

P-06-1253 Ban greyhound racing in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 07 Mawrth 2022
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Petition Number: P-06-1253

Petition title: Ban greyhound racing in Wales

Text of petition: In Wales we have one independent greyhound track racing once a week. Since April 2018, Hope Rescue & their rescue partners have taken in almost 200 surplus greyhounds from this track, 40 of which sustained injuries. There are plans for the track to become a Greyhound Board of Great Britain track, racing four times a week, greatly increasing the number of surplus dogs & injuries. Greyhound racing is inherently cruel & greyhounds have little legal protection. It is already banned in 41 US states.

More details

Campaign groups have collated data and evidence of poor welfare within greyhound racing in the U.K.

Alliance Against Greyhound Racing: <https://www.aagr.org.uk/category/why-is-greyhound-racing-cruel/>

League Against Cruel Sports: <https://www.league.org.uk/greyhound-racing>

There have also been press articles and undercover investigations in to greyhound racing:

RTE Investigates: Greyhounds Running For Their Lives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYTb2qBjIMM>



Panorama investigates: Doping and rigging bets

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0p0bH5kIAk>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jun/26/activists-renew-calls-to-end-greyhound-racing-as-400-die-despite-lockdowns>

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/greyhounds-being-shipped-pakistan-illegal-23765480>

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/13086085/british-greyhounds-racing-dogs-mass-graves-bolt/>

A recent petition is due to be debated in [UK] Parliament after securing 104,882 signatures.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/554073>

1. Background

There is currently one greyhound racing track operating in Wales - [The Valley Greyhound Stadium](#) in Ystrad Mynach, Caerphilly County. Races occur there once a week.

In the UK there are three independent race tracks which are licenced by the local authority (including The Valley Stadium) and 19 Greyhound Board for Great Britain (GBGB) licenced race tracks. GBGB tracks have additional rules designed to protect the animals' welfare (such as the presence of veterinary surgeons). GBGB doesn't have any tracks in Wales currently.

[Recently a deal has been completed](#) for sale of The Valley Stadium. The buyer's intention is to run it as a GBGB licensed racing track. The buyer expects the stadium to need further development and for it to be used as a GBGB racetrack by 2023, increasing racing to four times per week.

While GBGB publishes [injury and retirement statistics](#) at its tracks, there is no requirement for independent tracks to report. However, The Valley Stadium has some [data on its website](#). This states that out of the 4,652 runs by greyhounds in races, 24 greyhounds suffered a serious injury (typically, a bone fracture) during a race. This represents a serious injury rate of 0.5 per cent.

GBGB commissioned research shows that greyhound racing ‘core industry’ income in Great Britain was £119 million in 2012. Data for Wales is not available.

1.1. Current regulation of greyhound racing

The *Animal Welfare Act 2006*, (the 2006 Act) includes general animal welfare provisions. The 2006 Act allows action to be taken where there is evidence of cruelty to an animal or a failure to provide for an animal’s welfare needs. These provisions could apply where greyhounds are at tracks or kept at trainers’ kennels.

Section 12 of the 2006 Act gives regulation-making powers to the Welsh Ministers to promote the welfare of animals. Section 13 provides the Welsh Ministers with powers to introduce licensing schemes to protect animal welfare.

In England, regulations have been made by the Secretary of State under section 13 of the 2006 Act; *The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010*. These regulations aim to protect racing greyhounds in England and provide that all operators of greyhound racing tracks must obtain a licence.

There are currently no specific legal protections for racing greyhounds in Wales.

In 2020 there was a petition to the UK Parliament to ban greyhound racing in England. The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) responded by saying it supports high welfare for racing greyhounds but considered a ban to be unnecessary.

1.2. Stakeholder views

In response to this Senedd petition, a spokesperson from GBGB said:

The petition claims that our sport is inherently cruel; this statement is utterly false and insulting to the thousands of hardworking individuals within our sport.

As the regulator of licensed greyhound racing, the welfare, safety and wellbeing of our canine athletes is our highest priority. As an unlicensed track, the Valley Stadium and the greyhounds which race there currently sit outside of our regulatory remit. Should the Valley wish to operate as a licensed track, we would welcome being able to further safeguard the welfare of the greyhounds which race there.

