

Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3, Senedd

Meeting date: 15 October 2025

Meeting time: 09.30

For further information contact:

Richard Thomas

Committee Clerk

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Hybrid

Private pre-meeting

09:15–09:30

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

09:30

2 Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill: Stakeholder evidence session with animal welfare groups

09:30–11:00

(Pages 1 – 35)

Vanessa Waddon, Chief Executive Officer, Hope Rescue

James Fitch, Public Affairs Manager, Dogs Trust

Chris Burghes, Chief Executive, Blue Cross

Dr Sibylle Kuonen, Greyhound Rescue Wales

Billie-Jade Thomas, Senior Public Affairs Manager, RSPCA Cymru

Attached Documents:

Research brief

Written evidence – RSPCA Cymru

Written evidence – Blue Cross

3 Motion to elect a temporary Chair under Standing Order 17.22 for the meeting of 23 October

11:00



- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the rest of the meeting**

11:00

Break

11:00–11:10

- 5 Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill: Consideration of evidence received**

11:10–11:30

Document is Restricted

Written submission: The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill

Introduction

RSPCA Cymru welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee on the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill. We have been calling for a phased end to greyhound racing since September 2022, predominantly through our work as part of the Cut the Chase coalition which comprises Blue Cross, Dogs Trust, Greyhound Rescue Wales, Hope Rescue and ourselves.

Prior to the formation of this coalition, we undertook a detailed and intensive policy review which led to us determining that only an end to greyhound racing in Wales - and throughout the UK - can adequately protect dog welfare. This came following many years of attempting to work alongside the industry to secure much-needed improvements. While some progress was made through this approach - such as the publication of annual injury and retirement data, for example - we have determined that there are a myriad of issues that cannot be solved by regulation, via the Greyhound Board of Great Britain or otherwise (GBGB), as detailed within this response.

As well as having strong support among organisations such as ourselves, there is clear public support for a ban on greyhound racing too. Towards the end of 2024, a [summary of responses](#) to the Welsh Government's consultation on the licensing of animal welfare establishments, activities and exhibits was published demonstrating that almost two thirds (64.69%) of respondents either support a phased or imminent ban on greyhound racing. Importantly, it was found that support for a phased ban was stronger than support for the licensing of keepers, owners and trainers of racing dogs, which was also considered. While 55.52% of respondents supported the licensing of greyhound keepers, owners and trainers, a clear majority of those (31.88%) were also in favour of a phased ban. As such, the outcome of this consultation provided irrefutable evidence of the strength of support for an end to greyhound racing in Wales.

Concerns relevant to greyhound racing in Wales

We strongly support an end to greyhound racing in Wales to prevent the unnecessary and preventable deaths of hundreds of dogs every year, while concurrently eradicating thousands of individual injuries. Running around oval-shaped tracks at speeds of up to 40mph is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved, as demonstrated by data from GBGB. According to the [latest statistics](#) published in June 2025, 346 dogs involved in racing died for reasons other than natural causes/illness in 2024, while 3,809 injuries were also recorded. For the first time since the publication of these statistics began, the number of track fatalities increased, with 123 dogs having died at tracks licensed by GBGB - up from 109 the previous year. Negotiating bends during racing, and especially the first one, causes areas of congestion which increase the unavoidable risk of high speed collisions although it should be noted that, there are other factors associated with race tracks which also pose risk including design of the track, starting box and lure as well as the track's preparation and maintenance. Injuries experienced by greyhounds are unique and are seldom seen in other breeds of dog. While the aforementioned data covers tracks in both Wales and England - with GBGB regulating 19 at present - they are the first set of statistics that cover a full year of racing at the Valley Greyhound Stadium in Ystrad Mynach which became regulated by GBGB in 2023. A concerning lack of transparency remains as to the exact numbers of dogs injured and/or killed in Wales as GBGB does not publish track level statistics. However, with GBGB regulating 19 tracks at present, it would be reasonable to suggest that each track sees an average of at least six deaths and

200 recorded injuries a year. This in itself demonstrates that participating in racing poses a serious and unmitigated risk to animal welfare that regulation cannot prevent. It is our view that the death of one dog in the name of entertainment and profit is one too many, hence why we strongly support a ban on greyhound racing in Wales.

