

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 12 June 2024
11th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE2083: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

Introduction

Petitioner Katrina Gordon

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review [The Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) and ensure that breed specific regulations do not restrict responsible dog owners from undertaking exercise and training routines which support the dog's welfare and reduce the risk of their dog becoming dangerous.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2083>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 14 February 2024.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 553 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received submissions from the Scottish Government and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.
7. Members may wish to note that [the Criminal Justice Committee considered the Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024 at its meeting on 21 February 2024](#).

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
June 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2083: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

Petitioner

Katrina Gordon

Date Lodged

14 February 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review [The Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) and ensure that breed specific regulations do not restrict responsible dog owners from undertaking exercise and training routines which support the dog's welfare and reduce the risk of their dog becoming dangerous.

Background information

To be well adjusted and under its owner's control, an XL Bully needs 2 hours of outdoor exercise daily, both walking to heel on a lead and a small amount of running off-lead. Without the ability to "run off" energy each day, excess energy builds up and a well-adjusted dog can quickly become an anxious dog, resulting in it becoming more dangerous in the home.

Vital control commands cannot be practiced effectively on a leash or with a muzzle. A trusting bond is built up between owner and dog through daily off-leash practice of basic recall and other commands including "stop", "leave" (which prevents the dog from picking up an item of interest or chasing potential prey) and "drop it".

It is important that regulations do not curtail these existing successful strategies, which would result in owners losing the level of command, and dogs quickly becoming de-skilled and much more dangerous, not safer.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2083



The petitioner is calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review [The Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) and ensure that breed specific regulations do not restrict responsible dog owners from undertaking exercise and training routines which support the dog's welfare and reduce the risk of their dog becoming dangerous. The background to the petition relates to concerns about new restrictions on owning XL Bully type dogs in Scotland (summarised below). The [petitioner states](#):

“To be well adjusted and under its owner's control, an XL Bully needs 2 hours of outdoor exercise daily, both walking to heel on a lead and a small amount of running off-lead. Without the ability to "run off" energy each day, excess energy builds up and a well-adjusted dog can quickly become an anxious dog, resulting in it becoming more dangerous in the home”.

New XL Bully restrictions in Scotland and exemption scheme

Restrictions on ownership of XL Bully type dogs have recently been introduced in Scotland under two sets of 2024 Regulations. [The Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) was made under powers in section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and came into force on 23 February 2024. The Order designated “the type of dog known as the XL Bully” for the purposes of section 1 of the [Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 \(“the 1991 Act”\)](#). This means that, since 23 February, it is an offence under that Act to allow an XL Bully to be in a public place without being muzzled and on a lead.

The Order also means that:

- It is now an offence under that Act to breed, sell or abandon an XL Bully
- From 1 August 2024 it will be an offence to own or possess an XL Bully.

The [Dangerous Dogs \(Compensation and Exemption Schemes\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) was subsequently introduced as the “second stage” of the new rules. It sets out that from 1 August 2024, it will only be an offence to own an XL Bully dog if the owner has not applied for and been granted an exemption. Owners of an XL Bully dog will need to apply for an exemption on or before 31 July 2024 to be able to continue owning their dog. The [process for applying for an exemption is set out on the Scottish Government website](#) alongside more information on the restrictions. Information includes links to guidance on how to safely muzzle-train a dog to support compliance with the restrictions.

Background to the restrictions

The [UK Government announced it was introducing restrictions on XL Bully dogs in September 2023](#) in response to concerns about a number of dog attacks. Owning an XL Bully dog without a certificate of exemption after 1 February 2024 became a criminal offence in England and Wales. The [UK Parliament House of Commons Library has published a briefing on those restrictions](#). The [UK Government stated regarding the new restrictions](#):

“The decision was made following a concerning rise in fatal dog attacks involving the XL Bully breed type. Up until 2021 there were around 3 fatalities per year. There have been 23 since the start of 2021 – with the XL Bully being involved in many of these tragic attacks.”