Caerphilly Council published [a masterplan for Ystrad Mynach](#) in 2019. With regards to The Valley Stadium it states:

It is ideally located to capitalise on the many visitors to the area and there is opportunity to expand and increase the potential of the site as a tourism destination. Furthermore, there is opportunity for spin-off between this site and potential hotel and restaurant development on adjacent land.

Several animal welfare groups have concern for the welfare of racing greyhounds and are calling for further regulation or a complete ban.

[For example The Dogs Trust](#) doesn't believe the English regulations go far enough as they only cover what happens at the track. They are calling for regulation of all stages of racing greyhounds' lives as well as a levy on bookmakers to fund greyhound welfare. The Dogs Trust has recently commissioned a review of racing greyhounds' welfare in the UK and is expected to report in the first half of 2022.

[The Alliance Against Greyhound Racing](#) calls for a phased ban of greyhound racing in Great Britain, "in order to end the unnecessary deaths and suffering of greyhounds due to racing".

The links provided with the petition text provide further reading on animal welfare concerns.

2. Welsh Government action

In 2020, the Welsh Government and Animal Welfare Network for Wales published a [Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Welfare of Racing Greyhounds](#). [RSPCA Cymru commented](#): "The Code was a big step forward for the Sector, but greater work is needed to ensure compliance".

[During passage of the Wild Animals and Circuses \(Wales\) Bill](#) in 2019, the appropriateness of other animal exhibits was raised in the context of the ban on wild animals in travelling circuses.

Between August and November 2019 the [Welsh Government consulted](#) on draft regulations and guidance to regulate animal exhibits. The regulations were to be introduced under the 2006 Act and be called *The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Animal Exhibits) (Wales) Regulations 2020* and guidance. However, the

proposed regulations included an exemption for greyhound racing. The summary of responses to the consultation stated:

Substantial evidence was received which centred on concerns about welfare issues and a lack of self-regulation of greyhound racing in Wales. Those respondents that raised this issue were of the view that greyhound racing should fall within the scope of the draft Regulations.

[...]

With regard to proposals to include greyhound racing as a licensable activity, the evidence received has been noted. As no responses were received from organisations representing the greyhound racing sector, we will seek to invite their views before considering this further, as this will enable us to consider the various arguments before reaching a view as to whether or not greyhound racing should fall within the scope of the Regulations.

Following the consultation, regulations did not come forward.

On 4 November 2021, the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd, Lesley Griffiths (the Minister) published the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021-26. This includes a plan to introduce a licensing requirement in relation to animal exhibits and animal establishments – “**potentially** including mobile animal exhibits, **greyhound racing**, and animal welfare establishments [emphasis added]”.

The Welsh Government plans to undertake further consultation with an aim to bring forward new requirements possibly under the *Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) (Regulations) 2021*. The Minister’s letter on this petition states that officials will be engaging with a “broad range” of interested parties, including:

- the LA Enforcement Project lead, Gareth Walters;
- Caerphilly Local Authority;
- the joint AWWN/CAWWG [Animal Welfare Network Wales/ Companion Animal Welfare Group Wales] working group; and
- other relevant stakeholders.

Welsh Parliament action

The issue of greyhound racing has been raised several times in Plenary during the Sixth Senedd.

In answer to a question regarding inspection of the The Valley Stadium race track the Minister said:

Inspections at Wales's remaining greyhound racing track have been arranged through a partnership delivery programme funded by the Welsh Government, which is managed and co-ordinated by Monmouthshire trading standards and the greyhound working group, a sub-group of the Animal Welfare Network Wales, one of our key partnership networks.

She went on to say:

Clearly, if we looked at a ban of greyhound racing, we would have to look at evidence, consultation. It will all take a little while, and, obviously, legislative capacity would have to be available for me to do that. But it's certainly something - And you just mentioned something right at the end that I have only recently found out, and that is that there are only eight countries in the world that still allow greyhound racing, and we are one of them.

The Economy Trade and Rural Affairs Committee held an evidence session on animal welfare in November 2021 during which greyhound racing was discussed with animal welfare organisations. The Dogs Trust told the Committee it was commissioning an independent review of greyhound racing across the UK to determine if a ban is appropriate. RSPCA Cymru told the committee it is constantly reviewing its position on greyhound racing. It noted that Wales was behind England in terms of regulation so the inclusion of greyhound racing in the Animal Welfare Plan for Wales 2021-26 was welcome.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.