

Press release: Greyhound welfare boosted through multi-million pound deal with gambling industry

Thousands of racing greyhounds are to be better cared for as a result of a new deal worth an estimated £3 million this year, to be paid for by some of Britain's biggest bookmakers.

The Minister for Sport Mims Davies has announced that the funding will contribute towards new tailored training for veterinary staff, the expansion of an injury recovery scheme to ensure more greyhounds can enjoy a full and active life following racing, and the provision of more homes for dogs as they enter retirement, through increased funding for the Greyhound Trust.

The extra money will also go towards improving safety across the nation's 21 licenced racetracks, kennel improvements and the provision of air-conditioning for trainers' vehicles to improve welfare standards.

The voluntary commitment from Betfred, William Hill, Sky Betting and Gaming, and Paddy Power Betfair, was reached following discussions chaired by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, which called for a fair return to the greyhound industry from bookmakers' profits on the sport.

This follows major operators Ladbrokes-Coral, Bet 365 and Jennings Bet who have previously made commitments on the same basis.

The move will be underpinned by the 'Greyhound Commitment' – a long-term strategic plan from the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, which will ensure animal welfare and the integrity of greyhound racing remain paramount in the sport.

Gambling Minister, Mims Davies, said:

"I am delighted to have reached an agreement with leading operators to ensure the welfare of our greyhounds is protected and improved through this fund.

"As the sixth most watched sport in Britain, it is clear that the welfare and care of all racing greyhounds, from registration to retirement, must be a fundamental part of its successful future.

"I strongly urge all remaining bookmakers that take bets on greyhound racing who have not signed up to this agreement to follow suit and support the sport.

"Any greyhounds put to sleep due to medical treatment being too expensive, or a poor prognosis is one too many – we must stop this."

Mark Bird, Managing Director of the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, said:

"The Greyhound Board are extremely grateful for the conclusion of the mediation and the commitment of the major bookmakers to contribute additional funds from their on-line businesses.

"The GBGB has outlined clear ambitions, within our 'Greyhound Commitment' as to where this new income will be spent, with the majority supporting greyhound welfare standards and initiatives, both throughout their racing careers but also as part their homing process following retirement from the sport."

Joe Scanlon, Chairman of the British Greyhound Racing Fund, said:

"With this deal the BGRF will be close to full support from all the major retail and online operators and it will provide a firm basis for delivering the enhanced welfare and integrity provision the sport of greyhound racing expects.

"This agreement would not have been possible without the support of the Minister and her team at DCMS, Lord Lipsey who has worked tirelessly to improve the welfare of greyhounds over many years and of course the major bookmakers for their continued support of the Fund."

The agreement took effect from 1 January 2019 and is expected to increase the income to the British Greyhound Racing Fund to around £10 million a year.

Notes to editors:

For further information contact the DCMS press office on: 0207 211 2210

Under the terms of the agreement, operators will contribute 0.6% of their online turnover on bets placed on British greyhound racing, in addition to their current contributions from their betting shops business, with effect from 1 January 2019. For betting exchanges, an equivalent rate based on sportsbook gross gambling revenue will be applied to the commission on UK greyhound bets.

Ladbrokes-Coral, long-term retail contributors, started online payments on the same basis from 1 January 2018 and Bet365 is also a long-time contributor. Land-based operator JenningsBet also agreed to commence contributions from 1 January 2018.

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) is responsible for the governance, regulation and management of the sport of licensed greyhound racing in England, Scotland and Wales. It receives funds through the British Greyhound Racing Fund in the form of voluntary contributions from bookmakers on their turnover from bets placed on licensed British greyhound racing.

The GBGB's spending on welfare has been protected in recent years and has remained consistent at around £3 million per year.

The Greyhound Trust rehomes over 4,000 greyhounds each year.

The Government introduced regulations to protect the welfare of racing

greyhounds at race tracks in England in 2010 (the 'Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010').

Defra reviewed the 2010 Regulations in 2016 and found that while they appeared to have been successful judged against their original objectives, the industry needed to do more to tackle issues of transparency and standards at trainers' kennels.

The main industry regulator, the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) agreed to take forward several self-regulatory reforms, which they are currently in the process of delivering. GBGB are delivering on what they have promised, but Defra is monitoring their progress closely.

In 2017, 370 greyhounds were put to sleep due to medical treatment being too expensive, or a poor prognosis.