The [Scottish Government Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhan Brown MSP said, in setting out its reasons for bringing in equivalent restrictions in Scotland](#):

“We have public safety always in mind. As I made clear in my statement to Parliament last month, the decision to introduce the initial new safeguards on XL bully dogs is one that we did not make lightly. We wanted to ensure that we took an evidence-based approach after engagement with relevant stakeholders, which I carried out following the United Kingdom Government’s announcement of its legislation.

After that legislation came into force, it became clear that the UK Government could not confirm that an owner of an XL bully dog who lived in England or Wales and was not able to sell or rehome a dog there could not do so in Scotland. Although to rehome such a dog would breach English and Welsh law, the legislation created a loophole that led to some owners bringing dogs to Scotland. Therefore, we moved to take action immediately by introducing the new order.”

Forthcoming further Scottish Government work on dog control

Beyond these Regulations, [the Scottish Government has committed that in the medium term it will work with stakeholders to look at potential improvements to the Control of Dogs \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) (which introduced [dog control notices in Scotland](#)) that could strengthen the preventative dog control regime in Scotland. A timeframe for this work has not been set out.

The Scottish Government has also recently committed to holding a summit on dog control in June 2024. [Speaking in the Stage 1 debate on the Welfare of Dogs \(Scotland\) Bill on 9 May 2024, the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP said](#):

“In the past year, there was a lot of concern when the UK Government announced the ban on XL bully dogs. The Scottish Government is committed to the “deed not breed” approach but, unfortunately, we had to follow the UK legislation. We do not want to find ourselves in that position again.

I announce that the Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhan Brown, and I will hold a responsible dog ownership and control summit on 26 June this year. The summit will provide an opportunity for us to hear at first hand from stakeholders who are dealing with the various aspects of dog ownership and control in our communities. It will provide an opportunity for a free exchange of ideas in a focused environment to discuss how the current laws and approach on dangerous and out-of-control dogs are operating and what further measures are needed to improve public safety and continue to improve the welfare of dogs”.

Dog control and safety in private spaces

The new restrictions in Scotland mean that XL Bully dogs need to be on a lead and muzzled in public places only. One area of criticism of the new restrictions, both in Scotland and in England and Wales, has been that they do nothing to prevent dog attacks in private spaces e.g. within homes, whilst limiting the potential for exempted dogs to be exercised.

Motions to annul both of the above-mentioned Scottish Regulations were lodged and debated in the Criminal Justice Committee by Christine Grahame MSP, who raised a number of concerns about the restrictions. One area of criticism was that the new restrictions – taken forward under the framework of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 - only apply in public places, whereas the Scottish legal framework for Dog Control Notices under the framework of the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 applies more broadly.

[Christine Grahame MSP stated in the Criminal Justice Committee on 27 March 2024](#) that “Many attacks take place in a garden or in a home”. The [petitioner submitted further evidence to the Criminal Justice Committee in support of the motion to annul](#) on 21 February 2024. It stated:

“I have created an XL spreadsheet detailing the 25 fatal dog attacks in the UK since 2020. Of these, 72% took place indoors or in private gardens and so would have been unaffected by the proposed negative SSI.”

And:

“The proposed requirement to muzzle and keep the XL Bully dog on a lead in a public place, if implemented, will, within a matter of days, make the general public much less safe. This includes our emergency service workers, our postal workers, and any child or elderly person who either shares a house with an XL Bully type or visits such a house. There is a genuine risk of death to anyone who has to enter the home or garden of an under-exercised XL Bully type dog who has had its training regime restricted.”

Talking to the restrictions in the Criminal Justice Committee on 21 February 2024, [the Scottish Government Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhan Brown MSP](#) also recognised the need for the dog control regime to address safety within private as well as public places:

“After the UK Government implemented its legislation, there was a horrific incident down in Essex in which a woman was killed. That dog attack happened in a home, as a lot of dog attacks do. Even though we are talking about having dogs on muzzles and leads outside and bringing in safeguards, because public safety is paramount, we also have to acknowledge the responsibility that comes with dog ownership.”

