

[Campaign to protect police dogs is launched in Scotland](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
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23 Apr 2018



Liam Kerr MSP has launched a campaign, today, calling for a new criminal offence of causing injury to police dogs. He made the announcement after visiting the police dog unit in Baluniefield, Dundee.

Currently it is not a specific crime to injure or kill a police dog. In Scotland offenders who harm service animals such as dogs or horses can only be charged under a patchwork of laws unfit for this purpose.

The Scottish Conservatives have pledged to introduce a new criminal offence of harming or killing a service animal. This would adequately punish those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses who serve the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

The campaign continues the work undertaken by PC Dave Wardell requesting a similar change to the law in England. PC Wardell started his campaign after his police dog Finn was repeatedly stabbed during an attempted arrest.

During the visit Liam spoke to Chief Inspector Neil Anderson and his team regarding the work the dogs undertake on behalf of Police Scotland, the danger they are put in and the importance of their role. The visit to the Unit was facilitated by Police Scotland at the request of Liam Kerr MSP.

Commenting on the campaign, Liam Kerr said:

“Service animals are highly trained members of Police Scotland and are repeatedly put in dangerous situations.

“Police dogs and horses undergo extensive training. We ask them to work for us and risk their lives to keep us safe and yet the law does not fully protect them when they are hurt.

“Introducing a criminal offence of causing injury to police animals will ensure criminals who attack police animals are dealt with effectively, raise awareness of the severity of the crime and deter further attacks.

“Ultimately this gives service animals the legal protection they deserve and goes some, small way, to saying thank you for their dedicated service.”

PC Dave Wardell, who began the campaign for Finn's law, said:

"Service animals are vital to all of us. Police and prison animals are vital to our safety. A variety of other highly trained service animals offer services that positively change people's lives and help society.

"Isn't it about time that these amazing animals are recognised for the incredibly important role they play in helping and protecting us? Isn't it about time these animals were protected in law by having their own specific offence of assaulting them? It's time for Finn's Law!"

Chief Inspector Neil Anderson said:

"Police Scotland is not, and cannot, actively support any campaign to have laws created or amended, however this does not prevent us from welcoming any potential legislation which can provide further support to our officers, dogs, horses, or other specialist units in the future, particularly in areas beneficial to their welfare."