

PROPOSED DOG ABDUCTION (SCOTLAND) BILL – MAURICE GOLDEN MSP

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

This document summarises and analyses the responses to a consultation exercise carried out on the above proposal.

The background to the proposal is set out in section 1, while section 2 gives an overview of the results. A detailed analysis of the responses to the consultation questions is given in section 3. These three sections have been prepared by the Scottish Parliament’s Non-Government Bills Unit (NGBU). Section 4 has been prepared by Maurice Golden MSP and includes his commentary on the results of the consultation.

Where respondents have requested that certain information be treated as “not for publication”, or that the response remain anonymous, these requests have been respected in this summary.

In some places, the summary includes quantitative data about responses, including numbers and proportions of respondents who have indicated support for, or opposition to, the proposal (or particular aspects of it). In interpreting this data, it should be borne in mind that respondents are self-selecting and it should not be assumed that their individual or collective views are representative of wider stakeholder or public opinion. The principal aim of the document is to identify the main points made by respondents, giving weight in particular to those supported by arguments and evidence and those from respondents with relevant experience and expertise. A consultation is not an opinion poll, and the best arguments may not be those that obtain majority support.

Copies of the individual responses are available on the following website: [Dog Abduction Consultation Responses - Google Drive](#). Responses have been numbered for ease of reference, and the relevant number is included in brackets after the name of the respondent.

A list of respondents is set out in the Annexe.

Section 1: Introduction and Background

Maurice Golden's draft proposal, lodged on 21 October 2022 is for a Bill to:

create a new statutory offence to tackle the problem of dog theft and other situations where a dog is taken or kept without lawful authority, that would take account of considerations such as the feelings of dogs and dog welfare; and improve data recording to better inform detection and prevention efforts.

The proposal was accompanied by a consultation document, prepared with the assistance of NGBU. This document was published on the Parliament's website, from where it remains accessible:

[Proposed Dog Abduction Scotland Bill | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

The consultation period ran from 22 October 2022 to 16 January 2023.

Meetings with the following stakeholders took place to consult on the bill/consultation proposals:

BASC Scotland (British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Battersea
BVA (British Veterinary Association)
Cats Protection
Dogs Trust
Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home
Faculty of Advocates
Guide Dogs Forfar
Kennel Club
Law Society of Scotland
OneKind
Police Scotland
Procurator Fiscal
Scottish SPCA

Lord Goldsmith (then Minister for the Pacific and the International Environment)
Ash Regan MSP (then Minister for Community Safety)
Dr Daniel Allen (Animal Geographer at Keele University)
Debbie Forsyth (prominent welfare campaigner)
Marc Abrahams (veterinary surgeon and prominent welfare campaigner)

The consultation exercise was run by Maurice Golden's parliamentary office.

It was launched with an event at the Edinburgh Cat and Dog Home and was promoted through a number of online accounts for media sources, including:

BBC Scotland¹
Grampian Online²
Radio Clyde News³
That's TV Scotland⁴
The Herald⁵
The Scotsman⁶
The Scottish Sun⁷ and
The Courier⁸.

It was also promoted using the online accounts for bodies, including Scottish SPCA and Blue Cross.

The consultation process is part of the procedure that MSPs must follow to obtain the right to introduce a Member's Bill. Further information about the procedure can be found in the Parliament's standing orders (see Rule 9.14) and in the *Guidance on Public Bills*, both of which are available on the Parliament's website:

- Standing orders (Chapter 9): [Standing Orders | Scottish Parliament Website](#)
- Guidance (Part 3): [Guidance on Public Bills | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-63373338>

² <https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/campaign-to-make-dog-theft-a-specific-crime-284823/>

³ <https://rb.gy/d7k4e>

⁴ <https://twitter.com/ThatsTVScotland/status/1464296645550510083?s=20>

⁵ <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/23073877.msp-opens-consultation-new-dog-theft-law/>

⁶ <https://www.scotsman.com/news/crime/consultation-to-launch-as-dog-thefts-rise-by-700-3810251>

⁷ <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/scottish-news/9655598/animal-theft-dogs-pet-courts-law/>

⁸ <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/courts/3745153/dog-theft-scotland-law-change/>

Section 2: Overview of Responses

In total, 237 responses were received.

The responses can be categorised as follows:

- 202 (85%) were members of the public,
- 10 (4%) were professionals with relevant experience,
- 7 (3%) were politicians, and
- 3 (1%) were academics.
- Twelve (5%) were from third sector bodies,
- Two (1%) were representative organisations, and
- One was a public body.

Of the 15 organisations that responded to the consultation, 13 used the SmartSurvey tool and two, Cats Protection and the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (SCTS), emailed their responses.

In its response, SCTS did not directly answer any of the questions set out in the consultation, it used its submission to highlight potential costs that the proposal might have on the courts' service. Cats Protection addressed each consultation question.

All of the organisations that responded indicated that they were content for their responses to be published without a requirement for anonymity.

Of the responses from individuals:

- 65 (27% of all submissions), were anonymous responses, and,
- 25 (11%) were "not for publication".

A clear majority of responses were supportive of the draft proposal (93% fully supportive; 4% partially supportive). Answers to almost all of the multi-option questions posed by the member were supportive of each individual aspect of the proposal. Among organisations there was also a clear majority in support of the draft proposal however the Law Society of Scotland took a neutral stance.

The lowest level of support was in response to question 6, which sought views on whether the proposals will help to tackle the fear of the crime of dog abduction. 41% fully agreed and 45% partially agreed in response.

The number of respondents who were fully or partially opposed to any proposal within the questions was consistently very low. An example of this related to question 8, where only 3 respondents fully disagreed.

Given the low number of respondents indicating opposition to the proposals, the headings under each question in this document generally cover the arguments in support of the proposal, and then the counter arguments or any

concerns or reservations expressed.

Key themes that emerged in the responses included:

- that a new specific offence of dog abduction should remove such crime from the category of theft of moveable property. Many respondents thought that this would help recognise the sentience of dogs and the strength of the human/dog bond. It would also place a focus on animal welfare rather than the financial value of the dog throughout the prosecution process.
- that all dogs should be treated equally regardless of their financial value. The majority of respondents were of the view that the proposed maximum sentence would have a deterrent effect and reduce the incidence of dog abduction.
- that there is currently a lack of data available on dog abductions and the creation of a standalone offence would result in improved data collection.

Among those less supportive of the proposal, key themes were:

- a lack of current data to point to the need for a new offence;
- a lack of a need for a new offence given an existing offence of theft;
- that associated sentences with the existing offence can be higher than those under the proposed new offence; and
- that courts currently take account of animal welfare, victim impact and any other relevant considerations when dealing with dog theft cases including in sentencing.

Some respondents also noted that the proposal had a narrow scope, in being focussed on dog abduction only, with a number suggesting that further consideration be given to widen it to include cats, and other family pets.

Disclaimer

Note that the inclusion of a claim or argument made by a respondent in this summary should not be interpreted as verification of the claim or as endorsement of the argument by the Non-Government Bills Unit.

Section 3: Responses to Consultation Questions

This section sets out an overview of responses to each question in the consultation document.

General aim of proposed Bill

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? Please note that this question is compulsory.

Fully supportive/ Partially supportive/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially opposed/ Fully opposed/ Do not wish to express a view

Of the 236 members of the public and organisations that responded to the consultation questions, 218 (approximately 93%) indicated that they were fully supportive of the proposed bill, with 10 (4%) expressing partial support.

3 respondents stated that they were fully opposed to the proposal, and 2 expressed partial opposition.

A further 2 took a neutral stance, and 1 did not wish to express a point of view.

10 organisations (67% of the organisations) indicated that they were fully supportive of the proposal, with three (20%) expressing partial support. The Law Society of Scotland took a neutral position and SCTS did not express a view.

A number of key themes emerged in the responses, which are set out below. These are further developed in the summary of the responses to the other questions.

Sentience/Dog welfare and the human-dog bond

A common theme among respondents was that, in Scotland, the theft/abduction of any pet is treated as common-law theft, in effect treating the stolen animal in the same manner as inanimate property. Many respondents were of the view that as dogs are sentient (i.e., that they have feelings and emotions), their welfare, and that of their human owners, should be taken into account when dealing with such crime.

In the view of a large number of respondents, both individual and organisations, the sentience of animals and their experience of abduction was something that the current law failed to reflect. For example, Blue Cross (Smart Survey ID number 208368821) described the impact abduction could have on a dog as:

“devastating, both physically and psychologically. Many of these pets will be stolen by organised criminal gangs and used for illegal dog breeding and dog fighting, netting the perpetrators considerable sums of money and causing severe health and welfare problems for the dog.”

OneKind (208611005), which is a Scottish-based animal welfare charity, summarised the view that the current law failed to recognise the sentience of dogs and echoed a widely held concern that dogs were, for the purposes of criminal prosecutions treated no differently than inanimate property. It stated:

“The current situation of classifying dogs as property that can be stolen, rather than recognising them as sentient individuals, means that existing legislation and judicial processes fail to account for the mental and emotional impacts on the dogs and people involved when that dog is taken unlawfully.”

Dogs Trust (207014716) focussed on how the sentience of the dog, which it referred to as a “right” that should be reflected in the law. It stated that by treating abduction as common-law theft, perpetrators:

“will be sentenced in the courts in the same way as someone who steals a non-living object, such as a mobile phone...by equating animals to ‘property’, we are denying them the right to be considered sentient beings.”

