

Petitioner submission of 2 February 2024

PE2058/B: Require all dog boarding kennels to install smoke detectors, smoke alarms and sprinkler systems

This petition came about after myself and four other dog owners tragically lost our dogs in a kennel fire in June 2023.

This traumatic loss continues to affect us, our families and everyone who loved and cared for our pets. The huge response to our petition would suggest it also resonated deeply with the Scottish public who shared their sympathies and concerns with us.

Sadly, it is not until something affects you so deeply and personally that you dig deeper into things and truly understand how the mechanics of things work. I personally feel guilty and stupid for not researching things in more depth, but as the kennels were licensed by East Renfrewshire Council and had fulfilled their criteria in getting a licence, I wrongly assumed it would be safe. They had 5 star reviews on social media platforms so we all felt that it was a good choice for our much loved pets. The dogs loved going there and enjoyed running about and socialising with the other dogs. It never entered anyone's mind that such a tragedy could occur and erroneously we all assumed that the boarding kennels would have required to have adequate fire safety procedures in place in order to get a licence to trade.

However, subsequently we have discovered, and sadly too late for our pets that there is only guidance in place for the councils around fire safety in non-residential premises but it is not legislation and therefore open to interpretation by each local authority.

The current Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 only requires local authorities to be satisfied that appropriate steps will be taken by the licence holder to ensure the protection of animals in case of fire or another emergency. East Renfrewshire's only requirement was that a fire extinguisher was on the premises.

The fire that killed the dogs broke out overnight. The kennel building was approximately one hundred metres from where the owner lived and we have been advised that the fire had been burning for over 2 hours before

the alarm was raised. The kennels were destroyed by this point and all the dogs had sadly perished.

We feel that if there had been smoke alarms, smoke detection systems or sprinklers in place then the dogs would have stood a chance of survival. A fire extinguisher on the premises was of no use as no one knew there was a fire until it was too late.

Scottish Fire and Rescue did not send fire investigation crews to the scene and only extinguished the fire. A copy of their report obtained by us under Freedom of Information said they thought it was arson but they chose not to investigate further. Their report also says there were no victims as dogs are only treated as possessions in Scotland. As you can imagine, this was very upsetting to read and we still have no explanation of what happened that night, and absolutely no chance of closure.

We are aware that the Scottish Government have recently consulted on proposals to revoke the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963 and instead regulate animal boarding under The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 where the guidance says *“Suitable firefighting, prevention and detection equipment must be provided and maintained in good working order. Any buildings must have at least one working smoke detector (or other suitable fire detection system) installed in a suitable location on each separate level / floor of the property and there must be at least one carbon monoxide detector.*

Condition: Any such emergency plan must include details of the emergency measures to be taken for the extrication of the animals should the premises become uninhabitable and an emergency telephone list that includes the fire service and police.”

We would therefore request that the committee consider the proposals made by the Scottish Government and our petition and look to make effective change in order that we can improve upon the outdated legislation that is currently in place. We believe the regulations and safety within animal boarding establishments require to be changed to hopefully prevent tragedies like what happened to our poor dogs happening in the future.