While the statistics above provide solid evidence that greyhound racing poses an unnecessary risk to animal welfare - a risk that is present each and every single time a dog is raced - our concerns extend beyond this data. In 2024, [5,795 dogs](#) left the racing industry, 55.7% of whom were handed over to trusts and charities. The animal rescue sector is currently working under significant and unprecedented pressure with the greyhound racing industry's undeniable reliance upon the sector placing further strain on our already stretched resources. Like many others, the RSPCA is having to rely upon private animal boarding establishments to assist with our capacity issues as our centers in Wales - and further afield - are full. As such, we are concerned that allowing greyhound racing to continue - and become more frequent in Wales, if current trends continue - creates a permanent problem for the rehoming sector. GBGB's latest statistics also demonstrate a concerning trend of more dogs being used for breeding purposes once they exit the industry, with the number of dogs being repurposed for breeding having almost doubled in comparison to the previous year (174 in 2023 vs 84 in 2024). The more greyhounds being bred, the more that will inevitably require assistance from charities and trusts further down the line.

We also hold concerns around the lack of statutory regulation for trainers' kennels and the reliance on voluntary compliance with the Greyhound Board of Great Britain's standards to safeguard welfare. It has been previously found that some dogs used for greyhound racing spend [95% of their time](#) in trainers' kennels with little opportunity for social interaction with people and an absence of enrichment. The manner in which racing dogs are kept - along with the frequent risks they are exposed to - differentiates them from other dogs covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 such as companion animals, for example. Kenneling dogs for long periods of time can have detrimental effects on their welfare and behaviour, which when coupled with the dog's early life experiences which are typically outside of a home setting, has the potential to make them more challenging to rehome in the future.

The industry's funding model relevant to greyhound welfare is also insecure, as it is heavily reliant on voluntary contributions from bookmakers. For the period 2023-24, this totalled [£7.3m](#) - a 4% reduction on the previous year. In comparison, the horse racing income derived from its statutory levy totalled [£105m](#) in 2023/24. The lack of any statutory levy being made available for GBGB to implement its animal welfare strategic improvements restricts the industry's ability to ensure that each and every greyhound involved in racing can experience a life worth living. As such, this remains a significant concern around allowing the greyhound racing industry to continue.

With there being only one remaining greyhound stadium in Wales, it is likely that the vast majority of people in Wales do not attend or participate in greyhound racing. Spectator numbers at greyhound tracks on a UK wide basis have decreased significantly in recent years from [2 million in 2010 to 800,000 in 2022](#). A number of tracks have closed through the UK in recent decades, including a number in Wales. According to polling undertaken by Cut the Chase in 2024, only 5% of people in Wales follow or participate in greyhound racing. Furthermore, less than a quarter of respondents (23%) stated that they consider greyhound racing to be important to Welsh culture¹. It is our firm view that greyhound racing is not ethically justifiable because of the aforementioned welfare and governance issues and that it has lost its social license to operate in a modern-day Wales. We also believe that the animal welfare benefits that banning greyhound racing would secure far outweigh any potential cultural, social or economic benefits.

[The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing \(Wales\) Bill](#)

In its current form, the Bill should prohibit the commercial racing of greyhounds at stadiums and similar venues while, by definition, also outlawing training and trialling of greyhounds for racing purposes as this is also classed as 'greyhound racing'. This is particularly positive as the schooling of greyhounds for racing purposes carries the same inherent risks as racing on a commercial basis. The proposed legislation currently covers the operator or track/similar venue and any persons involved in organising greyhound racing. To mitigate any unintended consequences that could arise such as the facilitation of illegal/underground racing, it is highly important that the legislation is applicable to individuals as well as track operators/owners.