Following the UK Government’s announcement in September 2023, the UK Parliament’s [Environment, Food and Rural Affairs \(EFRA\) Committee held a session on XL Bully restrictions in England and Wales on 18 October 2023](#). Witnesses highlighted that the proposed new rules would not prevent dog attacks inside a private residence. The EFRA Committee subsequently [wrote to the UK Government](#), recognising imperfections associated with the approach of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, but overall supporting the ban in pursuit of public safety. It stated:

“It is a matter of record that this Committee has previously raised concerns about the nature and operation of that Act. While it is imperfect, we feel the circumstances presented by the proliferation of XL Bully attacks and fatalities make its use necessary as the most effective tool available to the Government.”

One of the witnesses before the EFRA Committee, Head of Animal Welfare for IVC Evidensia (a large veterinary care provider), was subsequently quoted in the media raising concerns that the restrictions could lead to XL Bullies receiving less exercise¹ resulting in them potentially becoming frustrated and therefore more aggressive within the home.

Some owners of ‘dog fields’ in the UK are advertising that they provide private spaces where XL Bullies may be exercised off lead without breaking the restrictions. In England and Wales, [the Crown Prosecution Service has issued guidance](#) clarifying that an exempted XL Bully “can be exercised in private grounds, paddocks or other places not accessed by the public in general”.

Stakeholder views about the restrictions

A number of animal welfare organisations have argued against the new restrictions. The [Scottish SPCA has not supported the restrictions and considers the Scottish Government should focus on ‘deed not breed’](#), tackling underlying causes of dog attacks such as poor breeding practices. The [Scottish Animal Welfare Commission have also raised a number of concerns](#) including that evidence supports that breed-specific legislation is not effective. There has also been some [support for breed-specific restrictions from some groups such as Bully Watch UK](#) and [the Campaign for Evidence-Based Regulation of Dangerous Dogs](#). Both organisations argue that Bully type dogs present a significantly increased risk of attack and serious injury.

Alexa Morrison, Senior Researcher

¹ BBC News, 4 December 2023, ‘XL bully ban could lead to more attacks at home – adviser’ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-67461693> (content warning - this article contains images of injuries sustained in a dog attack)

25 April 2024

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at

spice@parliament.scot

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

Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government submission, 12 March 2024

PE2083/A: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

The Scottish Government notes that the petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to 'urge the Scottish Government to review [The Dangerous Dogs \(Designated Types\) \(Scotland\) Order 2024](#) and ensure that breed specific regulations do not restrict responsible dog owners from undertaking exercise and training routines which support the dog's welfare and reduce the risk of their dog becoming dangerous'.

As the Committee will now be aware, the Minister for Victims and Community Safety, Siobhian Brown MSP, appeared before the Criminal Justice Committee on 21 February 2024 to give evidence on this Order. During that Committee meeting a Motion from Christine Grahame MSP to annul the Order was voted against unanimously 8-0.

The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) (Scotland) Order 2024 subsequently came into force on 23 February 2024.

The decision to introduce new safeguards in relation to XL Bully dogs was not one taken lightly. The Committee will wish to be aware that the Scottish Government is taking a two-stage approach to introducing the new safeguards.

For the first stage of the new rules and with The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) (Scotland) Order 2024 now in force, it is now an offence under Scots law for a person in Scotland to:

- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle
- breed or breed from an XL Bully dog
- sell an XL Bully dog
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray
- give away an XL Bully dog

The Scottish Government understands the concerns expressed by dog owners about the impact that the new controls may have on their dogs.

The Scottish Government takes animal welfare very seriously and is committed to the highest possible welfare standards. There is however a balance to be struck between protecting animal welfare and protecting public safety.

The new safeguard requirements that are now in force are designed to protect the public and aim to prevent and reduce the risk of incidents/attacks by XL Bully dogs from happening.

Allowing the owner of an XL Bully to exercise their dog in a public place while off lead and without a muzzle would be counterproductive to the aim of the Order, and would create too great a risk to the public. As such, the Scottish Government cannot support such a proposition.