As well as the impact of abduction on the dog a common theme among respondents was the devastating impact the abduction of a dog may have on its owners. Respondents detailed the warm and familial relationship between dog and owner. As the following sample of individual responses demonstrates, in the view of a large number of respondents the impact that dog abduction could have on owners should be reflected in the manner in which dog abduction is treated under the criminal law:

“My dogs are part of my family and the loss I would feel if someone abducted them would be immense. My dogs are irreplaceable.” – Anonymous (203134360)

“Dogs are members of the family. They should not be viewed in law as possessions. They are sentient beings with emotions. The stress placed on a dog, its owners and family when they are abducted is immense and should be reflected with the harshest of punishments under law.” – Kaylee Hughes (203154335)

“My dog is part of my family, not an inanimate object, and should not be able to be subjected to fear, abuse, neglect etc at the hands of anyone who has decided it may be profitable to steal a “family” member.” – Sheila Kite (203513061)

“I have never had a dog stolen but the thought horrifies me. Some dogs stolen are used as bait for fighting dogs and I cannot imagine my own mental health if I had a dog stolen and didn’t know which fate it had suffered.” - Debbie Martin (208036662)

“Dogs are full family members and the emotion stress caused by being stolen by both the dog and owner is massive.” - Anonymous (202216080)

Among organisations, there was also widespread recognition of the importance of the bond between dog and owner as a reason for welcoming the proposed Bill. Pet Theft Reform (208533364), which campaigns to make pet theft a custodial offence, commented that it recognised:

“the importance of the human-animal bond, the devastating impact that animal abduction has on people and pets, and the need for pet abduction as a specific offence.”

The Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) and Dogs Trust both cited research they had carried out, which suggested that a vast majority of pet owners considered their animals to be “family members”. ADCH (208624409) commented:

“The bond between human and dog should not be underestimated. People see their dog as part of the family and can feel more attached to their dog than they would a romantic partner through feelings of unconditional love without any form of judgement... not knowing what has happened to a stolen pet can mean that owners suffer for longer and in certain circumstances can be more traumatic than the bereavement of a pet.”

Scottish SPCA (206653181) shared the view that the strength of the bond between owner and pet meant that the impact of a dog abduction was severe. It highlighted that all members of a pet-owning family, including children, would be affected.

“Dogs are seen as family members and losing a pet to theft is devastating for owner/s and for the pet. The Society sees the immense value in the human-animal bond and the benefits the relationship can have on both people and pets.”

It also noted that:

“Attachment to pets has an important role in children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development, mental health, well-being, and quality of life in particular when this attachment is with a dog.”

Battersea (208396086) also highlighted the trauma caused by dog theft due to the impact on the dogs owners:

“Pet theft is devastating to pet owners, who often feel like they’ve lost a member of the family, and it is traumatic for pets themselves. It is emotionally different to many other categories of theft, which is why Battersea has long supported reforming the penalties for dog theft, so they reflect the heartbreak caused to owners, the distress caused to animals, and the status of dogs as sentient family members.”

Treating the crime primarily as an issue of animal welfare rather than financial loss

Following on from the arguments relating to the welfare of the dog and impact on the owner a number of respondents focussed on the factors which a court should take into consideration when sentencing crimes of dog abduction. Some respondents believed that at present weight was primarily given in the sentencing process to the financial value of the dog. In their view the preferred approach would be to give greater weight to the questions of animal welfare and impact of the offence with financial considerations a secondary consideration.

The Kennel Club (208380007) highlighted that financial value should not be the primary consideration when sentencing, stating:

“The ‘value’ of a dog is far more than its financial value. We believe the creation of a specific dog abduction offence, with a five year maximum sentence would help ensure the courts recognise the true value of a dog when considering sentencing.”

Scottish SPCA (206653181) also agreed that, when considering how the value of an abducted dog could be measured, it did not believe that:

“a price should be placed on an animal to determine the punishment for theft, or on the love between a person and their dog.”

and commented further that, under the proposed bill, it was

“pleased that monetary value will no longer be placed on a stolen dog.”

ADCH (208624409) also welcomed the proposed Bill as a way to remove financial value as a primary consideration at the sentencing stage. In its view, it believed that this would mean that:

“placing a financial value on a stolen dog will no longer be applicable under this Bill. If a dog is stolen under current common law, then this is treated the same as the theft of an inanimate item such as a piece of jewellery or mobile phone...attributing a financial amount on a stolen dog as a consideration for sentencing demeans the importance of the relationship between human and dog.”

It observed that:

“A 12-year-old crossbreed canine will not equate to the same financial value of a French bulldog puppy who was bought over the pandemic for £2,000 but the emotional connection will be priceless to the owners. A price cannot realistically be placed on the relationship between a person and their pet.”

These views are countered by the Law Society of Scotland (208616310), which sought to clarify the current process for sentencing in Scottish Courts. It stated that the proposed Bill failed to recognise that at present considerations in respect of welfare and impact on the owner are taken into account at the sentencing stage. In its response it highlighted that the consultation offers no evidence that the courts in Scotland currently treat dog theft purely in terms of the monetary value of the dog. It commented:

“The Scottish Sentencing Council’s Sentencing Process Guideline requires sentencers to consider and assess the seriousness of the offence as the first step in the process. Seriousness is judged against the criteria of culpability and harm. The greater the culpability or harm then the more serious the offence. In assessing culpability, the court will look at issues such as whether the crime was premeditated or planned. In assessing harm, the court will consider the impact on any victim or victims, in this case the dog’s owners. Paragraph 14 of the Sentencing Process Guideline states that harm is to be interpreted broadly and includes offences where harm is caused to an individual or to property. Therefore, in the specific case of crimes where the ‘property’ involved is a live animal, the court may legitimately consider the impact on the dog’s health and wellbeing as well as the distress caused to the owner.”

Improving data collection

At present, dog abduction in Scotland is treated as common-law theft. With a new specific offence, the police will be obliged to record these abductions as a standalone crime. One aim of the proposed Bill is that this would provide more accurate data to inform future efforts by police and policy makers to tackle dog abduction. In addition, publication of accurate data would allow the public to assess the effectiveness of those efforts more easily.

There was widespread support among respondents for this aim. A strong theme among organisational respondents was the deficiencies in the current quality of data available on dog abduction.

Scottish SPCA (206653181) noted that it was “pleased” that the proposal recommended consistent collection of this information. It observed that, under the current position:

“there is no process in place for Police Scotland to record the theft of a dog separately from another stolen item so accurate data capture and reporting of this specific crime is challenging. By having reliable information and processes in place, this will help to highlight any trends

in breeds or geographical areas and allow for preventative measures to be put in place.”

Battersea (208396086), observing from its experience in England, noted that:

“The full extent and nature of dog theft is not yet clear, and there is limited research exploring this. Data on dog theft is lacking and inconsistent and the introduction of dog abduction as a separate offence to theft will help rectify this issue.”

A number of organisations agreed that the creation of a standalone offence would greatly improve available data as compared to the current situation where there is a lack of consistency in recording practices and inadequacies in systems for retrieving information.

The Kennel Club (208380007) stated that:

“the creation of a specific offence for dog abduction should help improve the collection of data relating to this horrific crime. Prevention would always be better than cure and the Bill would help track crime levels and help to develop more effective prevention strategies.”

the charity also noted that it:

“encountered significant difficulties when accessing data on pet abduction during our COVID-19 research, and many police forces did not record instances of pet theft in a way that was distinguished from other theft. Improved data will allow forces to fully understand the scale and nature of dog theft, track outcomes of these offences and tackle fear of the crime.”

and ADCH (208624409) suggested that:

“Consistent data collection processes around dog theft in Scotland will allow for the recording of any trends to help to tackle crimes in specific areas and to roll out education campaigns and put any preventative measures in place.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) sounded a note of caution, stating the view that the proposed Bill should not be introduced until it was clear from data that it was required. To that end, its position was that it should be possible for steps to be taken to improve data collection and recording without also creating an additional criminal offence. It stated that:

“If the Police, COPFS and the Scottish Courts and the SCTS can adapt their systems to record that property stolen in theft and robbery cases included a dog, then that should be done independently of creating a new statutory offence of dog abduction. We believe that further data should be obtained prior to the creation of legislation.”

Maximum five-year prison sentence, and other similar legislation

The crime of common-law theft, which currently covers dog abduction carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. As the proposed Bill contains a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment views were sought as to whether that would dilute the powers of the court hearing a case or whether clarity as to the sanctions available and improved sentencing guidelines would improve the situation.

A number of organisations respondents contended that it was extremely unlikely that the current maximum tariff would be imposed for stealing a dog and stated that having a specific dog abduction crime in place with the five-year maximum sentence suggested by the consultation available would offer a more realistic option for the courts. Increased clarity in relation to sanctions would also function as a deterrent to would-be criminals.

For example, Blue Cross (208368821) stated:

“Although the current maximum sentence for theft in Scotland is life, this never happens in cases involving the theft of a pet dog. It is clear that the sentences for this crime are simply too lenient and clearly do not act as enough of a deterrent to dog thieves. Pet theft is seen as an attractive crime to commit with a low chance of being caught and, if caught, convicted.”