Positively, the passing of this Bill in 2026 could see racing end in Wales by the 1st of April 2027 and the RSPCA is highly supportive of such action. However, in its current form, its provisions may also see greyhound racing continue here until April 2030. As members of the Cut the Chase coalition and others across the animal welfare sector are actively preparing to rehome the dogs affected, we question whether such a long timeframe is necessary. To support the rehoming, rehabilitation and treatment of any dogs impacted by the end of greyhound racing in Wales, the Wales Greyhound Partnership (WGP) was established shortly after the ban was announced in February. The WGP comprises nine animal welfare organisations - including our coalition's members - and at this current time has the capacity to rehome up to 258 dogs. With an average length of time for rehoming of two months and 120 dogs rehomed since its conception, the partnership has clearly demonstrated that it is highly possible to rehome dogs affected by the ban in a much shorter time period than the current legislation would allow for. As such, our coalition is actively calling for greyhound racing to be ended in Wales within 12 months of passing of the relevant legislation. It is our view that such a timeframe will enable the dogs affected to be treated, rehomed and rehabilitated by ourselves in a safe and realistic manner, while minimising the harm racing poses to dogs. Inevitably, the longer that racing continues legally in Wales, the more dogs that will be put at risk of injury, or worse. A timeframe which could enable racing to continue on a legal basis for up to four years will see racing stocks replenished on a repeat basis, putting more animals at risk as well as additional pressure on the rescue sector. However, ending greyhound racing in a year will give both the rescue sector and industry a definitive deadline to work towards, which should simplify the implementation of the ban for all. This approach has also shown to be achievable elsewhere when tracks have been closed by the industry. For example, the closure of a track in Swindon was announced in March 2025, with racing to cease at the end of December 2025¹.

As it stands, a person found guilty of an offence under the Bill in its current format would be liable on summary conviction (i.e. those that can only be heard by a Magistrates' Court) to an unlimited fine. It is important that the penalties relevant to the legislation act as enough of a deterrent to prevent racing from continuing on an illegal basis while also minimising the risk of any potential repeat offences. We therefore welcome the Bill's intention to introduce unlimited fines for the relevant offences. However, we still question whether the potential for custodial sentences should also be considered to fully ensure that the legislation has the desired effect.

[Conclusion](#)

RSPCA Cymru strongly supports an end to greyhound racing in Wales and the provisions of the proposed Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill. It is our firm view that only an end to greyhound racing via this legislation can protect and future-proof the welfare of the dogs who are put at risk through racing. As it stands, Wales is currently among only a small handful of countries where commercial greyhound racing still takes place. However, the passing of the aforementioned Bill could see Wales become the first UK nation to end greyhound racing, thus building upon the many achievements made for animal welfare in recent years. We now look forward to providing oral evidence to the committee later this month and to supporting this Bill as it makes its way through the Senedd's legislative process. With the evidence in favour of an end to greyhound racing, and the support for such action both strong, we urge the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee to join us in supporting the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill.

Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee - Blue Cross written evidence

Summary

- Blue Cross is a member of the Cut the Chase coalition, along with Dogs Trust, Greyhound Rescue Wales, Hope Rescue and the RSPCA. Our coalition has been working towards an end to greyhound racing in Wales since 2022 to protect the relevant dogs from injury and death.
- As a coalition, we strongly support the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill as it brings us closer to ending greyhound racing in Wales.
- The coalition is calling for greyhound racing to be ended in Wales within 12 months of the passing of the relevant legislation, rather than in the timeframe currently specified in the Bill.

Wales has no greyhound specific regulation and although it's one remaining track is now licensed by the GBGB, we are clear that licensing is not the answer. It does not solve the issue at the heart of the industry and cannot protect dogs from the inherent risk of racing. We strongly believe that the industry is a long way from ensuring the welfare of all the dogs involved in racing. Progress has not been made quickly enough, or on a big enough scale, to protect the welfare of these dogs. Therefore, we believe that the only option to safeguard greyhound welfare is to pass the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill.

The Valley Track

The Valley track in Ystrad Mynach is the only operational greyhound track in Wales. It became a licensed GBGB track in 2023. As the Valley was an independent track up until that year, there was no requirement to disclose injury, euthanasia or rehoming figures. However, between 2018 and 2021, Hope Rescue's Amazing Greys project helped over 200 racing greyhounds whose owners and/or trainers had links with the Valley. Of these dogs, 40 endured serious, career ending injuries such as severe fractures needing significant veterinary treatment, amputation or orthopaedic repair.

