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21 Jun 2018



Following the UK Government's decision to increase legal protection for police dogs and service animals, Police Dog Finn and his handler PC Dave Wardell have, today, visited the Scottish Parliament.

PC Wardell has been campaigning for 'Finn's Law' which calls for a new offence of harming or killing a service animal since Finn suffered life threatening injuries during an arrest in 2016.

The UK Government, last week, announced its support for Finn's law and has published the Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill which will remove a section of the current law of self-defence, and increase maximum sentences for animal cruelty offences to five years in prison.

Liam Kerr is calling for the Scottish Government to follow suit and adequately punish those who harm trained animals like dogs and horses working with the police, fire service, military or other public services. It could also cover assistance animals like guide dogs.

Liam Kerr's petition to change the law to protect police dogs and other service animals now has 32,250 signatures.

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.

Scottish Conservative MSP Liam Kerr said;

"It is my great pleasure to welcome PD Finn and PC Dave Wardell to the Scottish Parliament and celebrate the publication of the UK Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill.

"Since Finn was viciously attacked, PC Wardell has campaigned tirelessly to secure a change in the law that will protect and support all of our service animals.

"It is a great step forward that this law has been published in England and Wales, but Scotland must now catch up and act with similar speed to increase legal protection for police dogs and service animals.

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

“They all work with the same dedication to duty as the men and women in our Police force, but our laws don’t protect them the same way and currently, the law views a Police animal as little more than property.

“There is tremendous public support for this campaign and the petition to change the law to protect police dogs now has over 32,000 signatures.

“The SNP must follow the lead of the UK Government, listen to the thousands of voices calling for greater protection and status for service animals and change the law now.”

PC Dave Wardell said:

“It is amazing to see the depth of support and commitment to change in Scotland.

“All service animals deserve the utmost respect for the invaluable service they provide every day. Finally recognising this and providing them with protection in law will be a fitting legacy for Finn and all those brave animals who, like Finn have served their community so loyally, and those who still do.

“I thank Liam Kerr MSP for taking Finns Law to Scotland and it is my pleasure that we have been able to visit today to cement the two campaigns for a shared goal.”