

P-06-1354: The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Medi 2023
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Reference: SR23/6132-6

Petition Number: P-06-1354

Petition title: The Welsh Government should support greyhound racing in Wales

Text of petition: The Welsh Government are currently considering banning greyhound racing in Wales.

This potential ban has been brought on through a petition submitted by a charity. I believe the information used to create that petition was not factually correct and that they used massively inflated figures on the number of injured greyhounds with no supporting evidence. The charity has been asked for evidence on multiple occasions but refused. The petition gained 35k signatures but less than 19k of these signatures came from within Wales.

Banning greyhound racing would have an economic impact on individuals involved in the industry. There would also be a direct impact on the Valleys Stadium, and the medium and long term development of the Ystrad Mynach area.

There would also be a negative impact on the greyhound breed.

Valley Greyhound Stadium is currently in the process of becoming a GBGB registered track.



All tracks licensed by GBGB must adhere to the regulator's Rules of Racing which seek to uphold the very highest standards of greyhound welfare and integrity. There are over 200 rules covering all aspects of how the sport is run and regulated including how greyhounds are cared for when they are at the track, at home in their trainer's residential kennels, when being transported and into their retirement.

The Senedd currently has a cross party group to support horse racing in Wales, we ask that the same support is shown for greyhound racing.

1. Background

1.1. The greyhound track in Wales

Wales has one, privately owned, greyhound track, the Valley Greyhound Stadium, Ystrad Mynach, which typically holds weekly races.

The Valley Stadium is one of three independent race tracks in the UK, which are licensed by the local authority. A further 19 race tracks are licensed by the Greyhound Board for Great Britain (GBGB). GBGB tracks have additional rules designed to protect the animals' welfare (such as the presence of veterinary surgeons). In 2022, GBGB published a new strategic vision to "further promote and protect welfare across all stages of a greyhound's life".

The Valley Stadium track was acquired by Dave Barclay in November 2021. The intention is to run the track as a GBGB licensed racing track and for it to be licensed by January 2024. The stadium is undergoing development for it to be used as a GBGB racetrack. It plans to increase racing to four times per week. Planning permission has recently been granted to the Valley Stadium to extend its clubhouse for more hospitality and veterinary facilities.

The Petitions Committee has previously heard that although registration under GBGB industry standards is likely to result in improved welfare standards, welfare organisations are concerned the increase in the number of races may result in a rise in the number of surplus dogs and injuries.

1.2. Regulation

The Animal Welfare Act 2006, (the 2006 Act) includes general animal welfare provisions. The 2006 Act allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a failure to provide for an animal's welfare needs. These provisions could apply where greyhounds are at tracks or kept at trainers' kennels.

Section 13 of the 2006 Act provides the Welsh Ministers with powers to introduce licensing schemes to protect animal welfare.

In England, regulations have been made by the Secretary of State under Section 13 of the 2006 Act; The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010. These aim to protect racing greyhounds in England and provide that all operators of greyhound racing tracks must obtain a licence.

There are currently no specific legal protections for racing greyhounds in Wales.

Keepers of greyhounds are required to comply with the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Wales) Order 2007. It is an offence to transport any animal in a way which causes, or is likely to cause, injury or unnecessary suffering to that animal.

1.3. Stakeholders' views

In September 2022 a number of animal welfare organisations - Dogs Trust, RSPCA, Blue Cross, Hope Rescue and Greyhound Rescue Wales - launched Cut the Chase, a new campaign to ban greyhound racing in the UK. They hope that Wales will set the lead for the other UK nations to follow.

The Senedd petition P-06-1253 "Ban greyhound racing in Wales" was considered by the Petitions Committee in 2022/23. The Committee collected evidence from animal welfare groups. A representative from Hope Rescue said:

Based on GBGB's own statistics for 2021, we're likely to see around 232 injuries if Valley goes ahead and becomes a GBGB track, and around 10 to 15 deaths every year. Now, that's a huge leap from the figures we're currently seeing at Valley.

The Committee also took evidence from the Valley Stadium, GBGB and Premier Greyhound Racing representatives. The former owner of the Valley Stadium, Malcolm Tams, said Hope Rescue's statistics were unfounded. He said:

We've been inspected by Caerphilly council eight times in the last 12 months, and the report is in here—they found nothing wrong with the track whatsoever. They brought an independent vet who inspected all the greyhounds and found them to be in good welfare conditions, totally in contrast to what was said by Hope—totally.

Caerphilly Council published a masterplan for Ystrad Mynach in 2019. With regards to the Valley Stadium it states:

It is ideally located to capitalise on the many visitors to the area and there is opportunity to expand and increase the potential of the site as a tourism destination. Furthermore, there is opportunity for spin-off between this site and potential hotel and restaurant development on adjacent land.

2. Welsh Government action

In response to the Committee's report on the petition P-06-1253 “Ban greyhound racing in Wales”, the Minister for Rural Affairs, Trefnydd and North Wales, Lesley Griffiths ('the Minister'), said:

We intend to consult on proposals for the licensing of activities involving animals later this year [2023]. The consultation will also seek views on how to improve the welfare of racing greyhounds in Wales.

...

A question considering a phased ban will be included in the consultation. The outcome of the consultation and what action will be taken cannot be pre-empted.

The Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW) / Welsh Government Voluntary Code of Practice for the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds explains what keepers of racing greyhounds must do to meet the standards of care the law requires.

The AWWN / Welsh Government Code of Practice for the Welfare of Dogs applies to all dogs, including greyhounds. The Code is intended to encourage all those who are responsible for dogs to adopt the highest standards.

3. Welsh Parliament action

As discussed, the Petitions Committee considered the petition [P-06-1253 “Ban greyhound racing in Wales”](#). The Committee collected evidence and concluded in [its report](#) (December 2022):

After considering the evidence from animal charities and the industry, including the steps already taken and planned to improve animal welfare, our majority conclusion is to support the growing calls for a ban on greyhound racing in Wales.

While one Member had concerns about supporting a ban, we are all agreed that the Welsh Government should consider all options when consulting on future arrangements, to ensure that the welfare of greyhounds is paramount – at all stages of their lives.

The Senedd held a debate on this petition in [Plenary on 8 March 2023](#). The Minister responded to the debate:

I have committed to consult on proposals, which will include seeking views on licensing and prohibiting greyhound racing in Wales. We will explore all options and we will take into account the views of the public and all stakeholders. Whilst discussions around an outright ban are necessary and of course will attract headlines, it is imperative that we approach the topic in a reasoned and appropriate way.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.