall consist of standards of all the measures set out in Parts I and IV and all weights set out in Part V of Schedule 3 to this Act other than capacity measures of more than [<sup>F7</sup>8 pints] or ten litres; and any such standard shall be constructed and, while it remains in use, from time to time at intervals not exceeding

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five years have its value or values redetermined, by reference to such one or more of the United Kingdom primary standards or any authorised copies of those standards as may appear to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.

- (3) The tertiary standards shall consist of such standards of such of the measures or weights set out in Parts I, IV and V of Schedule 3 to this Act as may from time to time appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient; and any such standard shall be constructed and, while it remains in use, from time to time at intervals not exceeding two years have its value or values redetermined, by reference to such one or more of the secondary standards as may appear to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.
- (4) The coinage standards shall consist of such standards of the weight of each coin of the realm for the time being authorised by or under the enactments relating to the coinage as may from time to time appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient; and any such standard shall be constructed and, while it remains in use, from time to time at intervals not exceeding two years have its value redetermined, by reference to such one or more of the secondary standards as may appear to the Secretary of State to be appropriate.
- (5) [<sup>F8</sup>[<sup>F9</sup>Department for Business and Trade] standards] shall be provided or replaced by the Secretary of State from time to time as may appear to him necessary or expedient and shall be in such form and of such material, and be kept under his control at such place or places, as he may think fit.
- (6) A secondary or tertiary standard of any linear or capacity measure may—
  - (a) be provided either as a separate standard or by means of divisions marked on a standard of a larger measure, and
  - (b) either be marked in whole or in part with subdivisions representing any smaller unit of measurement or multiples or fractions of such a unit or have no such markings,as the Secretary of State thinks fit.

#### Textual Amendments

- F5** Words in s. 3(1) substituted (9.11.2016) by The Secretaries of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for International Trade and for Exiting the European Union and the Transfer of Functions (Education and Skills) Order 2016 (S.I. 2016/992), art. 1(2), **Sch. para. 5(2)** (with art. 13)
- F6** Words in s. 3(1) substituted (3.5.2023) by The Secretaries of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for Science, Innovation and Technology, for Business and Trade, and for Culture, Media and Sport and the Transfer of Functions (National Security and Investment Act 2021 etc) Order 2023 (S.I. 2023/424), art. 1(2), **Sch. para. 6(2)** (with art. 17)
- F7** Words in s. 3(2) substituted (1.10.1995) by S.I. 1994/2867, **reg. 6(3)**
- F8** Words in s. 3(5) substituted (9.11.2016) by The Secretaries of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for International Trade and for Exiting the European Union and the Transfer of Functions (Education and Skills) Order 2016 (S.I. 2016/992), art. 1(2), **Sch. para. 5(2)** (with art. 13)
- F9** Words in s. 3(5) substituted (3.5.2023) by The Secretaries of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, for Science, Innovation and Technology, for Business and Trade, and for Culture, Media and Sport and the Transfer of Functions (National Security and Investment Act 2021 etc) Order 2023 (S.I. 2023/424), art. 1(2), **Sch. para. 6(2)** (with art. 17)

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#### 4 **Local standards.** **E+W+S**

- (1) There shall be maintained by each local weights and measures authority such standards (in this Act referred to as “local standards”) of such of the measures and weights set out in Schedule 3 to this Act as the Secretary of State may from time to time approve or require in the case of that authority as being proper and sufficient for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Local Standards—
  - (a) shall be provided and replaced by the local weights and measures authority from time to time as may appear to the authority to be necessary or expedient or as the Secretary of State may require,
  - (b) shall be of material and form approved by the Secretary of State,
  - (c) shall be kept in such manner and under such conditions as the Secretary of State may direct at premises provided by the authority, and
  - (d) shall not be used elsewhere than at those premises or at other premises which appear to the authority to be appropriate.
- (3) A local standard of any linear or capacity measure—
  - (a) shall be provided either as a separate standard or by means of divisions marked on a standard of a larger measure, and
  - (b) shall either be marked in whole or in part with subdivisions representing any smaller unit of measurement or multiples or fractions of such a unit or have no such markings,as the Secretary of State may from time to time direct.
- (4) No article shall be used as a local standard unless there is for the time being in force a certificate of its fitness for the purpose issued by the Secretary of State.
- (5) The Secretary of State shall cause any article submitted to him for certification under this section to be compared with such one or more of the tertiary standards as may appear to him to be appropriate and, if it falls within the prescribed limits of error and satisfies any other requirements of the Secretary of State, shall issue a certificate of its fitness for use as a local standard which, if the authority so request, shall include a statement of the amount of any error in it.
- (6) Subject to paragraph 9 of Schedule 11 to this Act, a certificate issued under subsection (5) above shall cease to be in force at the end of the prescribed period.
- (7) The Secretary of State shall keep a record of all certificates issued under subsection (5) above.
- (8) Any comparison of an article with the tertiary standards in pursuance of subsection (5) above shall be carried out—
  - (a) if the article is not for the time being a local standard at such place as the Secretary of State may direct; or
  - (b) if the article is for the time being a local standard, at the premises where it is kept or at other premises approved in that behalf by the Secretary of State.
- (9) The Secretary of State may charge on any occasion on which an article is submitted to him for certification under this section such fee as he may from time to time with the approval of the Treasury determine.

