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## Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

# Stage 1 report on the Greyhound Racing (Offences) (Scotland) Bill



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# Rural Affairs and Islands Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, with the exception of matters relating to land reform, natural resources and peatland, Scottish Land Commission, Crown Estate Scotland, and Royal Botanic Garden.



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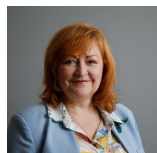
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# Introduction

1. The [Greyhound Racing \(Offences\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 23 April 2025. It is a member's bill and was introduced by Mark Ruskell MSP (the member in charge of the Bill).
2. In commencing its stage 1 scrutiny, the Committee [ran a targeted call for views between 29 August to 10 October 2025 to those organisations who had responded to the member in charge's consultation on the draft Bill proposal](#).
3. A detailed [summary of responses to the Committee's call for views, prepared by SPICe, can be read online](#).
4. In August 2025, the [Scottish Government set out its support of the general principles of the Bill in a memorandum from the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity](#). The Minister stated that, "as the Bill's focus is only to prohibit the racing of greyhounds on such [oval] tracks, we are content to support its stated aim, which is to protect the welfare of greyhounds raced on oval tracks in Scotland".
5. The Committee took oral evidence from [the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity on 5 November 2025](#) and from [the member in charge on 12 November 2025](#).

## Greyhound racing in Scotland

6. Reportedly, there were once 20 greyhound tracks operating in Scotland but the numbers gradually fell during the late 20th century and the last racetrack to operate in Scotland, also thought to be the only remaining independent track in Great Britain, is Thornton Greyhound Stadium in Fife. A Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) racetrack at Shawfield in Rutherglen in South Lanarkshire ceased operating in 2020.
7. Thornton is not licensed by the GBGB, which operates an industry licensing scheme for greyhound racing, and there is no requirement for it to be licensed by any other body. Whilst racing took place earlier in 2025, the Thornton Racetrack website states that there is currently no racing taking place. It is unclear if this applies to all racing activity e.g. trials (for timing purposes) and training use.

# Overview of the Bill

8. The policy memorandum states that the member in charge "considers that there is an inherent, evidence-based risk of injury or fatality of greyhounds involved in racing" and that "existing animal welfare measures have not sufficiently protected racing greyhounds from harm".
9. The Bill would create two primary offences to protect greyhounds from harm, and which would, effectively, ban greyhound racing in Scotland by making it an offence for:
  - a person who owns or is responsible for a greyhound, to "knowingly cause" that greyhound to run on a racetrack or "knowingly permit" another person to do so.
  - a person who owns or is responsible for the operation of a racetrack, to "knowingly cause or permit" another person to cause a greyhound to run on that racetrack.
10. The offences would apply to any racetrack used for the purpose of racing greyhounds that is oval in shape, with powers for Scottish Ministers to, by regulations, modify the definition of "racetrack" to modify the ban to include "other categories of premises used for the purpose of the competing of running greyhounds". The policy memorandum sets out this is because evidence shows the risks of injuries and fatalities in racing are strongly linked to the typical oval track design.
11. Maximum penalties for those convicted of an offence under the Bill would be:
  - on summary conviction, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine not exceeding £20,000 (or both).
  - or on conviction on indictment, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years or a fine (or both).
12. The Bill makes provision for enforcement and for courts to issue deprivation, disqualification and seizure orders in relation to greyhounds. These would, for example, order the removal of greyhounds from a person's care or disqualify a person from owning a greyhound following conviction of a relevant offence.
13. [SPICe has published a detailed briefing on the Bill](#) which provides further information about the Bill as well as on the background context of greyhound racing in Scotland and in the rest of the UK.

