



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01776

Name of petitioner

Maryann Parry-Jones

Petition title

Dogs are not inanimate objects

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to change the classification of dogs to sentient beings from inanimate objects, for the purposes of legal action on dog theft.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have met with my local MSP representatives Ben Macpherson from SNP and Diedre Brock SNP regarding this petition who are supportive of this action. This is currently being taken to the Cabinet Secretary of Justice and I am currently awaiting a response.

Petition background information

Under current legislation, the theft of a pet is treated in the exact same manner as the theft of an inanimate object such as a mobile phone. It would appear that dog theft in particular is an ever-increasing issue within Scotland, which citizens are becoming extremely worried about. Police Scotland could not comment on the statistics when asked through a freedom of information request, further demonstrating that it is clearly not seen as an issue by law enforcement. The minimum penalty is usually applied to such offenders, which commonly only results in a fine. This is unacceptable as the bond between a human and their beloved pet is not taken into account during the prosecution of such offenders.

Furthermore, as the minimum penalties are often applied this conveys to such offenders that the price for committing such a crime is not heavy, and thus the law is not acting as much of a deterrent. In addition, the criminals involved in such acts will most likely use the stolen dogs in further criminal acts, such as dog fighting, baiting in dog fighting, and over-breeding in unsanitary conditions.

Based on all of the information above, it is recommended that legislation be created in order to combat the issue effectively. The bond that can exist between humans and dogs is far greater than the bond between a human and an inanimate object, and this should be reflected in Scottish Law.

I run a project called the Scottish Dog Walking Awareness Project. Through this project I raise awareness of dog safety and owner responsibility. I currently have 1,200 members since starting up in August 2019. I speak with dog owners in parks also about potential risks they may not be aware of, for example, how to prevent being a target of dog theft.

I started this project to help raise awareness about the increase of dog thefts in the UK. When owners are out walking their beloved pets, dog owners don't always think about the risks. Dog owners casually walk their dogs minding their own business. However, they would not know if they were a target of someone else's business. Dog theft is a big money business that criminals are capitalizing on, this includes puppy farms, theft, breeding and dog baiting. I work hard to share as much information as I can about this topic, usually handing out leaflets and putting up informative posters.

I have also met with my local Community Police Officer to discuss my current project. We spoke in great detail about how important it was for dog owners to be aware of the potential risks they may take when out walking their dogs. This can be anything from not tying dogs up outside shops to being mindful and alert when out walking.

I do this form of networking with local Police as I feel there is no real attention being spared for dog owners and current legal standing.

Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/dogrights>

Related information for petition

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/dog_thefts_7

<https://fullfact.org/law/pet-theft-whats-law/>

<https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/petssteft.html>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

20 / 01 / 2020

Comments to stimulate online discussion

How can dogs be classified as inanimate objects when humans rely on their valuable support when working as Fire & Rescue Dogs, Mountain Rescue, Police Dogs, Therapy Dogs and Guide Dogs?