The view that despite the potential for lengthy sentences, at present courts were in some cases too lenient was shared by the Kennel Club (208380007), which stated:

“existing penalties handed out do not reflect the impact that dog theft can have. Whilst we note in Scottish common law a theoretical life sentence is possible for the theft of a dog, quite clearly this is purely a theoretical possibility. In a recent example, an individual was found guilty of stealing multiple dogs and separately of animal cruelty, and the offender was sentenced to 90 days in prison.”

Several organisations were of the view that greater clarity as to sentencing levels would make it more likely that the maximum sentence would be imposed for offences at the more severe end of the scale. This view was summarised by Canine Concern Scotland Trust (207838634), which suggested that a maximum sentence of five years was:

“a sensible limit which ought to be applied in the most serious cases. Ridiculously high upper penalties as per the current legislation for theft will never be taken seriously by the courts and are thus likely to be waived - perpetrators will realise that.”

A number of individual respondents raised concerns that the proposed maximum sentence was not severe enough given the seriousness of the crime. For example, an anonymous respondent (202172328)

stated.

“I think 5 years as a limit depending on the case doesn’t seem harsh enough, will 5 years really mean 5 years if this was the sentence imposed? Depending on the scale of the criminality I think a max of 5 years too limited.”

Some organisations noted that the level of sentence proposed was similar to that available for other offences involving animals, and that similar legislation, the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill⁹, was being considered by the UK Parliament. In their view the proposed maximum sentence would provide consistency as it aligned with other legislation and Bill proposals.

Scottish SPCA (206653181) drew comparisons with the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006¹⁰. It stated that under that existing legislation should a dog experience any injury or suffering as a consequence of abduction then it:

“would expect an additional prosecution under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 Act, with the increased sentencing outlined in the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020¹¹, where the custodial sentence is up to five years and/or an unlimited fine.”

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (Scotland) (BASC) (208572427), which represents the interests of gundog owners, noted that the UK Government had:

“announced plans to introduce a specific criminal offence for those who steal dogs across England and Wales, therefore it makes practical and logical sense this is introduced in Scotland too.”

Deterrent effect of the proposed Bill

There was wide support for the suggestion that the introduction of a specific offence of dog abduction would have a deterrent effect. A number of organisations highlighted the importance of enforcement of any new legislation if the deterrent effect was to be realised. These included, Blue Cross (208368821), which stated:

“creating a specific offence of dog abduction in law will act as a deterrent – but it will not achieve that objective on its own. The deterrent value of any new offence is also related to two other facets: the perceived chances of being apprehended and the chances of being convicted.”

⁹ [Animal Welfare \(Kept Animals\) Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

¹⁰ [Animal Health and Welfare \(Scotland\) Act 2006 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

¹¹ [Animals and Wildlife \(Penalties, Protections and Powers\) \(Scotland\) Act 2020 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

In addition to implementation, resourcing and enforcement, ADCH (208624409) highlighted the need for both communication and public awareness as key to the proposed Bills deterrent effect. It stated:

“The new offence will need to be effectively communicated to the public through a clear, simple and wide-reaching awareness campaign. This will act as a deterrent to potential dog thieves, who will know that Scotland will not tolerate this crime. It will also assure dog owners that the crime is taken seriously and help them to understand what to expect should their dog be stolen.”

Extending the proposal to cover other types of pet

The proposed Bill is limited in its scope to the crime of dog abduction as opposed to pet abduction more generally. As set out in the consultation document this was for reasons of practicality rather than a judgement that dog abduction was more serious in terms of impact on the animal than other types of pet abduction.

A stated aim of the proposal is to set a precedent and to serve as a blueprint for legislation on other types of pet abduction.

A number of respondents did raise concerns regarding this limited scope and the need for urgent and similar action for other species.

Cats Protection (non-Smart Survey response), which was partially supportive of the proposal, expressed “disappointment” that the proposal did not extend to cats stating:

“The theft of a beloved cat is just as traumatic to an owner as a dog being taken. As such, the charity recommends including protections for cats in this Bill.”

ADCH (208624409) stated that it recognises that the proposal was to be seen as a “blueprint” for other companion animals to be included in future, but commented:

“We would strongly recommend extending this current Bill to include statutory protections for cats who can be subject to theft due to their roaming nature and the demand for high value pedigrees.”

Pet Theft Awareness (208560847), which campaigns for pets to be recognised as family and not property, and produces annual statistics on cat theft, observed that:

“2021 figures show an alarming 40% increase in police recorded cat theft and it is our contention that the proposed dog abduction offence should recognise the value of family cats alongside dogs and that they suffer equally when taken from all they know. In addition, who would

deny that cat owners are every bit as devastated when their pets are stolen; the bond between cats and their owners is hugely important and should not be dismissed as inferior to that formed with dogs. Cats are often the companion of choice for the elderly - sometimes they are their only family member and certainly their most present. This vulnerable demographic need to have their family member protected from abduction as do the rest of the Scottish cat owning population.”

OneKind (208611005) noted that the concerns regarding such abduction was “true for other companion animal species” but stated that it understood

“the restrictions on what can be achieved in a Member’s Bill and also recognise that dogs are the species most at risk from abduction.”

And Scottish SPCA (206653181) suggested that the proposal:

“provides a strong basis to extend protections for other pets in the future, such as cats, who can also be subject to theft due to their roaming nature.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) thought that the proposed Bill would very likely lead to similar legislation covering other pets. It suggested caution however, given the potential for confusion regarding different types of legislation as well as with prosecution policies and sentencing.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill’s aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

A number of themes arose among the respondents who stated that the proposed legislation was necessary. Many reiterated their concerns over animal welfare and belief that, as dogs are sentient creatures, their abduction was an issue that should be seen to be taken seriously. In their view the current law did not adequately recognise these issues and accordingly new legislation was required.

For example, The Kennel Club (208380007) commented that:

“The introduction of a specific offence of dog abduction would appear the only way for the Scottish Parliament to indicate how seriously dog abduction should be taken by the judicial system.”

Blue Cross (208368821) considered that the legislation was “the most effective vehicle” for dealing with the crime, adding that:

“Enshrining the theft of a dog as a specific offence in statute law will send a clear message that dogs are not property but members of the family and sentient animals who can suffer pain and distress if they are

forcibly removed from their home.”

In doing so however, it noted that:

“legislation is never a panacea and it is imperative any new law is enhanced and strengthened by increased resources being devoted to preventing and tackling this abhorrent offence.”

Battersea (208396086) stated that it considered that the proposed changes would be “unlikely to be achieved by other means”, and highlighted what it sees as the bond between pets and families being a key reason for legislating:

“Having a pet stolen causes significant emotional distress for pets and owners alike...Pets play a huge role in the lives of their owners, who often consider them members of the family rather than property. The creation of a separate offence for dog theft would recognise this relationship and account for the welfare and sentience of the animal affected, it would also allow for sentencing which better reflects the harm caused to both pet and owner...”

OneKind (208611005) commented that current sentencing processes fail to give adequate weight to welfare considerations. In its view, this would be remedied by the proposed Bill, which moves the focus away from monetary/value considerations. It stated:

“new legislation would create the potential for the welfare of the dog to be a primary consideration when sentencing. It could focus the courts on the specific value of dogs, which is not monetary, and direct them to not simply consider the offence as a theft but to consider the impact on the animal. It could also give the courts wider discretion and a toolkit of options when sentencing.”

Several respondents stated that the new legislation was necessary as it would address what they saw as a current lack of robust data regarding dog abductions. In their view, creating a standalone offence was necessary to ensure proper data was gathered in respect of the numbers of offences and rates of prosecution.

For example, Scottish SPCA (206653181) commented:

“Unfortunately, so far, the current methods of recording data around theft of a dog in Scotland have not been measured so a true understanding of the extent of the issue has not been possible so far.”

Battersea and OneKind shared that view, with Battersea (208396086) stating that the “creation of a specific offence” would:

“allow for sentencing which better reflects the harm caused to both pet and owner, and allow for robust data collection to show the true extent of the issue in Scotland.”

and ADCH (208624409) noted that:

“The current strategies of recording information around dog theft in Scotland have not been measured separately from theft of an object so a genuine understanding of the full extent of the issue has not been recorded to date. By making dog theft a standalone crime, this will ensure consistent data recording so that the crime can be effectively and efficiently tackled.”

Another theme among respondents supportive of the need for further legislation was the view that the proposed Bill was necessary to ensure more severe sanctions were imposed by the courts as opposed to the position under the existing common law theft prosecutions.

BASC (208572427) commented that:

“Dog theft penalties do not match the severity of impact of this crime., There is growing evidence to suggest that dog theft has risen by up to 160 per cent during the pandemic.”

and the Kennel Club (208380007) observed that it believed that:

“sentencing guidelines fall under the remit of the Scottish Sentencing Council which is independent of the Scottish Parliament. Therefore it is not within the remit of the Scottish Parliament to influence the length of custodial sentences handed down under existing Scottish common law to those found guilty of dog theft.”

