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Your ref: 631.0522

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee Clerks
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



William Telford
Detective Sergeant
Wildlife Crime Coordinator
Specialist Crime Division

Dear Convener

I refer to the correspondence from the *Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee* dated 28th June 2022 regarding the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill. This correspondence requested a response to two questions. I have outlined both questions and responses below:

- 1. Does Police Scotland have a view on the code of practice for hunts, introduced following a suggestion by Lord Bonomy, in terms of its effectiveness for enforcement?**

It is the view of Police Scotland that the code of practise for hunts provides no benefit to enforcement activities as it is not a statutory requirement. For example the code states the hunts “*should inform the Police of the intention to carry out the activity*”. Such notifications are made sporadically, and where this does occur it is by hunts that would routinely do so prior to the publication of the code of practise. Likewise the code states hunts should “*make available to the Police the details of all active participants in the activity*” and “*maintain a record of those involved together with the details of the outcomes of the activity*”. However, requests from Police Scotland for such information have previously been refused.

- 2. Regarding the ban on trail hunting, you referred to logistical issues posed by the exemption to allow the training of no more than two dogs. Would Police Scotland wish to elaborate on these logistical issues and any wider implications this ban may have on the training of police dogs?**

Police Scotland utilise dogs to locate cadavers, and these dogs are trained using animal based scent trails. Training sessions usually comprise 3-4 dogs but sometimes as many as six dogs, each with their own separate handler. Such training sessions occur around

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four times each year and may take place within a building or area of land around 10 acres in size. No more than two dogs will follow one trail.

It is not clear from the bill whether these circumstances would be considered as more than two dogs being trained using an animal based scent. However, if this format is deemed not to be legal practise Police Scotland may be required to amend its training practises, for example increasing the number of courses. This will likely have an impact on resourcing. However the full extent of the impact is unknown at this time.

I hope I have provided clarity regarding these points, but if you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Detective Sergeant Billy Telford
Wildlife Crime Coordinator
Specialist Crime Division

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