# Background to the Committee's consideration of the Bill

## Petition PE1758

14. [Petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland](#) was submitted to the Scottish Parliament by Gill Docherty on behalf of Scotland Against Greyhound Exploitation (SAGE) on 23 October 2019. The petition “calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to put an end to greyhound racing in Scotland”.
15. The session 5 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee did not have time to consider the petition before the 2021 Scottish parliamentary election and agreed to keep the petition open and to include it in its legacy report to its successor committee.
16. In 2022, this Committee decided to undertake an inquiry on the issue, taking a 'whole-life approach' by considering the welfare of greyhounds bred for racing across their life, from breeding and early life, through their racing years and into retirement.
17. Whilst the Committee was considering the petition, Mark Ruskell lodged a draft proposal for a member’s bill to ban greyhound racing in Scotland. When the Minister gave evidence to the Committee on the petition, he stated the Scottish Government’s intention to wait for parliamentary scrutiny of the proposed member's bill to conclude before taking a decision on the issue of greyhound racing. The Committee, therefore, agreed to wait for parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill to be concluded before the Scottish Government responded to its interim report.
18. The Committee published its [Interim report on petition PE1758: End greyhound racing in Scotland](#) on 27 November 2024, setting out the evidence taken over the course of the inquiry and the Committee's conclusions and recommendations relating to the other aspects of the petition inquiry which it did not anticipate would be part of the proposed Bill.

## Scottish Government statutory licensing scheme

19. Currently no licence is required to operate a greyhound racetrack in Scotland. In addition, there are no specific statutory animal welfare standards or legislation applicable to greyhound racing in Scotland, beyond the general protections in key animal welfare legislation, principally, the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. During 2023, the [Scottish Government consulted on introducing statutory licensing for various activities involving animals, including greyhound racing](#), to ensure consistent welfare standards and regulatory oversight. The proposals focused on creating a single framework administered by local authorities, with clear conditions, enforcement powers, and penalties for non-compliance.
20. When he gave evidence to the Committee on the Bill on 5 November 2025, the Minister confirmed the Scottish Government would not introduce a licensing

scheme for greyhound racing at that time. He went on to say that licensing may still be an option in future, for example “if somebody brings forward a straight track”.

## Proposal for a member’s bill

21. Mark Ruskell lodged his draft proposal for a member’s bill to promote the welfare of greyhounds by introducing an offence of permitting a greyhound to race at racetracks in Scotland on 7 February 2024. Between February to May 2024 the member in charge of the Bill [consulted on proposals for the Bill](#) , supported by the Scottish Parliament’s Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU) . A [consultation summary and analysis of responses was published on 26 June 2024](#) and a final proposal for the Bill lodged on the same day. [Further information about the draft proposal is available on the Scottish Parliament’s web pages](#) .

# The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill

22. [The Prohibition of Greyhound Racing \(Wales\) Bill](#) was introduced to the Senedd on 29 September 2025. The Bill provides that it is an offence 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. At the time of the Committee's consideration of this report, the general principles of the Bill have been agreed and the Bill is at stage 2.

## Consideration of the Bill by other parliamentary committees

23. A delegated powers memorandum, which sets out the member in charge's reasons for proposing the delegated powers in the Bill and for the procedures chosen, was published to accompany the Bill. [The Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee reported on the delegated powers memorandum on 25 June 2025 and concluded that the proposed delegated powers were acceptable in principle and that it was content with the proposed procedures.](#)
24. The Finance and Public Administration (FPA) Committee considered [the financial memorandum which sets out the Bill's estimated costs and financial implications.](#) [The FPA Committee held a call for views, which received one response.](#) and then agreed to take no further steps.