Insufficient evidence to demonstrate the need for the proposed Bill

The Law Society of Scotland’s (208616310) view was that it was not clear that there was a need for the proposed Bill. It focussed on the lack of available data to show the extent of dog abduction In its view, there was also a lack of evidence that the courts were not taking adequate account of factors such as the welfare of the animal and were solely focussing on the value of the adducted animal. It stated:

“The consultation appears to be predicated on the view that courts do not recognise, or that existing penalties are insufficient, to appropriately reflect the impact of theft on a dog’s wellbeing and the distress caused to the owner. Rather than current prosecutions fail due to shortcomings in the common law of theft, or insufficiency of evidence. The consultation does not offer any evidence to show that prosecutions for dog theft are failing. In our view the consultation does not establish that there is a gap in the current law of theft which would be filled by a new statutory offence.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) set out the current process for sentencing in theft cases. It stated that the courts at present can take account of a large number of factors at the sentencing stage, including the impact on the animal, impact on the victim and other circumstances when assessing sentencing. As an alternative to legislation, it suggested that further guidelines on how dog theft should be treated at the sentencing stage may be effective. It stated:

“Additionally, the Scottish Sentencing Council could be invited to consider issuing guidelines on thefts involving live animals for approval by the High Court of Justiciary. The Scottish Sentencing Council is currently developing guidelines on environmental and wildlife crime. It is worthy of note that guidelines issued by the Scottish Sentencing Council are published after detailed consideration and consultation and are informed by current sentencing practice.”

Dr Craig Anderson (203197434), who is a university lecturer in law, also opposed legislating in this field as, in his view, rather than introducing the proposed Bill, it would be more effective to provide additional resources to allow the existing law to be properly enforced. He stated:

“The Bill purports to criminalise something that is already a crime. Indeed, it would impose a lower maximum sentence than the common law crime of theft. While I am sympathetic to what is hoped to be achieved, this is not likely to achieve that aim. Without increased resourcing for law enforcement, simply creating a new offence is unlikely to achieve anything of value. I therefore do not consider this Bill to be an appropriate use of Parliamentary time.”

This view was shared by an anonymous member of the public (202216080):

“Dog theft is a crime. So is mistreating animals. We don’t need further laws duplicating existing ones.”

Q3. What is your view on the proposal that introducing a specific offence of dog abduction, as set out in the consultation document, will ensure that the crime is treated as primarily a matter of welfare rather than monetary value?

Fully agree/ Partially agree/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially disagree/ Fully disagree/ Unsure

Although there was no direct opportunity for respondents to explain the reason for their answer in the survey (other than indicate whether or not they supported this), some did provide a detailed explanation on this point in their response to other questions. Reference is made in particular to the summary of question 1 responses above.

A number of organisations stated the view that in their view at present too much weight is given to the financial value of a dog at sentencing. The approach set out in the proposed Bill was favoured by these organisations as it allowed the welfare of the dog to be the primary consideration. Battersea (208396086) summarised this view:

“Creating a separate offence for dog abduction would account for the welfare of the animal rather than the monetary value, which is often immaterial compared with the emotional impact. A dog may have little commercial resale value if it cannot be used in breeding, but the emotional impact of its loss could be devastating. The impact on the owner is much more relevant here than the financial value of the theft.”

Scottish SPCA and the ADCH agreed that a move away from focussing on the financial value of a dog and towards welfare considerations was welcome, with Scottish SPCA (206653181) stating:

“The human-animal bond cannot be underestimated. The love someone has for their dog cannot be valued in financial terms. A seven-year-old Labrador, for example, will not be valued very high in financial terms compared to an eight-week-old dachshund puppy that has just been purchased for around £2,000 but the emotional attachment will be invaluable to the owners and you cannot realistically put a price on that relationship.”

As outlined in the summary of Q1 responses, the Law Society of Scotland’s (208616310) starting position was that the law at present does allow for many factors to be taken into account other than the monetary value of the dog. In its view the proposed Bill failed to accurately reflect current practice where considerations in respect of welfare and impact on the owner are taken into account at the sentencing stage.

Q4. This proposal suggests imposing a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment for dog abduction, what is your view on this?

Fully agree/ Partially agree/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially disagree/ Fully disagree/ Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response including any comments on the potential sentences for the proposed offence.

234 respondents answered this question. 175 (75%) stated that they fully agreed with this, and 27 (11%) partly agreed. 13 (6%) expressed partial disagreement and 7 (3%) fully disagreed. 8 stated that they were unsure, and 4 took a neutral position.

A majority of respondents were in favour of the suggested maximum sentence of five years. Whilst the common law offence of theft has a theoretical maximum sentence of life imprisonment organisations were of the view that the clarity of sentence length in the proposed Bill was more likely to result in satisfactory outcomes to criminal prosecutions. For example, The Kennel Club (208380007) commented that:

“introducing a more realistic maximum firm five year sentence may work as a better deterrent as it is more likely to be imposed, however, we understand this is not always guaranteed.”

Organisations also highlighted a need for sentencing guidelines to be clear with regard to imposing penalties, to ensure that the maximum tariff could be used by the courts.

Dogs Trust (207014716) suggested that such guidelines are:

“needed to ensure that the most severe offenders receive the maximum sentence, to reflect the welfare impact of the crime of dog abduction. The emotional impact of pet theft also demonstrates that maximum sentencing should not be reserved solely for dogs of high monetary value.”

Blue Cross (208368821) also noted the need for “effective and robust sentencing guidelines” that, in its view, would:

“enable the Courts to impose the maximum penalties outlined in the Bill so that it acts as a strong deterrent and helps to alleviate concerns among dog owners.”

Blue Cross was among the organisations that linked the proposed maximum sentence with the deterrent effect of the proposed Bill. It believed that the five-year maximum sentence would:

“hopefully act as a deterrent to anybody considering abducting a dog and will show that Scotland regards it as a very serious offence.”

Another theme of the responses to this question was that the proposed maximum sentence was at the correct level as it was in alignment with other legislation in respect of crimes against animals.

Scottish SPCA (206653181) also drew comparisons with other animal welfare legislation stating:

“This sentence is in line with the maximum custodial penalty available via the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 and therefore the Scottish SPCA supports this. The theft of a dog causes untold distress to both owner and dog and we believe this to be a very serious welfare issue for both human and animal. We believe in general terms that perpetrators who commit to

stealing a dog will have no regard for the welfare of the dog but instead their interest is purely about making a profit, therefore this must be taken into account and they should be sentenced accordingly.”

Blue Cross (208368821) stated that:

“Five years imprisonment will also align the sentence with that currently outlined in the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill for a similar offence, and also that prescribed for the worst cases of animal cruelty in the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020.

Such sentences will send a message that inflicting cruelty on animals – either deliberately or through abducting them – is not acceptable in a civilized society and perpetrators will receive an appropriate and proportionate sentence for their transgression.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) took a neutral position on this question but stated the view that if a new statutory offence were to be created then the penalty should correspond with other statutory offences. It explained that an offence with a five-year maximum sentence would be required to proceed under the solemn procedure (jury trial) in the Sheriff Court.

Among the public, some respondents suggested that the five-year maximum sentence was insufficient. For example, an anonymous respondent (208044846) stated:

“As a dog owner I would like an increased maximum sentence. Many dogs are service animals and [provide] informal support for a variety of reasons. They are a lifeline for some people, Old and young. They are members of the family.”

Beth Ritchie (207336412), who is a supply animal care assistant for a local authority-run kennels, also thought the proposed maximum sentence was overly lenient. She stated:

“I agree that offenders should serve long sentences, but I think it needs to be higher than 5 years for two reasons. Firstly, given that this offence has more than one victim, the owner and the dog, the maximum sentence should be higher to recognise the distress and suffering caused to both parties. Secondly maximum sentences are rarely handed down and sentencing guidelines recommend a range that is lower than the maximum.”

Q5. What is your view on the suggestion that having a specific offence of dog abduction set out in law will act as a deterrent?

Fully agree/ Partially agree/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially disagree/ Fully disagree/ Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response.

236 respondents answered this question. 147 (63%) fully agreed, and 73 (31%) partially agreed. 5 (2%) said that they fully disagreed with this, and 2 (1%) stated that they partially disagreed. 8 took a neutral position.

There was widespread support for the suggestion that having a specific offence of dog abduction would act as a deterrent to would be criminals. One theme in the responses to Q5 was that clarity around the level of sentencing would make it more likely that offenders would be deterred by the prospect of a custodial sentence if convicted. A number of organisations emphasised that there would need to be use of the maximum sentence if the proposed Bill was to achieve this aim.

ADCH (208624409) was among those who emphasised the need for sentencing to be robust:

“the Bill will act as a deterrent but penalties in the Bill must be handed out by the Courts otherwise it will not act as strong a deterrent as hoped. The efficiency of the Bill will also depend on the level of enforcement (including training), the consistency of data collection by police forces and the public awareness of the Bill.

At present, while the current offence may provide a theoretically higher maximum sentence, there can be little expectation that offenders will have to face it. With a newer offence, crafted with a proportionate maximum penalty alongside other animal welfare legislation, and a significant focus on Scotland’s rejection of these crimes, we can reasonably suspect that there will be a greater fear of the maximum penalty and so a greater deterrent effect.”

Scottish SPCA (206653181) made a similar point:

“the Courts must employ the penalties outlined in the Bill otherwise it will not act as strong a deterrent as anticipated.”

In the view of some respondents, a necessary requirement for deterrence was stated to be appropriate communications and public information so that there was knowledge of the proposed Bill. For example, ADCH (208624409) commented that:

“the Bill will act as a deterrent but penalties in the Bill must be handed out by the Courts otherwise it will not act as strong a deterrent as

hoped. The efficiency of the Bill will also depend on the level of enforcement (including training), the consistency of data collection by police forces and the public awareness of the Bill.”

