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A petition to increase legal protection for service animals, including police dogs and horses, has exceeded 30,000 signatures.

The petition, launched on the 10 May this year, is part of a campaign organised by Scottish Conservative MSP Liam Kerr calling for a new criminal offence of causing injury to police dogs.

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.

Commenting on the campaign, Liam Kerr said:

“It is extremely heartening to see the fantastic number of signatures this petition has gathered in such a short amount of time.

“The support this petition has gathered simply demonstrates the widespread public support for a change to the law to fully protect service animals.

“In Scotland, hundreds of service animals work with Police Scotland to keep us safe.

“This includes sniffer dogs, police dogs and horses; they all work with the same dedication to duty as the men and women in our Police force.

“Unfortunately, in Scotland, our laws don’t protect them the same way and currently, the law views a Police animal as little more than property.

“The Cabinet Secretary must listen to the thousands of voices calling for greater protection and status for service animals and change the law now.”