The Committee will wish to be aware that helpful and practical support and guidance has been published on the Mygov.scot website to ensure owners are made aware of how to comply with the new safeguards on XL Bully dogs: [XL Bully dogs in Scotland - mygov.scot](#)

The Committee will also wish to be aware that the second stage of the new rules will mean that from 1 August 2024, it will be an offence to own a XL Bully dog without an exemption. Owners of an XL Bully dog will need to apply for an exemption on or before 31 July 2024 to be able to continue owning their dog.

The details of the exemption scheme such as the start date for application, requirements to receive an exemption and also arrangements for compensation for any XL Bully dog owners not wishing to retain their dogs, will be published on the Mygov.scot website in due course.

Yours sincerely

Criminal Law, Practice and Licensing Unit

Petitioner submission of 21 March 2024

PE2083/B: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

The [Scottish Government's submission](#) betrays two fundamental misunderstandings:

1. "There is... a balance to be struck between protecting animal welfare and protecting public safety."
2. "Allowing the owner of an XL Bully dog to exercise their dog in a public place while off lead and without a muzzle... would create too great a risk to the public."

These unevicenced statements contradict both my experience and the evidence of the academic research presented below. This legislation has had an immediate negative impact on the welfare of XL Bully type dogs, creating a life of chronic stress, which is a recognised cause of **increased aggression** in dogs.

Dogs who experience lower welfare standards experience much higher levels of stress, indicated by higher levels of cortisol, and these dogs also exhibit more behavioural issues (Menor-Campos et al., 2011). Already aggressive dogs have been shown to have higher levels of the stress-related hormone cortisol compared to dogs who were not aggressive. (Rosado et al., 2010).

Wearing a muzzle on a regular basis significantly **increases** levels of cortisol in dogs (Malancus, 2019). Mandatory daily muzzle use negatively impacts social behaviours and decreases both welfare and quality of life in the dogs affected (Arhant et al.,

2021). The results of the same study also show that badly fitting muzzles, especially when used daily, represent a significant risk factor for the development of painful injuries to the dog. Pain in dogs is recognised to cause or exacerbate problem behaviours, including aggression (Mills et al., 2024).

Further research reveals that dogs which are restricted to lead exercise (“sedentary dogs”) are **more aggressive** than “active” dogs (i.e. those participating in high-energy off-lead training such as agility and other dog sports). “Sedentary” dogs were twice as likely to “react aggressively when touched on the head” and more than twice as likely to exhibit “aggressive behaviour when scolded” compared to those active dogs who were regularly trained off-leash (Zilocchi et al., 2016).

So, in fact, there is no “balance to be struck” – when a dog’s welfare needs, including exercise and training, are fully met, the public are safer. When a dog’s welfare is compromised, by muzzling on every walk and never being allowed to exhibit basic natural behaviours outdoors such as running, then chronic stress results, cortisol levels increase and the dog becomes **more** aggressive, resulting in a much **greater** risk to public safety, particularly indoors.

80% of dog attacks already happen indoors or in private gardens (Loder, 2019). Restricting dogs’ welfare as this legislation does will result in an increase in indoor attacks, and this study shows that **the victims are then more likely to be children or elderly people.**

During the four years we have owned my dog, we have daily trained and exercised him completely safely, on and off the leash, without incident. Until the new law came in, his muzzle was only for vet’s visits. In our care, he has presented no risk at all to the public. Our “safeguarding measures” which achieved this zero-risk approach, included maintaining a safe distance from other people and dogs and training him **every single day** in basic obedience, including recall, “leave” and “stop”. It is no longer possible, within the law, for us to practice these commands outdoors and so we are quickly losing the voice control we once had over our 40kg dog. (Our nearest “secure dog park” is 2+ hours drive away from home.)