Blue Cross (208368821) also highlighted the importance of communications stating that it believed that:

“creating a specific offence of dog abduction in law will act as a deterrent – but it will not achieve that objective on its own. The deterrent value of any new offence is also related to two other facets: the perceived chances of being apprehended and the chances of being convicted.”

Similar to comments on the proposed maximum sentence, the need for clear sentencing guidelines was highlighted by respondents as being essential. A number of respondents emphasised that for the proposed Bill to achieve maximum deterrent effect it required proper resources particularly for Police Scotland. For example, Blue Cross (208368821) stated that:

“It is important, therefore, that appropriate resources are dedicated to prevention and investigation of dog abduction. Police Scotland need sufficient resources and training to be able to deal with dog theft in a sensitive and empathetic manner and highlight where owners can turn for support.”

Dogs Trust (207014716) agreed. It asserted that:

“the effectiveness of a specific offence of dog abduction is a positive and welcome step forward; however, it will depend on the sentences given and emphasis placed by the police on tackling the crime. Many thefts at present go unsolved due to a lack of police emphasis on the crime, and Dogs Trust welcomes the Bill’s push to address this.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) questioned whether the prospect of a maximum custodial sentence would have the desired deterrent effect highlighting that it is not clear that stricter sanctions always have a deterrent effect. It stated:

“it is debateable whether the availability and use of stringent penalties does indeed act as a deterrent to convicted or would be dog thieves or indeed other offenders...the Scottish Sentencing Council’s guideline on The Principles and Purposes of Punishment [guideline-principles-and-purposes-of-sentencing.pdf¹² offers a non-exhaustive, unranked list of the purposes of punishment. Deterrence is mentioned in that list as a means of achieving protection of the public but is not listed as one of the Scottish Sentencing Council’s stand-alone aims of punishment.”

¹²<https://www.scottishsentencingcouncil.org.uk/media/1927/guideline-principles-and-purposes-of-sentencing.pdf>

Dr Craig Anderson (203197434) also questioned whether the proposed Bill would have a deterrent effect stating:

“With all due respect, it is quite beyond me how this could possibly have any additional deterrent effect. Theft of a dog is already illegal and is well known to be so.”

Among other members of the public, Beth Ritchie (207336412), partially agreed that the proposed Bill would have a deterrent effect, stating that:

“It will be a deterrent as long as it is actually enforced. It is important that all bodies that will be responsible for enforcing this legislation are properly consulted, and also that they are sufficiently resourced otherwise the legislation will be ineffective.

Another important point is that offences must be prosecuted. This needs to be given particular attention, especially when you consider the ineffectiveness of other animal welfare legislation.”

Sarah Hawkswell (202243651), who is a professional dog trainer, fully agreed with the proposal on the basis that:

“This will raise awareness that dog abduction is taken more seriously than theft of objects - promotion of data and information about the offense will raise awareness should result in a greater deterrent. Dog theft is currently seen as a low risk crime.”

Q6. What is your view on whether these proposals will help to tackle the fear of the crime of dog abduction?

Fully agree/ Partially agree/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially disagree/ Fully disagree/ Unsure

235 respondents answered this question. 96 (41%) fully agreed with it, and 106 (45%) said that they partly agreed. 4 (2%) fully disagreed and 3 (1%) expressed partial disagreement. 15 (6%) said that they were neutral and 11 (5%) recorded a response of “unsure).

A large majority thought that the proposed Bill could reduce fear, but that, to do this, the legislation would have to be seen to be effective following thorough implementation:

Battersea (208396086) summarised this view stating that:

“Providing reassurance to the public through tackling pet theft could reduce fear and improve animal welfare, so long as the Bill is effectively communicated to the public and the crime is fully prosecuted and can therefore be seen as a deterrent to would-be thieves.”

BASC (208572427) reiterated the point regarding police resources, stating that it is:

“a matter for the Scottish Government to ensure that Police Scotland are sufficiently resourced to ensure that crime prevention is also effective.”

Blue Cross, Scottish SPCA and the Kennel Club were all of the view that the proposed Bill would have a positive impact on the fear of dog abduction. Blue Cross (208368821) referred to its Big Pet Census¹³, in which 7% of respondents stated that they were worried about pet theft. It stated that fear of dog abduction was an element of pet ownership and thought that:

“the new offence will certainly provide some welcome and timely reassurance to dog owners in Scotland that the potential theft of their pet is now treated as a specific offence that could attract a five-year prison sentence and will therefore deter would-be thieves from perpetrating the offence.”

Scottish SPCA (206653181) agreed that the proposed Bill would provide reassurance to pet owners, commenting that the proposal:

“has the potential to put owners’ minds at ease so they know if their dog is stolen then it will be treated seriously and will take in to account their loss and the welfare of their dog.”

The Kennel Club (208380007) stated that the proposal should help allay fear as it:

“should reassure people that the Scottish Parliament, the police, and the courts take dog abduction very seriously. We would expect the public would feel less worried about not being taken seriously in dog theft cases, and would put out a strong message to potential offenders.”

Among the public there was strong support for this aspect of the proposed Bill. As with organisational responses a number of individual respondents also highlighted the importance of effective implementation if this aim was to be fully realised. Carole Brown (208176750) stated that she was in full agreement on the basis that:

“I’d walk my dog safe in the knowledge, that if someone tried to abduct my dog, it would be dealt with as a criminal act and incarceration may be an outcome.”

Gordon and Julie Webster (204099353) expressed partial agreement, noting:

¹³ <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/the-big-pet-census-2022>

“It is only with a high conviction rate and sufficiently tough sentencing will people believe that they have some protection from the law. The fear will not go away entirely but it will help to know that the deterrent is effective.”

Kirsty Robertson (202949812) took a neutral position, stating:

“I feel the fear will still be there, the criminals won’t just disappear as highlighted in the report it is hard to find them and charge them, unless something is done about funding and dedicating police time to looking into this crime I feel it may be put on the back shelf.”

Q7. What is your view on the proposal to treat incidents of dog abduction, regardless of the number of dogs involved, the function of the dog or their value, under this new offence with its associated penalties?

Fully agree/ Partially agree/ Neutral (neither support nor oppose)/ Partially disagree/ Fully disagree/ Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response. If there are circumstances where you believe that the offence should be considered as the theft of property under the existing common law offence, please set these out.

236 respondents answered this question. 190 (81%) said that they fully agreed with it, and 25 (10%) partially agreed. 5 (2%) fully disagreed, and 4 (2%) partially disagreed. 3 said that they were neutral and 9 were unsure.

A large majority of respondents were in favour of this aspect of the proposed Bill however a number of organisations stated that there should be recognition of certain aggravating factors within the sentencing processes and guidelines.

For example, Scottish SPCA (206653181) was of the view that the law should not differentiate between the functions of dogs by placing greater value on one type of animal over another. In its view the current law may be more suited to certain circumstances than the proposals. It stated:

“Where existing law might be deemed more appropriate than the new legislation could be in cases where a number of dogs or puppies were stolen at high value. Under current law the sentence may be higher than under the proposals in the new Bill. Another situation where existing law might be more suitable could be the income made from any stolen dogs/puppies. For example, if seven cockapoo dogs or pups are stolen by a low-welfare puppy dealer who then uses them to breed from and subsequently makes tens of thousands of pounds selling the resulting cockapoo puppies.”

Battersea (208396086) also considered that where than more than one animal was abducted this should be reflected in the sentencing and suggested that this be treated as an “aggravating factor”. It stated:

“For example, if a dog breeder were to be the target of theft and several dogs were stolen, the value of the dogs need not be considered, but the welfare of a higher number of dogs would have been compromised, and this should be regarded during prosecution. Likewise, an attack on a professional dog walker could mean significantly higher numbers of dogs are stolen in one incident, with a greater range of harm as it would impact many owners. There should also be provision for this in sentencing.”

ADCH (208624409) shared the view that the number of dogs involved should be considered as an aggravating factor as in its view the welfare implication is greater the more dogs are involved. It also thought that certain categories of dogs that perform certain functions should be treated differently. It suggested that the theft of assistance dogs should be:

“treated as a separate offence within the Bill, given the additional impacts on their owners... It is essential that effective sentencing guidelines are introduced and enforced alongside the creation of a specific offence of dog abduction, to ensure that appropriate sentences are imposed.”

OneKind (208611005) also focussed on sentencing guidelines as providing an important tool to reflect aggravating factors relevant to an offence. It noted that these:

“lay out the different impacts on the wellbeing of the dogs and humans involved in different circumstances, such as dogs being taken from a commercial setting, a family home, or a role as an assistance animal. In the case of multiple dogs with high monetary value being taken, that monetary value and the intention behind the abduction could additionally be considered in sentencing but should not supersede the animal welfare impacts.”

In responding to the question, The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) reiterated its view that there was no evidence to show that the courts in Scotland do not currently take into account a broad range of factors such as premeditation, victim impact and distress caused to the animal in determining the outcome of dog abduction cases. The body also stated that, while there were currently no offence specific guidelines for theft, Scottish courts were not precluded from taking into account evidence from the victim under current procedure.

“Even though there are currently no offence specific sentencing guidelines for theft, and victim statements can be made only in respect of a list of prescribed offences [Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 (legislation.gov.uk) at section 14 and The Victim Statements

(Prescribed Offences) (Scotland) Order 2009 (legislation.gov.uk)], the court is not precluded from taking into account the evidence of the victim or from thinking other than in terms of simple monetary value.”