An inherently dangerous sport

Greyhound racing is inherently dangerous for the dogs involved. Curved tracks are dangerous because of the forces they exert on the dogs while negotiating the bend, but they also cause areas of congestion which increase the risk of high speed collisions. The first bend is particularly problematic as it tends to be where the most congestion occurs, where dogs are travelling the fastest and where most incidents are recorded.

While race tracks are typically referred to as oval in shape, the shape of the Valley's track is considered unique with a layout described as rectangular with four rounded corners. It is stated that greyhound welfare is absolutely paramount within licensed racing. However, the scientific evidence in relation to improved track design does not appear to be adopted when opportunity arises. For example, in moving from an independent to a licensed track, the Valley could have been upgraded from an oval shape to one which avoids high injury rates. This was not done, and the track remains the same shape.

Injury and Fatality Statistics

The industry's own statistics provide the most reliable evidence as to why an end to greyhound racing is needed to protect animal welfare. According to the latest statistics¹ from the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) published in June 2025, 346 dogs involved in racing died for reasons other than natural causes/illness in 2024, while 3,809 injuries were also recorded. For the first time since the publication of these statistics began, the number of track fatalities increased, with 123 dogs having died at tracks licensed by GBGB - up from 105 the previous year.

While this data covers tracks in both Wales and England - with GBGB regulating 19 at present - they are the first set of statistics that cover a full year of racing at the Valley Greyhound Stadium in Ystrad Mynach since it became regulated by GBGB. However, there is no injury data publicly

¹ GBGB 2018 - 2024 Injury / Retirement Data <https://gbgb-prod-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/26104723/2018-2024-Injury-Retirement-Summary-FINAL.pdf>

available for the Valley track as even those tracks governed by GBGB do not publicly display or release injury data by racetrack, outcomes of licensing inspections or residential kennel audits. Additionally, no evidence is provided to demonstrate how such information is collated and informs industry development to ensure meaningful changes are made.

The level of suffering caused by greyhound racing, and the risks posed, are significant and must be considered unacceptable, especially when greyhound racing is a leisure activity. Furthermore, we would also argue that the cost of regulation cannot be justified when the risk to welfare outweighs any potential positive benefit.

These stark and disturbing statistics provide irrefutable evidence that racing around oval tracks at speeds of around 40mph is inherently dangerous, with serious consequences for dog welfare clear to see.

A declining industry

Greyhound racing is also a declining industry, both in the UK and abroad. In the 1940s, there were 77 licensed tracks and more than 200 independent tracks in the UK. The numbers have steadily declined to 19 regulated and one independent track on which greyhounds race in January 2024. Mark Ruskell MSP has introduced the Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government has recently announced² that it supports the Bill's general principles.

Internationally, New Zealand³ announced its plans to ban greyhound racing shortly before the Welsh Government, with its government having recently confirmed that it will legislate on the closure of the greyhound racing industry by July 31st, 2026. In August 2025, Tasmania also confirmed its intention to phase out the activity, with its premier having recently vowed

² Letter from Jim Fairlie MSP, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee, 29 August 2025 <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/correspondence/2025/greyhound-racing-offences-scotland-bill-29-aug-2025.pdf>

³ <https://english.news.cn/asiapacific/20250820/65fe67045db14236a923347e2186a9bd/c.html>

to end greyhound racing in the state by 2029.⁴ A relevant Private Members Bill⁵ was also laid in New South Wales in February this year.

As it stands, Wales is currently among only a small handful of countries where commercial greyhound racing still takes place, including all other UK nations, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and just one state in the USA - West Virginia. In the USA, commercial greyhound racing is illegal in 44 states while countries such as Mexico, China and Vietnam no longer have operational tracks.

Although the Valley track is now licensed by the GBGB, we are clear that licensing is not the answer. It does not solve the issue at the heart of the industry and cannot protect dogs from the inherent risk of racing. That is why legislation is needed to ban the activity.

Implementation Group

Blue Cross welcomed the creation of the Implementation Group and is represented on the Group via our colleagues at Hope Rescue and the RSPCA who are representing the Cut the Chase coalition. We continue to support its work to ensure that the Bill is enacted in the most efficient and comprehensive manner, ensuring the health and welfare of all the greyhounds currently involved in racing in Wales.