# Committee consideration

## The case for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland

25. Throughout both the Committee's petition and stage 1 inquiries, it heard differing views from stakeholders around the evidence on whether racing presents an inherent welfare risk to greyhounds.
26. In May 2023, as part of the Committee's inquiry into the petition, animal welfare organisations strongly argued that greyhound racing does risk animal welfare and that there is a clear case for a ban. [The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission \(SAWC\) also gave its view, in its 2023 report](#) and in evidence to the Committee, that, on average, a dog bred for racing in Scotland currently has poorer welfare than the average of other dogs.
27. When the Minister gave evidence to the Committee on 22 May 2024, he stated that the statistics published by the GBGB relating to injuries and fatalities were "unacceptable", "must be addressed" and that they made up the "central argument for prohibiting greyhound racing in Scotland".
28. The Minister also stated, however, that "at this time" the Scottish Government was "not persuaded of the need to ban greyhound racing in Scotland" on the basis that it is "not convinced that such a ban is a proportionate and fair response to the animal welfare concerns arising from the practice". The Minister also queried the relevance of such statistics to the welfare of greyhounds at Thornton, telling members that "we must therefore caution against making assumptions about the current situation in Scotland and legislating to ban a sport, however contentious, without a sound evidence base for doing so."
29. The Minister also alluded to the social and community aspects of racing at Thornton track, telling the Committee that "I do not want the Government to ban something that is part of the social fabric of that community based on things that we have not fully explored, so I would like to explore it further".
30. In its interim report, the Committee reported that it agreed with the Minister's view that the statistics relating to racing at GBGB tracks are "unacceptable" and "must be addressed". In relation to racing at independent tracks and Thornton, the Committee noted the Minister's view that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that the risks are the same as those at GBGB-regulated tracks but shared the concerns expressed by stakeholders about the lack of data for injuries, fatalities and associated risk at the independent track at Thornton. The Committee asked the Scottish Government to consider how data on injuries, fatalities and associated risk could be gathered from the Thornton track.
31. Throughout the Committee's stage 1 inquiry, the concept of the inherent risk in racing, regardless of regulation, was again strongly put forward by stakeholders. Several responses to the call for views said that a full ban on greyhound racing was the only way to address the animal welfare issues associated with it, and that alternatives such as increasing regulation via licensing would not be sufficient. For example, the Dogs Trust said that licensing or industry reform is "not the answer" and would not address inherent issues associated with the industry, citing that

regulation has not been effective in protecting greyhound welfare in England.

32. In its response, however, Thornton challenged the view that greyhound racing is inherently dangerous, claiming that “Thornton Greyhound track when it was racing was one of the safest tracks in the UK, in the last 5 years there have been very few serious injuries”.
33. In [its letter to the Committee, dated 14 November 2025, the GBGB](#) argued that licensing, rather than a ban, would better protect animal welfare. The GBGB argued that the Bill lacks a strong evidence base and questioned how industry stakeholders had been consulted. It highlighted its 2024 data that it suggested shows record low injury rates and consistent fatality rates. It also highlighted the recent progress which has been made under its welfare strategy ‘*A Good Life for Every Greyhound*’, including improvements in veterinary care, education, and nutrition, since the SAWC report was published.
34. When he gave evidence to the Committee on the Bill on 5 November 2025, the Minister confirmed the Scottish Government’s view that a case has now been made that a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland would be a “proportionate response” to the inherent welfare risks associated with racing on oval tracks. He explained that—
- ” The Bill that is now before the Scottish Parliament is narrower in scope in that it seeks specifically to prohibit the racing of greyhounds on oval tracks. The stated aim of the Bill is to address the inherent welfare risks associated with the running of dogs at speed on oval tracks. Even with good practice, those risks cannot be eliminated entirely, and licensing would not eliminate them.
35. Members of the Committee pressed the Minister on the reasons why the Scottish Government now supports a ban on greyhound racing at independent tracks, given the absence of any additional evidence about the welfare risks at independent tracks. The Minister told the Committee that—
- ” When I gave evidence to the Committee at that time [May 2023], I had not met Mr Ruskell or looked at the specific considerations in relation to greyhound racing on an oval track which is the aspect that the bill is now focused on.
36. The Minister went on to state that “I am now convinced that there is enough inherent danger in oval tracks and that enough welfare concerns are raised to say that that should no longer be allowed”.
37. Scottish Government officials further explained that, in reaching its decision to support the general principles of the Bill, the Government had considered evidence provided to the RAI Committee in its inquiry, evidence provided to the Senedd in relation to the Welsh Bill, GBGB-published injury and fatality data including the most recent for 2024, and responses to the Scottish Government’s licensing proposal.
38. The Minister acknowledged the Bill would affect those for whom racing greyhounds at Thornton track was “less about serious competition and more about companionship”, telling members that “we must be cognisant of the Bill’s impact on such social and community aspects”.
39. On 12 November 2025, the member in charge set out his reasons for calling for a ban, stating it is the “only way forward”. He went on—