Among individual respondents, there was widespread support and many fully agreed with the proposal. Neil Macleod (202139656) welcomed the approach, stating:

“We should treat all dog theft as equal, a guide dog or working dog both have potentially higher monetary value than a dog from the local dogs home but the fact remains, all dog owners will be attached to their dogs and a theft will impact the owners greatly plus the potential harm that may come to the dog after being stolen remains the same.”

Similarly, Sarah Hawkswell (202243651) was supportive of the proposal as it treated all dogs equally, regardless of their function. She suggested:

“The value of the dog should not be taken into account. Working dogs should be treated in the same way as pet dogs. The impact on the welfare of the dog is not affected by its role or use, and this should be seen as a primary factor - abduction is animal abuse.”

However, some shared the view that the number of dogs involved in an abduction was a relevant consideration that required to be taken into account. John Smillie (203561263) commented:

“I believe dogs are almost always abducted by criminals purely for financial gain. The worth of a dog to its "owner" is emotional rather than how much it cost. The impact on their family would surely be greater if more than one dog was abducted. Perhaps the penalty should increase in proportion to the number of dogs abducted?”

Q8. What is your position on the suggestion that the proposals set out in this consultation will help improve the quality of the data collected and recorded regarding incidences of dog abduction?

Please explain the reasons for your response.

236 responses were received to this question. 169 (72%) fully agreed, and 41 (17.02%) partially agreed. 3 respondents (1%) fully disagreed. 15 (6%) took a neutral position and 8 said that they were unsure.

A large majority agreed that the proposal would improve the quality of data collection. Many respondents highlighted the lack of reliable data at present. Some organisational respondents focussed on the details of how they would prefer the data to be processed with the aim of having the greatest impact on the level of dog abductions. Issues such as whether to publish data, the need

for a centralised database and how to ensure consistency were considered by some organisational respondents.

Canine Concern Scotland Trust (207838634) stated that it hoped that collecting data as proposed:

“will inform further proposals and at the very least be a quantitative measure of the success or not of the legislation after a period of time. Publication of such data may also help to act as a deterrent to prospective perpetrators.”

Blue Cross (208368821) agreed that the lack of data on dog theft made it difficult to assess the level of crimes at present. It thought that increased provision for data collection was an essential part of the proposed Bill. In relation to the specifics of the data collection process it stated that it:

“would advocate, subject to data protection laws, a central publicly accessible dog abduction database which records every incidence of dog abduction, the location, the breed, whether the dog was microchipped, whether the dog was subsequently returned to the owner, and the outcome of any criminal proceedings.”

In their responses, Battersea and ADCH both emphasised the importance of consistency in how the crime was recorded across Scotland with appropriate resources put in place to ensure proper implementation. Battersea (208396086) suggested that:

“It would be beneficial to record data on the breed, sex and age of the dog(s) involved in any incidents along with whether the dog abduction is linked to any personal issues between the abductor and the dog’s owner, or if it is linked to a breeding operation. This will allow both police forces and the public to understand the nature of the crime, provide them with the information needed to reduce opportunities for crime and increase the risk of criminals being caught.”

Scottish SPCA (206653181) considered how the data that would be collected could be used to reduce dog abduction, particularly through education. It commented that the proposal:

“will help collate accurate data and implement consistent recording processes across the Police Scotland network. With accurate data, trends can be measured to allow for any education campaign to be rolled out or to allow Police Scotland to ensure resources are utilised efficiently. Should information be made public around any problematic geographical area or specific breed of dog, members of the public will be able to respond to this and take precautionary measures where possible.”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) stated that introducing the proposed Bill was premature as there was not sufficient data as to the level of

dog abductions and the way the courts disposed of the crime to allow a proper assessment of whether the legislation was necessary. Its preferred approach was to use existing systems to collect clearer data in respect of the crime of dog theft as a first step and thereafter assess the need for legislation. It stated:

“The creation of a new offence may improve the quality of the available data on the extent of the crime of dog abduction. However, creating the offence in order to require the collection of data appears to be putting the cart before the horse. It is our view that the current law of theft deals with cases where dogs are deliberately taken from their owner without the owner’s consent the intention to deprive them permanently deprive them of their pet, or otherwise deprive them of their animal temporarily or indefinitely.

It should be possible for steps to be taken to improve data collection and recording without also creating an additional criminal offence. If the Police, COPFS and the Scottish Courts and the SCTS can adapt their systems to record that property stolen in theft and robbery cases included a dog, then that should be done independently of creating a new statutory offence of dog abduction.”

Among individual respondents, there was strong support for the data collection proposals. Debbie Martin (208036662) expressed full agreement, commenting that, under these plans:

“Dog theft will be recorded as such, and therefore be quantifiable, rather than being mixed in with data relating to cruelty cases, and it will also improve the quality of the data for cruelty cases to have theft recorded separately.”

Erin Scott (208036662) noted that:

“I think this could significantly help in improving the way such information is captured and used.”

Alastair Murray (203173657) suggested that:

“More data should be available when recorded as a separate crime under a specific Act.”

Neil Macleod (202139656) fully agreed with this, on the basis that:

“Any improvement of sharing data and recorded incidences with other agencies can only help tackle this crime.”

Susan Edwards (205715687), who is a Kennel Club-accredited instructor and an Institute of Modern Dog Training trainer, said that she partially agreed, noting that:

“Data collected will always be dependent on the willingness of people to cooperate and the time and effort put into collecting it and analysing the information it gives but it is worth collecting it.”

Q9. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

a significant increase in costs/ some increase in costs/ no overall change in costs/ some reduction in costs/ a significant reduction in costs/ skip to next question

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including who you would expect to feel the financial impact of the proposal, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could be delivered more cost-effectively.

There were 183 responses to this question. 9 (5%) suggested that there would be a significant increase in costs, 83 (45%) believed that there would be some increase, 81 (44%) suggested that there would be no overall change, 8 (4%) believed that there would be some decrease and 2 (1%) stated that there would be a significant decrease.

Most respondents accepted that there would be costs associated with implementing the proposed Bill. The costs highlighted included the expenses for Police Scotland and local authorities in investigating and bringing prosecutions. There were also costs of the criminal court process and if prosecutions were successful the cost of custodial sentences. There would also be costs associated with the implementation of the data collection and continued administration and analysis data collection work in the future.

A number of organisations thought that the costs were justified as they were necessary to increase the welfare of the animals. For example, Dogs Trust (207014716) observed that it recognised:

“the consultation document’s note that there may be additional administrative costs relating to crime recording and data collection for the existing offence. However, we firmly believe that any extra costs relating to the recording of data and prosecutions under the Bill would ultimately be mitigated by the welfare improvements to dogs and owners that its introduction will bring.”

The Canine Concern Scotland Trust (207838634) stated:

“there will no doubt be a cost issue but we firmly believe that where canine and human suffering is at stake, this should be a small price to pay.”

The Kennel Club and Stewarty Dog Training Club were among the organisations that thought that the costs would be mitigated to some extent by the deterrent effect of the proposed Bill. The Kennel Club (208380007) observed that:

“with more realistic sentencing guidelines, there could potentially be the opportunity for an increased number of offenders receiving a custodial sentence which may result in increased prison costs. However, the overall impact of the Dog Abduction Bill could be balanced out as there would hopefully be a reduced number of dog thefts which would save the police and the courts time.”

Stewartry Dog Training Club (208028187) also suggested that, as the deterrent effect led to less dog theft pet insurance premiums might reduce as a consequence.

Battersea (208396086) highlighted how the use of data could prevent crime and mitigate the cost of the proposed Bill. It stated:

“if the Bill were effectively enforced, investment was made into ensuring high quality data recording and provided investment was made into raising public awareness, such initiatives would result in an increased cost for police forces and Local Authorities. However, if this enables better understanding and therefore prevention of the crime, this could become a cost saving in time.”

Although the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) (non-Smart Survey response), did not directly respond to the consultation questions, it did refer to the financial impact that the proposal might have on SCTS:

“we anticipate that the proposals relating to applications may impact on the SCTS in relation to: -

- court time and relative court programming;
- associated staff and accommodation resources;
- costs involved in relevant IT changes.

The SCTS would be grateful to be kept informed of the progress of the consultation and for the opportunity to contribute to any impact assessment or financial memorandum, at the appropriate time, should the proposals be taken forward.”

Among the public respondents, there was also recognition that there would be costs associated with the implementation of the proposed Bill.

Juliet Hardwicke (203340337) noted that:

“As the police are already recording the instances as theft of property, they would need to redesign paperwork, retrain staff and alter follow-up

procedures that once in place would be no different to handling any other crime.”

Fiona Brennan (202483813) suggested that any increase in cost could be mitigated by introducing:

“A dog licence for a small fee (e.g. £15)... it would be affordable as an annual fee.”

Erin Scott (208036662) suggested that there might be some reduction in costs:

“At best, it could see insurance and veterinary costs reduce and potentially free up Police Scotland time if incidents of theft were to reduce.”

Q10. Any new law can have an impact on different individuals in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law? If you do not have a view skip to next question.

Please explain the reasons for your answer and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people

This was an open question that received 76 responses.

