

Cross-Party Group on Animal Welfare - Grŵp Trawsbleidiol ar Les Anifeiliaid

Date: 19/02/2024

Location: Zoom

In Attendance

Carolyn Thomas MS
John Griffiths MS (Attended by Support Staff Lily Gray)
Jayne Bryant MS (Attended by Support Staff Lily Gray)
Dan Rose (Support Staff, Carolyn Thomas MS)

Shahinoor Alom (Secretariat, League Against Cruel Sports)

Clare Hutchinson (BBC Wales)
Paul Reynolds (British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council)
Fiona Pereira (Animal Aid)
Billie-Jade Thomas (RSPCA Cymru)
Vanessa Waddon (Hope Rescue)
Alex Findlow (Dogs Trust UK)
Ed Hayes (The Kennel Club)
Daryl Gordon (Cats Protection UK)
Tim Doyle (Greyhound Rescue Wales)
Joan Whittaker (Almost Home Dog Rescue)
Richard Woodward (Blue Cross)
Dewi John (Dogs Trust UK)
Ann Woods (Flintshire Local Voluntary Council)
Mike Bird (RSPCA, Aberconwy)

Apologies

Peredur Owen Griffiths
Llyr Gruffydd
Delyth Jewell
Bronwen Dennis (Blue Cross)

Summary of Meeting

Introduction, approval of minutes and update on actions.

CT introduced the meeting of the Cross-Party Group by thanking all those in attendance. She highlighted the ongoing Welsh Government consultation on Licensing of Animal Welfare Establishments as it will soon end on Friday 1st March. The theme for this CPG will be on Animal Welfare Establishments.

Following on from the actions of the previous meeting:

- CT has raised the issue of allowing pets for private landlords at a Loyal Government & Housing Committee. The committee will be exploring that further. Cat's Protection and Dogs Trust will be giving evidence to the committee on 13th March.
- A joint CPG with children, poverty and women to be considered with fellow chairs in relation to domestic abuse after the next AGM.

BBC investigation on Capricorn Rescue

Clare Hutchinson, Journalist at BBC

CH worked on the Week In, Week Out programme since 2016 up until 2023 and was involved in producing a programme on an animal sanctuary in North Wales that had some concerns around welfare and other issues at the sanctuary.

There was an undercover reporter who was sent into the animal sanctuary, Capricorn Animal Rescue and this journalist found around 350 animals at the rescue. There would be 1 member of staff most of the time and a small number of volunteers that would look after the large mixture of animals.

The main issues found were dirty conditions, overcrowding, lack of access to water and poor disease control. The undercover reporter highlighted that he was given a very minimal induction into what to do. She then described how there were cats overcrowded, sharing a space, sitting in their own faeces with clear signs of disease.

There were other animals like chickens, rabbits, squirrels, pigeons and reptiles. It was a huge range of different animal types with low numbers of staff and volunteers helping. These animals had very limited access to water. The reporter showed the footage to a vet who mentioned that there were clear signs of poor disease control.

There were also concerns with regards to management of the charity as they were bringing in substantial amounts of money. In 2015, they raised around £250,000 through charity shops, donations, and legacies. Their report led to a Charity Commission investigation which eventually led to the owner of the charity being disqualified and banned from being able to run a charity again.

AW from FLVC mentioned that “the volunteers were doing their very best in just atrocious conditions” as they were approached by volunteers seeking support from the voluntary council.

DR shared his experiences as a volunteer at Capricorn and raises concerns around animal welfare establishments regulations in that a great deal of experience and understanding is required when licensing, ensuring that there is a robust and rigorous regime in places. This is something for Welsh Government to include in the consideration of regulation.

No actions from this item.

Animal Welfare Establishment regulations in Scotland. **Paul Reynolds, Deputy Chair, British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council**

PD gave a brief introduction to The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. It came into force in September 2021 in Scotland, and it introduced a revised licensing scheme for some animal-related activities. It also replaced previous legislation, covering pet sales and dog breeding. Local authorities were given powers to license with the exception to organisations based outside of Scotland but carrying out their licensable activity within Scotland. In that instance, the Scottish Government would be the licensing authority.

In Scotland, an animal welfare establishment is a place where animals that have been abandoned, or otherwise separated from their keepers, or sick, or injured or captured animals that were previously living in a wild state are kept for care. Wildlife rescue centres are also included unlike in England. Animal welfare establishment operators only require a license. If a threshold number of animals are kept at the animal welfare establishment, this threshold will be met. If, for example, 5 dogs or 5 equines, or 5 animals, comprising a mix of dogs and equines, or a mixture of 8 animals of any type except any animal under the age of 4 months, born within the AWE or received into the AWE with its mother.

The general conditions of the licence looked at 10 different areas which PR talked through. These were:

1. Licence display
2. Records
3. Number of Animals
4. Staffing
5. Suitable environment
6. Suitable diet
7. Enrichment and training of animals
8. Animal Handling and interactions
9. Protection from pain, suffering, injury and disease
10. Emergencies

No actions from this item.

Campaign to ban greyhound racing

Cut the Chase Coalition

VW gave an overview on the latest of the campaign. She mentioned that Valley Track Watch as well as a volunteer are both monitoring incidents as dogs fall during races. The volunteer is at the track watching closely where the incidents on the track occur.

VW mentioned that the response was coming along very well and the fact that the only greyhound racing track is now licenced by the GBGB actually helps the case further that regulations hasn't improved welfare to a satisfactory standard. There will be no answer with regard to licencing of trainers as the view of the coalition is that no regulation is going to be able to protect greyhounds fully.

There was a great turnout of members of Senedd for photos.

TD mentioned that Greyhound Rescue Wales has submitted a joint letter with Forever Hounds Trust to the welfare team at the GBGB raising concerns about some of the dogs recently taken in and they way they've been kept prior to re-homing. GRW are quite keen for the GBGB to carry out an inspection.

JW mentioned in her response that she's focusing on the social and psychological damage caused onto the greyhounds.

SA mentioned that the League Against Cruel Sports have shared an email to action for supporters to participate in the consultation, also sharing it on social media with sponsored ads.

No actions from this item.

Any Other Business

- Next CPG will be the AGM held on 22nd April 2024.