” The issue comes on the back of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 not being able to address the issues that surround the racing of greyhounds in Scotland. That is partly because greyhound racing is inherently a lawful activity, so it has been difficult to prove that there has been unnecessary suffering of greyhounds. The 2006 act has not worked, in that it has not dealt with that inherent suffering. Therefore, the only way forward, as I see it, is to bring in the offence of racing a greyhound.

40. Some members questioned the need for a ban, given that it seems racing at Thornton has been suspended. The Minister acknowledged that greyhound racing seems to be less popular than in the past but highlighted the member in charge’s concern that a track could open in the future.

41. The Member in charge elaborated on this concern when he gave evidence on 12 November 2025—

” I point to what happened in Wales, which had an unlicensed track—the last unlicensed track in Wales. It sought investment, registered with GBGB and, as a result of that, started televising races around the world. The number of races went up, the number of dogs involved went up and, as a result, the number of injuries and deaths went up. That might change, if the Welsh Senedd approves a bill to end greyhound racing in Wales.

If we do not agree to the bill, the same could happen here: the last remaining unlicensed track could get licensed, and, based on the figures that come from GBGB, I do not think that that would lead to a welfare improvement. If anything, it could result in more dogs being raced, more dogs dying and more dogs being injured. That is the risk.”

42. **In its interim report, the Committee set out its view that a licensing scheme – under consideration at the time – would be unlikely to address the welfare concerns associated with greyhound racing. The Committee also noted the Minister’s view, at that time, that there was not sufficient evidence to conclude that the welfare risks at independent tracks were the same as those at GBGB-regulated tracks. Members shared the concerns expressed by stakeholders about the lack of data for injuries, fatalities and associated risk at the independent track at Thornton and asked the Scottish Government to consider how data on injuries, fatalities and associated risk could be gathered from the Thornton track.**

43. **As part of this stage 1 inquiry, the Committee has sought to establish whether additional evidence is now available to sufficiently support the case for a ban of greyhound racing at independent, as well as GBGB tracks. The Committee notes the Minister’s view now that there are inherent welfare risks associated with greyhound racing at speed on oval tracks which would not be eliminated entirely with good practice or a licensing scheme.**

44. **Following the Committee's stage 1 inquiry, some members did not feel a case has been made in support of a ban.**

45. **The Committee asks the Scottish Government to provide further information about the evidence base underpinning its support for the Bill, including its reasons for now assuming welfare risks are comparable between independent and GBGB tracks. The Committee asks for this information ahead of the stage 1 debate.**

## **Impact of the Bill, if passed, on the welfare of greyhounds kennelled and trained in Scotland for racing in England and/or Wales**