A theme among these was how dog abduction can affect people who are impacted by disability and who rely on assistance dogs, noting how a reduction in such crime might have a disproportionately positive impact on them. For example, the Kennel Club (208380007), responded to this question noting that:

“An overall reduction in dog abduction would reduce the risk of an assistance dog being stolen, which would be beneficial.”

Other groups identified in responses who would be positively impacted were older people and people who were vulnerable and isolated. A number of respondents including Caroline Kennedy (203232071) and Anne Boyd (203608952) highlighted the support that these groups also receive from having pet dogs. Sharon Dowey MSP (208420319) summarised this view stating:

“As a deterrent, this bill could prevent service dogs being abducted which would have an immeasurable positive impact on those with

disabilities who rely on dogs to help them with their daily tasks eg guide dogs, hearing dogs etc. This would equally be the same for those who are elderly and have a dog for companionship as this may be the only company.”

Q11. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations. Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas?

**Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas?
If you do not have a view then skip to next question.**

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

This was an open question that received 79 responses.

Respondents who supported the Bill generally agreed that the proposed Bill would have a positive impact in the highlighted areas. For example, Canine Concern Scotland Trust (207838634), responded to this question, stating:

“The sentiments of what are right and what are wrong implied by the new law ought to promote good citizenship by future generations.”

Sarah Hawkswell (202243651) thought that the application of the proposed Bill to everyone in society regardless of their financial status would lead to a more just society. She commented that:

“This proposal helps to provide for a more just society - currently the ability to follow up on dog abduction is partially dependent on the wealth of the dog's owner and their ability to mobilise voluntary searches. Many stolen dogs are retrieved not by action from police or other authorities but through mobilisation of volunteers and increased awareness with the dog owning community.”

A particular theme among respondents was the positive impact on wellbeing of the proposed Bill, closely connected to the positive impact of dog ownership. Sarah Petchell (203497783) believed that the proposal:

“Will make society a safer, friendlier place, with increased wellbeing across the board.”

Cecile Smith (203346235) observed that:

“Pets are good for mental health and protecting people from the distress of a dog theft is good for people's well-being.”

Kevin Heneghan (202841116) commented:

“I believe that if people felt safer taking their dog for a walk or indeed having a dog at all, this would be good for general mental health, health through exercise and combatting loneliness.”

However, while stating that “it would be nice to think that such a law would give us a strong, healthy and just society”, Susan Edwards (205715687) felt that more work was still needed, noting that:

“it is hard to see how this one would do that except in the important step of recognising the importance of animal emotions and the values of connections and relationships with them.”

Q12. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

This was an open question that received 79 responses.

A number of respondents used this question to give further emphasis to comments that they had made previously, which they wished to highlight.

The Canine Concern Scotland Trust (207838634) reiterated its view that a central and accessible database with up-to-date records was essential to the proposed Bill’s effectiveness. Battersea (208396086) focussed on the issue of extending the proposal to include cats. While recognising that the nature of cat theft is different to dog theft and therefore it may be harder to prove that abduction has taken place and successfully prosecute its view was that the proposal should include cats. It stated:

“they are a popular pet across the UK, second only to dogs; PDSA and Cats Protection now estimate that as of 2022 there are around 11 million cats owned by the UK public, 900,000 of which are in Scotland.¹⁴ To exclude them from the Bill would fail to account for their welfare or recognise their importance to the public. We understand and respect Mr Golden’s reasons for not including them so far, however as a dog and cat charity we firmly believe that cats are also an essential part of the families in which they reside, and their loss is also devastating for their owners...”

The Law Society of Scotland (208616310) restated its view that there was no evidence that the proposed Bill was necessary as it is already an offence to abduct dogs in Scotland and there is provision under existing procedures for animal welfare and a wide range of other factors such as victim impact to be

¹⁴ <https://www.cats.org.uk/media/11908/cats-report-2022-uk.pdf>

taken into account when sentencing. While recognising the good intentions behind the Bill and acknowledging the importance of pets to their owners it further commented on whether there could be an alternative pathway to legislation:

“it is not clear that there is a need for the legislation proposed in this consultation. It may be that support for the changes proposed in this consultation can be made without primary legislation. We consider that it may be useful to seek Scottish Government support for further research to accurately gauge the extent of the problem in Scotland and whether there is a need for a new offence.”

Stewartry Dog Training Club (208028187) summarised the view of those organisations and individuals who were particularly supportive of the idea of treating the crime of dog abduction as something distinct from crimes involving theft of moveable property. In welcoming the proposal, it asserted that:

“Greater protection for pets and their owners, rather than treating the animals as inanimate objects, is long overdue. It will be welcomed by all animal owners and will have no impact on those who do not keep pets.”

Among individuals, a person who wished to remain anonymous (203134360) commented:

“Dogs are intelligent and loving members of a family. They are hardworking team members in all kinds of jobs and roles. Their lives are worth more than the monetary value placed on them - it doesn't matter if it's a £50 mongrel or a £5k sheepdog, they are someone's friend and should be allowed to live without fear of being stolen.”

Lesley EC Peters (202147849) thought that the proposed Bill was a starting point for dealing with broader issues of animal welfare and criminality, stating that:

“I think there are far deeper questions to be asked about dog and pet animal welfare at stake and the abductions are just the tip of a criminal goldmine. Give them serious sentences and fines plus compulsory attendance involving hands on education regarding animal welfare. There are schemes in USA where prisoners are made responsible for the care and welfare of dogs rescued or given up and facing euthanasia. Perhaps if they knew first hand what it means to have the privilege of a dogs affection and be responsible for its care they might begin to understand the cruelty of their actions.”

Beth Ritchie (207336412) highlighted that in further development of the proposed Bill it would be beneficial to engage with those who would be key to implementation. She suggested:

“Please consider involving police officers, animal enforcement officers, and dog wardens when developing this Bill further. Involving those who will be responsible for the enforcement of any future legislation will help to increase its effectiveness.”

Section 4: Member's Commentary

Maurice Golden MSP has provided the following commentary on the results of the consultation.

I want to thank everyone who took the time to respond to this consultation on my proposed Members' Bill on Dog Abduction. It is encouraging to see responses from a wide range of sources at this early stage of the proposed Bill's progress. I also want to thank the Non-Government Bills Unit at the Scottish Parliament for their advice, support and professionalism throughout the process.

There was a total of 237 responses to the consultation with almost all indicating support. In total, 97% of responses either fully or partially support the proposed legislation. This strong level of support was also evident in the responses to the consultation's multi-option questions.

It is important though to recognise and address criticism of the proposals with a small handful of respondents who did not see a clear case for introducing new legislation. The arguments put forward included a lack of data to assess the extent of the crime and how the courts dealt with it or because dog abduction could be dealt with under existing law. I also recognise the point from the legal academic Dr Craig Anderson that he regards it as more effective to invest more in enforcing the existing law than create new legislation.

However, these arguments do not necessarily take into account the full intent of the proposals. For example, improved data recording without a new offence should be technically possible. But a new offence would not only introduce consistent data recording to avoid dog abductions being recorded together with thefts, it would also send a signal to the public and criminals alike that the law is taking this crime more seriously than before. Equally, dog abduction can be dealt with under the existing law, but that means accepting dogs are still, fundamentally, to be treated as inanimate objects as a starting point.

Overall, the high level of support is incredibly encouraging and also demonstrates a strong public interest in matters of animal welfare. This can be seen in some of the very passionate and personal reflections on the proposals from members of the public.

In addition, the consultation benefited from the input of those working in related fields, the legal profession and welfare organisations. The feedback they and the public provided will help inform my views as I take the proposed Bill forward.

The issues raised centred around a number of common themes that I will examine closely in developing the proposals further:

- The intention is for the new offence to see cases of dog abduction treated primarily as a welfare matter rather than one of financial impact. I appreciate the point raised by the Law Society of Scotland that current law allows for different factors to be taken into account when sentencing. However, I believe the starting point should be one of welfare with other factors then potentially brought into play, and this shift in focus was welcomed by a number of welfare organisations. Perhaps best summed up by Battersea in saying “The love someone has for their dog cannot be valued in financial terms”. It is on that basis I intend to pursue a shift in the starting point for treating these cases.
- The maximum sentence proposed is five years, and this was well received with 86% in favour. In particular, I note comments from Blue Cross and The Kennel Club that even though this is a lesser sentence than the current theoretical maximum, it was a more realistic maximum and may prove a more effective deterrent. Welfare organisations stated the need for clear sentencing guidelines to ensure the maximum penalty could be used. Alongside which, Beth Ritchie highlighted that “Involving those who will be responsible for the enforcement of any future legislation will help increase its effectiveness”. I fully agree and intend to pursue both this and the point on sentencing guidelines.
- Despite the general support for the proposed maximum sentence, I recognise some members of the public felt five years was insufficient as a maximum sentence. However, the Scottish SPCA felt the proposed maximum was in keeping with other animal welfare legislation. I also note the opinion of the Law Society of Scotland in saying that any new statutory offence should have a similar penalty to other statutory offences. As such, I am minded to progress the proposed Bill with the suggested five year maximum.
- The potential for aggravators was raised though, and I feel these warrant further consideration. For example, there was the suggestion, including from some welfare organisations, that abducting multiple animals should be considered an aggravating factor (and not just because of financial impact but because the “impact on their family would surely be greater”). Likewise, Onekind spoke about using sentencing guidelines to reflect other potential aggravators, such as abduction from certain settings and the role of the dog. Further work is required to identify which aggravators would prove most useful to include, and this will form part of future discussions with relevant stakeholders.
- One of the key intentions of the proposed Bill is to improve data collection, so it was, again, encouraging to see strong agreement (89%) that the proposals would achieve this. Alongside consistency of recording, a number of suggestions were raised to help in that regard, including public access to the data, creating a centralised database and specific data markers to include when recording incidents. These

issues deserve further discussion, and I will explore both their practicality and how best they could be introduced.