Further research validates my dog’s welfare need to be allowed to exercise safely off the leash (Foltin et al., 2021). This study reveals that dogs **need** to be allowed to exercise off leash regularly to be able to exhibit their natural physiological walking pace, which is faster than any human’s. The study concludes that “*most dogs stay close to their owner and off leash restrictions should be reconsidered.*”

We have tried our best to comply with the new law, but my previously well-adjusted, well-trained, completely safe dog is now showing classic signs of the chronic stress which leads to aggression. He has lost 5kg due to stress since we started using the muzzle regularly. We are now breaking the 2006 Animal Welfare Act to comply with the 2024 legislation and **my dog is becoming more dangerous as a result** – this is not a sustainable situation.

“Overall, it becomes more challenging for dog owners to provide their dog with opportunities for ‘a good life’ or ‘a life worth living’ if mandatory muzzling is enacted.” (Arhant et al., 2021)

“For animals to have “lives worth living” it is necessary, overall, to minimise their negative experiences and at the same time to provide the animals with opportunities to have positive experiences.” (Mellor, 2016)

I’m calling on the Government to annul this SSI and repeal this legislation as soon as possible **in order to restore public safety** in my home and many others.

Thank you.

References

1. Arhant, C., Schmied-Wagner, C., Aigner, U. and Affenzeller, N., 2021. Owner reports on the use of muzzles and their effects on dogs: An online survey. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 41, pp.73-81.
2. Foltin, S. and Ganslosser, U., 2021. Exploration behavior of pet dogs during off-leash walks. *J. Veter. Sci. Med*, 9(9).
3. Loder, R.T., 2019. The demographics of dog bites in the United States. *Heliyon*, 5(3).
4. Mellor, D.J., 2016. Updating animal welfare thinking: Moving beyond the “Five Freedoms” towards “a Life Worth Living”. *Animals*, 6(3), p.21.
5. Menor-Campos, D.J., Molleda-Carbonell, J.M. and López-Rodríguez, R., 2011. Effects of exercise and human contact on animal welfare in a dog shelter. *Veterinary Record*, 169(15), pp.388-388.
6. Mălăncuș, R.N., 2019. Stress induced by muzzle wearing in dogs.
6. Mills, D.S., Coutts, F.M. and McPeake, K.J., 2024. Behavior Problems Associated with Pain and Paresthesia. *Veterinary Clinics: Small Animal Practice*, 54(1), pp.55-69.
7. Rosado, B., García-Belenguer, S., León, M., Chacón, G., Villegas, A. and Palacio, J., 2010. Blood concentrations of serotonin, cortisol and dehydroepiandrosterone in aggressive dogs. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 123(3-4), pp.124-130.
8. Zilocchi, M., Tagliavini, Z., Cianni, E. and Gazzano, A., 2016. Effects of physical activity on dog behavior. *Dog behavior*, 2(2), pp.9-14.

Petitioner submission of 4 June 2024

PE2083/C: Review the rules to ensure that no dog becomes more dangerous as a result of breed specific regulations

The SPICe briefing provides a useful update on this evolving situation and highlights the increased risk of more indoor dog attacks.

Since that briefing was published, an Edinburgh owner has suffered serious injuries after being attacked by her two XL bullies in her home². A police investigation is ongoing. The woman appears to have been compliant with the current restrictions. It is of the utmost importance that the Government takes full responsibility and an active role in monitoring and investigating incidents where “compliant” XL Bully type

² BBC News, 22 May 2024, “Woman attacked by her own XL bullies in flat”, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2vvgx1y1x8o>

dogs have attacked, because, as outlined in my previous submissions, it is likely that these dogs were not dangerous before their welfare was restricted by this legislation.

The SPICe briefing didn't mention the mental health of affected owners or the negative effects this is having on their dogs' behaviour. A submission provided to the Criminal Justice Committee in advance of consideration of the Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) (Scotland) Order 2024, presented evidence that 89% of owners were struggling with stress and anxiety as a result of the ban and that 64% of owners were suffering suicidal thoughts some or all of the time related to the ban. An extrapolation of these statistics suggests that between 3,200 and 19,200 people in Scotland may be experiencing suicidal thoughts as a result of the implementation of this legislation; each unstable individual remains in charge of a potentially dangerous dog.

