

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

10th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday, 29 March

Petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland

Introduction

1. Petition [PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland](#), submitted by Gill Docherty on behalf of Scotland Against Greyhound Exploitation, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to put an end to greyhound racing in Scotland.
2. This paper supports the Committee's evidence session with the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) on the subject of [its report on the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland](#).
3. All correspondence and written submissions received in relation to the petition are [available on the petition webpage](#).

Consideration by the RAI Committee

4. The Committee began its consideration of the petition with [an evidence session with the petitioner on 20 April 2022](#). The Committee wrote to the SAWC, among other key stakeholders, for its views on the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland, and on the prioritisation of greyhound welfare within its work programme.
5. In its [response of 26 May](#), the SAWC stated it did not support the continuation of greyhound racing at unlicensed tracks in Scotland and that it intended to consider the issue more broadly upon completion of a review, commissioned by Dogs Trust, of greyhound welfare in Great Britain. Following completion of the review by Dogs Trust, the [SAWC informed the Committee on 9 November 2022](#) that it intended to "undertake more research and fully consider the available evidence, in order to reach a balanced conclusion on the various issues that have been raised".
6. On 28 February 2023, the Committee received the [SAWC's report on the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland](#).
7. At its [meeting on 15 March 2023](#), the Committee considered the SAWC's report and agreed to undertake an inquiry into the welfare of greyhounds used for racing in Scotland. The Committee [opened a call for views](#) on 17 March 2023,

seeking submissions on the welfare of racing greyhounds, the petition which calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland, and the recommendations of the SAWC report. The call for views will close on 7 April 2023.

8. The Committee also agreed to hold an evidence session with the SAWC to discuss the recommendations of its report and with other stakeholders on the issue of greyhound racing, petition and the SAWC recommendations. The Committee will hear evidence from the following SAWC board members—
- Professor Cathy Dwyer (chair);
 - Dr Ellie Wigham; and
 - Mike Radford OBE.

SAWC recommendations

9. The SAWC concludes its report with the following recommendations—

“1) Although there are some positive welfare aspects of racing for dogs, where gambling and other commercial activities are present, the risks of poor welfare outweigh the likely positive aspects. Thus, on average, a dog bred for racing in Scotland currently has poorer welfare than the average of other dogs in the population.”

“2) Independent tracks, although they may provide some social benefit, do impose some specific risks on dog welfare through the lack of immediate veterinary care to injured dogs and general veterinary oversight of dog welfare. We consider that a veterinarian **must** always be present when dogs are racing to minimise unnecessary suffering in the event of an injury and should have the power to prevent a dog racing if deemed unfit. The presence of a veterinarian also ensures that there is independent oversight of dog welfare, and we further recommend that this function includes the collection of independent data on injuries and fatalities at stadia. We suggest reviewing these metrics, and whether racing should continue, within the next 3-5 years, to provide the independent evidence that is currently lacking on the impact of racing on dog welfare.”

“3) We recommend that no further new greyhound tracks are permitted in Scotland. We are not convinced that any of the current proposed measures can safeguard greyhound welfare appropriately and believe that this will help to reduce suffering in Scotland.”

“4) Even if there were no racing opportunities available in Scotland, it would remain possible to own, breed, train, and kennel racing greyhounds in the country, notwithstanding that the dogs would have to be taken elsewhere to race. As greyhounds may spend a large amount of their racing lives in kennels, and consistent with our view that independent oversight and regulation is required when there is potential commercial gain, we consider that a scheme independent of GBGB is

required to ensure the welfare of these animals, possibly through Local Authority regulation or under the auspices of the new Scottish Veterinary Service.”

**Rural Affairs and Islands Committee clerks
March 2023**