- Unsurprisingly, a number of responses raised concerns about the intention to focus solely on dogs. I appreciate many of these understood the rationale behind this decision, but equally I am sympathetic to the desire to see other animals and owners benefit from legislation. However, that widening of scope is unlikely to be achievable in the context of this proposed Bill.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude once again to everyone who took part in this consultation. It is a key part of the overall process of introducing a bill and having such a strong show of interest early on establishes the public's appetite to tackle this awful crime.

Annexe

Respondent Name
Adams, Christine (ref 203328404)
Aitken, Kayley (ref 203196268)
Anderson, Dr Craig (ref 203197434)
Angell, Matthew (ref 202138769)
Anonymous (ref 202171821)
Anonymous (ref 202172328)
Anonymous (ref 202182455)
Anonymous (ref 202216080)
Anonymous (ref 202222137)
Anonymous (ref 202229967)
Anonymous (ref 202259023)
Anonymous (ref 202392946)
Anonymous (ref 202505064)
Anonymous (ref 202518864)
Anonymous (ref 202544421)
Anonymous (ref 202616101)
Anonymous (ref 202630077)
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Anonymous (ref 202640136)
Anonymous (ref 202666582)
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Anonymous (ref 202916838)
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Anonymous (ref 203083676)
Anonymous (ref 203103817)
Anonymous (ref 203118958)
Anonymous (ref 203134360)
Anonymous (ref 203139556)
Anonymous (ref 203142489)
Anonymous (ref 203148018)
Anonymous (ref 203151337)
Anonymous (ref 203151526)
Anonymous (ref 203169475)
Anonymous (ref 203169830)
Anonymous (ref 203230971)
Anonymous (ref 203241765)
Anonymous (ref 203285930)
Anonymous (ref 203290041)
Anonymous (ref 203378733)
Anonymous (ref 203411185)
Anonymous (ref 203607665)

Anonymous (ref 203611142)
Anonymous (ref 203630515)
Anonymous (ref 203687094)
Anonymous (ref 203757050)
Anonymous (ref 203826170)
Anonymous (ref 205792366)
Anonymous (ref 205883311)
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Anonymous (ref 205977338)
Anonymous (ref 205982351)
Anonymous (ref 205986413)
Anonymous (ref 206132303)
Anonymous (ref 206141338)
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Anonymous (ref 208044846)
Anonymous (ref 208060287)
Anonymous (ref 208176761)
Anonymous (ref 208418750)
Anonymous (ref 208482349)
Anonymous (ref 208552990)
Anonymous (ref 208554065)
Anonymous (ref 208554937)
Anonymous (ref 208556211)
Anonymous (ref 208570786)
Anonymous (ref 208594147)
Anonymous (ref 208616532)
Anonymous (ref 208648813)
Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) (ref 208624409)
Battersea Dogs and Cats Home (ref 208396086)
Berrecloth, Sybil (ref 203031423)
Blue Cross (ref 208368821)
Borg, Juliet (ref 203449620)
Boyd, Anne (ref 203608952)
Brennan, Fiona (ref 202483813)
Bright, Liz (ref 208577778)
British Association for Shooting and Conservation (Scotland) (ref 208572427)
Brown, Carole (ref 208176750)
Brown, Paul (ref 208553004)
Buchanan, Carol (ref 203534105)
Cage, Andrew Martin (ref 202405819)
Cairns, Sandra (ref 203107030)
Campbell, Rosalind (ref 205884791)
Campbell, Stewart (ref 202158016)
Canine Concern Scotland Trust (ref 207838634)
Carson MSP, Finlay H (ref 208575503)

Charnley, Pam (ref 202249817)
Clark, Scott (ref 203187890)
Clements, Josephine (ref 202710845)
Coates, Sarah (ref 205883409)
Cooper, Colleen (ref 208628091)
Costello, Jo (ref 208576324)
Cowen, Isabelle (ref 203073173)
Crosbie, Caroline (ref 203073272)
Dawson, Susan (ref 202467832)
Dew, Carol (ref 203479722)
Dogs Trust (ref 207014716)
Dowey MSP, Sharon (ref 208420319)
Eastwood, Ian (ref 203152405)
Edge, S (ref 208554062)
Edwards, Susan (ref 205715687)
Fisher, Eileen (ref 205598198)
Fleming, Susan (ref 203161709)
Fraser, Craig (ref 202259310)
Gibson, Michelle (ref 202616112)
Gilchrist, Alex (ref 203263976)
Gray, Audrey (ref 203405679)
Gray, Cllr Geri (ref 204503507)
Gray, Doug (ref 203172640)
Halliday, Lauryn (ref 203176313)
Hannah, Yvonne (ref 203114727)
Hardwicke, Juliet (ref 203340337)
Hattle, Lesley (ref 205305597)
Hawkins, Lorraine (ref 202218198)
Hawkswell, Sara (ref 202243651)
Henderson, Amanda (ref 203710618)
Heneghan, Kevin (ref 202841116)
Hill, Simon (ref 205976699)
Hughes, Kaylee (203154335)
Hull, Roger (ref 203513192)
Inch, Jennifer (ref 203825229)
Jean (ref 202123976)
Jeffrey, Lauren (ref 202935235)
Johnson, Margaret (ref 202258359)
Johnstone, Maureen - (ref 202122337)
Kennedy, Caroline (ref 203232071)
Kennel Club (ref 208380007)
Kite, Sheila (ref 203513061)
Lamb, Jacqui (ref 203132445)
Law Society of Scotland (ref 208616310)
Leggat, Tracy (ref 203110484)
Leggat, Tracy (ref 203110484)

Lowdon, David (ref 203612577)
Macdonald, Ken (ref 208164779)
Mackay, Dennis (ref 203135602)
MacKenzie, Sheila (ref 203135708)
MacLaine, Joanna (ref 203757824)
Macleod, Neil (ref 202139656)
Malinowski, Kristine (ref 202948889)
Marrian, Dr Valerie Jean (ref 205868824)
Marsh, Graham (ref 203156068)
Martin, Debbie (ref 208036662)
Masson, Sandra-Dee (ref 203346046)
Mcateer, Amanda (ref 202931974)
McBride, Kerrie (ref 203686875)
McCall, Roz (ref 208586265)
McClue, Caitlyn (ref 205488444)
McConnell, Margaret Anne (ref 203112304)
McDerment, Alexandra (ref 203123087)
Mcfarlane, George (ref 203139675)
McGuinness, Gail (ref 207440559)
McIntyre, Debbie (ref 203131608)
McKenzie, Edward (ref 205688676)
Mckie, Patricia (ref 202211330)
McLaughlin, Rhona (ref 203168051)
McLennan, Jean (ref 203132093)
McMillan, Jennifer (ref 208554849)
McNeill, Scott (ref 202645018)
Mitchell, Heather (ref 203491159)
Morgan, Bryan (ref 202552681)
Muir, Louise (ref 203562136)
Murray, Alastair Murray (ref 203173657)
Navarro, Jo (ref 202551818)
Nicol, Arlene (ref 208209666)
OneKind (ref 208611005)
Pet Theft Awareness (ref 208560847)
Pet Theft Reform (ref 208533364)
Peters, Lesley EC (ref 202147849)
Prentice, Caitlin (ref 203154918)
Puncher, David (ref 203209497)
Quinn, Graham (ref 208067034)
Ritchie, Beth (ref 207336412)
Robb, Nicola (ref 203687024)
Robertson, Kirsty (ref 202949812)
Robertson, Linda (ref 203799430)
Robinson, Richard (ref 203768712)
Rooney, Sheena (ref 203085039)
Ross, Cllr Ann (ref 205807611)

Sarah (ref 203497783)
Scott, Daniel (ref 203337904)
Scott, Erin (ref 202158915)
Scottish SPCA (ref 206653181)
Sedgley, Leigh S (ref 205883424)
Sharpe, Derek (ref 208620262)
Shields, Carrie (ref 208561033)
Sloan, Craig (ref 203205147)
Smillie, John (ref 203561263)
Smith, Cecile (ref 203346235)
Smith, Colin (ref 202666363)
Soutar, Freida (ref 208640839)
Stewart, Sheena (ref 203195201)
Stewartry Dog Training Club (ref 208028187)
Tague, Duncan (ref 202145887)
Thomson, Gillian (ref 208579378)
Thomson, Steve (ref 203199042)
Thornton, Kyle (ref 202820713)
Troupe, Clare (ref 208554248)
Urquhart, Donna (ref 208553898)
Valentine, Jacqueline (ref 203110479)
Vermeulen, Peter (ref 207189947)
Waring, Nanette (ref 206907071)
Watt, Elizabeth (ref 203161077)
Webster, Gordon & Julie (ref 204099353)
Weir, Scott (ref 202760724)
Wells-Kidd, Hazel (ref 203166678)
Whitehead Minto, Wendy (ref 203162209)
Black, William Stuart (ref 203609291)
Wilson, Roger (ref 203161051)