46. Sections 1 and 2 would create offences relating to racing greyhounds in Scotland only. As set out earlier in this report, however, there is currently no greyhound racing at the remaining greyhound racing track in Scotland, Thornton track.
47. When asked about this, both the Minister and member in charge argued that the Bill would prevent racing recommencing at Thornton or for another track to open in the future. It was noted that Thornton, in its submission, suggested that, were it not for the "undeserved vilification of our sport since 2019", Thornton "would have been racing under GBGB rules".
48. The policy memorandum for the Bill notes, however, that "it is understood that there are 27 GBGB-registered greyhound breeders and trainers in Scotland". These trainers train and kennel their greyhounds in Scotland, but travel to England and/or Wales to race them. The Committee took evidence from two GBGB-registered Scottish trainers as part of its petition inquiry who both confirmed they had 40 greyhounds of all ages. The Bill would not prohibit the racing of greyhounds which are kennelled in Scotland, from being transported to race at tracks in other parts of the UK.
49. At the Committee's meeting on 5 November 2025, members asked the Minister for his view of the impact of the Bill on the welfare of greyhounds raced in England and/or Wales by GBGB-registered trainers based in Scotland. The Minister responded that the scope of the Bill "is entirely up to [the member in charge]".
50. In its petition inquiry and interim report, the Committee made a number of recommendations relating to enhancing racing greyhounds' welfare. These included recommendations relating to transportation, traceability, kennelling. If the Bill is passed, these issues would still affect those greyhounds which are trained and kennelled in Scotland but raced in other parts of the UK.
51. When he attended the Committee's meeting on 5 November 2025, the Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government has "no plans to introduce specific regulations on other aspects of greyhound racing in Scotland, including the keeping,

breeding, kennelling, training and transport of greyhounds”. He added that “the other activities that you are talking about are already covered by the general provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and other legislation that applies to all dogs”.

**52. The Committee notes that, whilst the Bill would have a very limited impact given there is currently no greyhound racing in Scotland, the Bill would both prevent racing recommencing at the Thornton track and prevent another (oval) racetrack from opening elsewhere in Scotland.**

**53. The Committee notes the Bill would not prevent greyhounds kennelled in Scotland from being raced in other parts of the UK. Given the Minister’s concerns about the “inherent risk” of greyhound racing on oval tracks, the Committee asks the Scottish Government for its response to the different level of protection afforded to these greyhounds as a result of a ban on racing in Scotland.**

**54. The Committee asks the Scottish Government, after stage 1 of this Bill has been completed, to provide a full response to its interim report on petition PE1758.**

## **Section 1 and 2 offences (and penalties)**

55. Section 1 of the Bill would make it an offence to allow a greyhound to run on a racetrack and section 2 would make it an offence to operate a racetrack for the racing of greyhounds (where a racetrack means premises provided for the purpose of running greyhounds on a track that is oval in shape). Sections 1(2) and 2(2) set out the respective penalties.
56. This is a different approach than that proposed in the Prohibition of Greyhound Racing (Wales) Bill which makes it an offence for an operator of a track to use it for greyhound racing, and to be involved in organising greyhound racing, but does not propose an offence for a greyhound owner to race their greyhound.
57. All animal welfare organisations who responded to the call for views supported sections 1 and 2, citing the inherent cruelty and risks associated with greyhound racing, particularly focusing on injuries and fatalities evidenced by GBGB data. GBGB and Thornton did not agree with these sections of the Bill.
58. During the 5 November 2025 session with the Minister, a Scottish Government official said the Government agreed with the approach in the Bill of both criminalising people responsible for a greyhound from racing their dog, as well as criminalising the operation of greyhound racing at track level.
59. The Committee asked the member in charge about his rationale for the approach in the Bill to criminalise both the owner and track operator when he gave evidence on

12 November 2025. The member in charge explained that—

” ... we believe that [approach] is more comprehensive. We do not want to create a loophole that means that the track owner can be penalised but those who are racing the dogs, putting them in the traps and providing them are not included. It is a more thorough approach.

60. When he gave evidence to the Committee on 5 November 2025, the Minister confirmed the Scottish Government is content that the penalties proposed are in line with key animal welfare offences in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and agreed there shouldn't be bespoke penalties, stating also that it would be up to the judiciary to determine maximum penalties.

61. When asked about the penalties, the member in charge stated those set out in the Bill are based on those set out in existing legislation.