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## 5 Working standards and testing and stamping equipment. **E+W+S**

- (1) Subject to subsection (3) below, each local weights and measures authority shall provide for use by the inspectors appointed for the authority's area, and maintain or from time to time replace—
  - (a) such standards (in this Act referred to as “working standards”) of such of the measures and weights set out in Schedule 3 to this Act,
  - (b) such testing equipment, and
  - (c) such stamping equipment,as are proper and sufficient for the efficient discharge by those inspectors of their functions in the authority's area.
- (2) An authority may—
  - (a) provide a particular working standard or item of equipment as required by subsection (1) above by making arrangements with another person for the standard or item to be made available by him, and
  - (b) make arrangements with another person for standards or equipment provided by the authority under subsection (1) above, except stamping equipment, to be made available to the other person.
- (3) If a local weights and measures authority are of opinion—
  - (a) that any particular description of testing equipment is proper and sufficient for the efficient discharge of the functions of the inspectors appointed for the authority's area, but
  - (b) that, having regard to the expenditure involved and the frequency with which such equipment is likely to be used by those inspectors, it would not be reasonable for the authority to provide and maintain such equipment,the authority may request the Secretary of State to provide and maintain such equipment and to make it available for hire to the authority.
- (4) The terms of hire of equipment under subsection (3) above shall be such as the Secretary of State may determine.
- (5) Working standards and testing and stamping equipment provided under subsection (1) above shall be of material and form approved by the Secretary of State.
- (6) Except so far as may be necessary for the purposes of their use elsewhere, such working standards and testing and stamping equipment shall be kept, subject to subsection (7) below, at premises provided by the local weights and measures authority.
- (7) Subsection (6) above shall not apply to things which are the subject of arrangements under subsection (2)(a) above.
- (8) A working standard of a linear or capacity measure—
  - (a) shall be provided either as a separate standard or by means of divisions marked on a standard of a larger measure, and
  - (b) shall either be marked in whole or in part with subdivisions representing any smaller unit of measurement or multiples or fractions of such a unit or have no such markings,as the Secretary of State may from time to time direct.
- (9) The Secretary of State shall by regulations make provision—

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- (a) for working standards to be from time to time tested by comparison with, and if necessary adjusted to within such limits of error as may be specified in the regulations by reference to, the local standards or other working standards more recently tested, and
  - (b) with respect to the testing, adjustment and limits of error of testing equipment provided under subsection (1) above.
- (10) No article shall be used by an inspector as a working standard or as testing equipment provided under subsection (1) above unless the relevant requirements of regulations under subsection (9) above are for the time being satisfied with respect to it.
- (11) Nothing in subsection (2) above prejudices the operation of—
- (a) the <sup>M1</sup>Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970,
  - (b) section 101 of the <sup>M2</sup>Local Government Act 1972, or
  - (c) section 56 of the <sup>M3</sup>Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973,
- [<sup>F10</sup>or
- (d) sections 14 to 16 of the Local Government Act 2000 or any regulations made under sections 17 to 20 of that Act]
- (which among other things enable a local authority to arrange for the provision of goods or services and the discharge of its functions by another local authority).

#### Subordinate Legislation Made

- P1** [S. 5](#): for previous exercises of this power before 01. 02. 1991 see Index to Government Orders.
- P2** [S. 5\(9\)](#): s. 5(9) (with s. 86(1)) power exercised (26.7.1991) by [S.I. 1991/1775](#)

#### Textual Amendments

- F10** [S. 5\(11\)\(d\)](#) and preceding word inserted (E.W.) (11.7.2001 for E.and 1.4.2002 for W.) by [S.I. 2001/2237](#) arts. 2(f), 14 and [S.I. 2002/808](#), [art.13](#)

#### Marginal Citations

- M1** 1970 c. 39.
- M2** 1972 c. 70.
- M3** 1973 c. 65.

## 6 Testing of other standards and equipment. **E+W+S**

- (1) The Secretary of State may, if he thinks fit, on the application of any government or person, accept for testing as to accuracy or compliance with any specification and for report—
- (a) any article used or proposed to be used as a standard of a unit of measurement of mass, length, capacity, area or volume, or as a standard of the weight of any coin,
  - (b) any weighing or measuring equipment,
  - (c) any other metrological equipment, and
  - (d) any article for use in connection with equipment mentioned in paragraph (b) or (c) above,
- submitted by that government or person for the purpose at such place as the Secretary of State may direct.

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- (2) The Secretary of State may charge, in respect of any article or equipment accepted by him in pursuance of subsection (1) above, a fee of an amount ascertained in such manner as he may determine with the approval of the Treasury.

**Modifications etc. (not altering text)**

- C1** S. 6 modified (1.3.1996) by 1986 c. 44, s. 36B(1) (as inserted (1.3.1996) by 1995 c. 45, s. 10(1), Sch. 3 para. 44; S.I. 1996/218, art.2)

**Changes to legislation:**

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Weights and Measures Act 1985, Part I.