The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill

Scope

In its current form, an offence is committed if a person (a) is an operator of a stadium or similar venue in Wales and uses it, or knowingly permits it to be used, for greyhound racing, or (b) is involved in organising greyhound racing in Wales. It does not, therefore, include individuals attending any such meeting.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/aug/10/tasmanian-premier-vows-to-end-greyhound-racing-as-he-woos-crossbench-to-back-minority-government>

⁵ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=18622>

We welcome the fact that the Bill also prohibits the training and trialling of greyhounds around tracks for racing purposes as this is also classed as ‘greyhound racing’. This is particularly positive as the schooling of greyhounds around tracks for racing purposes carries the same inherent risks as racing on a commercial basis.

Blue Cross does not believe a ban on greyhound racing in Wales would lead to the activity moving ‘underground’ with illegal races being conducted. The very structure of the greyhound racing industry means that if banned it would be very hard to continue illegally. The business of greyhound racing is heavily reliant on the streaming of racing both in the UK and abroad. Once illegal, the betting industry could no longer support greyhound racing meaning a loss of significant income and the incentive for people to participate. Furthermore, the significant infrastructure and resources needed for greyhound racing, such as a large oval track, would be hard to move ‘underground’ and go unnoticed by authorities. There is little evidence to support the theory that greyhound racing will move ‘underground’ and is not, in our opinion, a valid reason to not take steps to protect the welfare of racing greyhounds in Wales.

Timeframe

The Bill states that it must be brought into force on a day that is (a) no sooner than 1 April 2027, and (b) no later than 1 April 2030. As the members of our coalition and others across the animal welfare sector are actively prepared to rehome the dogs affected, we question whether such a long timeframe is necessary.

To support the rehoming, rehabilitation and treatment of any dogs impacted by the end of greyhound racing in Wales, the Wales Greyhound Partnership (WGP) was established shortly after the ban was announced in February. The WGP comprises nine animal welfare organisations - including our coalition’s members - and at this current time has the capacity to rehome up to 258 dogs. With 120 dogs rehomed since its conception, the partnership has clearly demonstrated that it is highly possible to rehome dogs affected by the ban in a much shorter time period than the legislation would allow for. Furthermore, this window is much greater than that provided for other tracks closed by the industry. For

example, the closure of Swindon was announced in March 2025, with racing to cease at the end of December 2025. **As such, our coalition is actively calling for greyhound racing to be ended in Wales within 12 months of the passing of the relevant legislation.**

It is our view that such a timeframe will enable the dogs affected to be treated, rehomed and rehabilitated by ourselves in a safe and realistic manner, while minimising the harm racing poses to dogs. Inevitably, the longer that racing continues legally in Wales, the more dogs that will be put at risk of injury, or worse. A timeframe which could enable racing to continue on a legal basis for up to four years will see racing stocks replenished on a repeat basis, putting more animals at risk as well as additional pressure on the rescue sector. This is especially relevant in relation to plans which could see the number of races the Valley Greyhound Stadium expanded before the ban.

However, ending greyhound racing within a year of the Act being passed will give both the rescue sector and industry a definitive deadline to work towards, which should simplify the implementation of the ban for all.

Sanctions/penalties

As it stands, a person found guilty of an offence under the Bill would be liable on summary conviction (i.e. those that can only be heard by a Magistrates' Court) to a fine. The Explanatory Note specifies an unlimited fine. It is important that the penalties relevant to the legislation act as enough of a deterrent to prevent racing from continuing on an illegal basis while also minimising the risk of any potential repeat offences.

Conclusion

Blue Cross warmly welcomes the publication of the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill. With the evidence in favour of an end to greyhound racing and strong support for such action, we urge the Senedd to support the proposed legislation as it passes through the relevant legislative stages. Wales has demonstrated its ability to be a world leader on animal welfare on several occasions – it was the first UK nation to have introduced full bans on shock collars for dogs, snares and glue traps. This

Bill is a real opportunity to add greyhound racing to this list of achievements before 2026's election and truly demonstrate that animal welfare is a priority for Wales on a global scale.

We therefore call on all to support the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill to prevent the needless injury to and deaths of countless dogs in the coming years.