**62. The Committee agrees, if a ban were to be introduced, with the approach taken in the Bill to make it an offence for both the greyhound owner and track operator to allow a greyhound to race.**

**63. The Committee is content with the provisions related to penalties set out in the Bill.**

## Definition of racetrack

64. Section 1 of the Bill defines a 'racetrack' used for racing greyhounds as oval but allows this definition to be amended via secondary legislation.

65. Some respondents raised concerns about a potential loophole which would allow racing on other types of track to develop in the future, such as 'figure-of-eight' tracks or straight tracks..

66. Other respondents viewed the approach as pragmatic and evidence-based. OneKind, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA), SAGE and the League Against Cruel Sports agreed with the approach taken in the Bill. In its submission, OneKind stated—

” The evidence that greyhound racing poses an inherent risk of injury and death is from oval tracks, as that is how almost all racing is conducted. Racing at speed around an oval track increases risk of injury because:

- dogs are raced anticlockwise, putting strain on their left foreleg/right hindleg.
- centrifugal force pulls greyhounds towards the outside of the track so if they fall, they often crash into the fence; and
- greyhounds slow as they enter bends and bunch together to keep the lure in sight. The resulting congestion frequently leads to collisions and falls.

67. However, the Scottish SPCA suggested there is a need for clarity on other forms of racing. It said that, while the Bill “rightly focuses on oval greyhound racetracks”, it is important to recognise that other types of racing, such as straight-track events, whippet racing, or unregulated forms of racing, can also raise welfare concerns. It recommended that the Scottish Government continues to gather evidence on all racing activities involving dogs in Scotland.

68. When he gave evidence, the Minister said the evidence about the welfare risks of greyhound racing in Scotland relate to oval tracks and that, while there are a small number of straight tracks in other countries, there isn't the evidence of the same degree of risk to justify a ban on straight tracks. The Minister said that the Scottish Government would take a view on racing on a straight track if one was opened in Scotland including considering the option of licensing.

69. The Committee picked up these points on 12 November 2025 with the member in charge, when he contended that “the fact is that, in the industry, the act of greyhound racing takes place on an oval track”. In relation to other types of track racing potentially emerging in the future, he stated—

” ...it is important that there be a provision in the Bill for ministers to be able to reflect on the evidence and change the definition of the track, should that be necessary and should there be an implication in relation to the welfare of greyhounds.

**70. The Committee notes that the available evidence relating to the welfare risks associated with greyhound racing is most strongly associated with oval tracks; accordingly, the Committee agrees that, if the Bill is passed, the ban should only apply to oval tracks. The Committee notes the Scottish Ministers would have the power to extend the offences to other tracks, if required.**

## Enforcement provisions

71. Section 3 provides that enforcement would be the responsibility of Police Scotland. Sections 5 to 9 make provision for enforcement, deprivation orders, disqualification orders, and seizure orders in relation to greyhounds and will ensure that the courts

have sufficient power and flexibility to impose appropriate sanctions on anyone found guilty of the Bill's two primary offences.

72. The Scottish Government's memorandum on the Bill states that it would seek, via amendments, to replace the enforcement provisions to apply the existing provisions for animal welfare offences under Part 2 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006<sup>i</sup>. The memorandum states this would "bring the Bill into line with the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, as opposed to the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023, which the Bill has been modelled on".
73. In its response to the call for views, the GBGB raised concerns about how deprivation or seizure orders would work in practice, stating that they "present a serious threat to greyhound welfare". It said that, whilst those provisions require the court to have "considered the need to ensure the welfare of the greyhound", no details are given as to how that would be assessed, and how welfare would be safeguarded in the case of court-ordered 'sale' or 'another disposal' of a greyhound.
74. On 5 November 2025, the Minister confirmed that, if the Bill progresses, the Scottish Government would seek to streamline the enforcement process to avoid the need to establish new court systems and processes, stating that there is suitable capability in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 to allow any enforcement to take place.
75. When the member in charge gave evidence on 12 November 2025, NGBU officials explained that the provisions in the Bill are consistent with similar order-making powers in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023 but tailored to the specifics of the proposed offences.
76. On both 5 and 12 November 2025, the member in charge confirmed he was in discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish SPCA about amending the Bill to allocate enforcement powers or responsibilities to local authorities in addition to Police Scotland.