[There is a direct correlation between poor mental health of owners and negative behaviour traits in their dogs, as researched by Barcelos et al in their 2023 study.](#)

The results of this study revealed that higher occurrences of aggressive dog behaviour, fearful dog behaviour, and lack of control over the dog were all directly correlated with mental health difficulties of owners. This suggests that the Government has made these dogs much more dangerous by adversely affecting the mental health of owners through hasty implementation of the restrictions.

I am lucky. My 26" crossbreed rescue bulldog has recently been assessed by an English Dog Legislation Officer (we do not have any in Scotland). I now have a 4-page document outlining why he doesn't meet the DEFRA conformation standards. Since I made the positive, fully informed decision not to exempt him, and have stopped muzzling him, my mental health has turned around. In April I was uncharacteristically suffering daily with suicidal thoughts, and now I am returned to full health. This is evidence of the direct link between this legislation and affected owners' mental health. By marginalising and stigmatising a minority group of innocent civilians, threatening the lives of our pets, restricting animal welfare and leaving us with no hope of justice and a real sense of hopelessness, the Government has directly created a massive mental health crisis in this population. This owner-instability is making those dogs much more dangerous, right now.

Suggested action points for the Scottish Government:

1. Repeal this legislation as soon as possible. It is unfair and is having a net-negative effect on public safety. It is in direct contravention to the government's own "deed not breed" policy.
2. Show active compassion to affected owners through pro-active use of the exemption register database. Contact exempted dog owners and ask relevant questions:
 - a. Request a photo and measurements of each dog on the exempted list. Employ an expert to check whether they fit the DEFRA guidance. This will dramatically reduce the number of exempted dogs, thus relieving owners of their mental health issues and making their dogs safe again.

- b. Assess each owner's mental health. Those most badly affected must be offered genuine compassion and support through this living nightmare. Remember that most affected owners are guilty of no crime and their dogs are loved pets which have never hurt anyone. Owners need to feel some kind of hope; they need to escape their feeling of entrapment; they need to feel respected rather than stigmatised and included rather than marginalised. Repealing the legislation and treating all potentially dangerous dogs the same would be a step forward to preventing suicides and making these dogs safer again.
 - c. Assess how owners are currently exercising their dogs and how the ban has affected that. Offer practical support to owners whose dogs are struggling to cope with the mandatory reduction in welfare: all dogs must be enabled to exercise daily in a safe environment off lead and without a muzzle. This is vital for the health of both dog and owner, to keep everybody safe. This may mean the government paying for secure dog-park time for those on restricted incomes, and using local dog wardens in remote and rural areas to agree safe places where a dog can be exercised if no secure dog-park is available.
 3. Where an owner of an exempted dog dies by suicide or dog attack, accept some responsibility and have a formal investigation.
 4. Arrange for the movement of these dogs across the border. The current situation that Scottish exempted dogs are not exempted in England and vice versa is keeping families apart and this is having a huge toll on the mental health of affected families, causing their dogs, potentially, to become much less safe as described in the Barcelos report.

Suggested action points to avoid a repeat scenario:

1. Make it mandatory that the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission is consulted by the Scottish Government on all primary and secondary legislation affecting the welfare of animal sentient beings, that the SAWC views are updated so as to be currently relevant at the time of decision-making, and that these views are made available to Parliament, either in writing or in-person, at the time of decision-making. This would help ensure committees are more fully informed of the potential impacts of regulations when considering whether or not to approve proposals such as this one.
2. Implement the Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy in all parliamentary decision-making processes. Wherever evidence of a significantly increased suicide risk becomes apparent, stop proceedings, and introduce Time, Space & Compassion. On this occasion, evidence of a massively increased suicide risk was ignored. This has resulted in the mental health of thousands of owners being destabilised, directly causing their dogs to become more dangerous. This will result in an increase in dog-attacks and deaths. Compassion must be central to any future dog legislation proposals to protect owners' mental health and thus prevent animals from becoming more dangerous.