**77. The Committee is content with the Bill's provisions in sections 3 – 9 on enforcement, deprivation orders, disqualification orders, and seizure orders. The Committee notes the Scottish Government's intention to amend the Bill to streamline the provisions and ensure they are consistent with existing animal welfare legislation.**

**78. The Committee requests the member in charge provide an update to the Committee, ahead of stage 2, on how discussions are developing with COSLA and the Scottish SPCA regarding extending responsibility for enforcement.**

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<sup>i</sup> Greyhound welfare falls under the scope of Part 2 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. The 2006 Act applies to all people responsible for animals, including breeders, trainers, and owners of racing greyhounds and those in charge of animals for rescue or re-homing.

## Commencement, transition and review

79. Section 13 provides that the Bill's provisions would come into force after a period of 12 months from Royal Assent.
80. In its written evidence, Say No to Greyhound Racing in Scotland suggested that Scotland should be able to introduce an immediate ban. It argued this would be due to the lower number of dogs in Scotland that would need to be rehomed than would be the case if a ban were introduced in other parts of the UK.
81. In its memorandum in August 2025, however, the Scottish Government confirmed it would seek to amend the Bill to provide for the Scottish Ministers to specify the commencement date by regulations.
82. The Committee explored the issue of support for those associated with greyhound racing in Scotland as part of the transition to a ban. On 5 November 2025, in response to concerns previously raised regarding the potential rehoming of greyhounds, the Minister sought to reassure the Committee—
- ” For some time now, most owners who go to the Thornton track have kept their greyhounds more as pets than as competitive racing dogs. On that basis, we do not anticipate significant displacement, nor do we expect a major rehoming challenge to arise.
83. In terms of supporting the Thornton track business, the Minister conceded that he had not spoken to the owners of the business but that he would “absolutely endeavour to do that”. The Minister undertook to update the Committee on these discussions.
84. On 12 November 2025, the Committee asked the member in charge about any proposed arrangements to support a transition to a ban. The member stated his understanding that there had been two full-time equivalent employees but that it is not clear whether they are still in employment.
85. The Bill does not provide for a review of the operation of the legislation but some calls were made to the Committee for this to be included. OneKind said that the impact of the ban should be monitored, and the next government should act swiftly to alter the legislation if it appears that racing is being displaced onto other track designs or dog welfare otherwise compromised.
86. Similarly, the Dogs Trust suggested a review should be undertaken after an adequate timeframe (suggesting after two years, or no more than five years), including consideration of whether there has been a rise in other breeds used in racing, or evidence of illegal underground activity.

**87. The Committee notes the Scottish Government's intention to amend the Bill's commencement provisions to specify the commencement date by regulations. The Committee is content with this.**

**88. The Committee asks the Scottish Government for an update on any**

**discussions it has had with Thornton track management regarding a transition to a ban.**

89. **The Committee notes some animal welfare organisations' request for the Bill to be amended to require a review of the operation of the legislation. The Committee asks the Scottish Government for its response to this suggestion before stage 2.**

## Conclusion

90. **Some members felt the member in charge has not made a case for a ban on greyhound racing in Scotland. These members also felt the Bill would not address the welfare concerns raised in relation to greyhound racing. These members do not support the general principles of the Bill.**

91. **The Committee supports the general principles of the Bill.<sup>ii</sup>**

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**ii Finlay Carson MSP, Tim Eagle MSP, Rhoda Grant MSP and Beatrice Wishart MSP do not support the general principles of the Bill.**

