

**PE1396/R**

**RESPONSE FROM IAN ROBB, PETITIONER, TO PROPOSALS FROM DR BEVERLEY WILLIAMS AND JAMES WILSON, JUSTICE DEPARTMENT**

**Saturday 17 March 2012**

Dr Williams is of the opinion that COSLA should chair the working groups which we hope will be set up to outline strategies for tackling the issue of overbreeding of Staffordshire Bull Terriers. This, she says, is due to the fact that her own department within the Scottish Government has no staff to allocate to the problem and that the government has no funds to carry the proposals forward. To some extent, I agree that COSLA would be the appropriate organisation to handle the problem in the absence of help from government.

However, it still concerns me greatly that the plight of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier does not appear to be taken seriously enough either by government or society in general. Looking back on my own experience of fifty years working with dogs I can truthfully say that I have never seen a breed of dog so stigmatised and despised. I doubt very much if this excellent breed can ever recover from the damage inflicted upon it by the drug and 'yob' cultures in our country. It is clear that housing associations and private landlords have zero tolerance on the breeding of dogs in their properties. What can this same rule not be applied to the breeding of dogs in council properties? I see that recently Glasgow city council has finally agreed to deal with the problem of dogs in council flats – so I hope that this is a step in the right direction. It is the breeding of these poor animals in council properties all over Scotland which is at the core of the problem and I cannot for the life of me understand why this cannot be tackled by councils the length and breadth of the land. Only registered breeders ought to be allowed to breed dogs. It is clear to me that breeding and abandonment laws are not working correctly and need change, as does the sloppy enforcement of these laws.

If compulsory micro-chipping and proper breeder registration came into force and were applied correctly by the appropriate authorities the problem would be minimised. Yes, there are huge problems in this country at the moment, but government, police and councils cannot simply wash their hands of this massive animal welfare problem and leave it all to animal charities to cope on their own. Angus Council could be the body to give guideline to others. After the May elections, Angus Council plan a powerful media campaign on the staffie problem. The council will require its own departments and the police to work together to identify those people who are causing the problems to neuter and spay these dogs. This is certainly a step in the right direction and one hopes it will be copied by other council bodies in Scotland.

One wonders where Scotland would be without charity animal rescue centre and the work they do. When these people, who are at the front line of the problems, ask for some help they should be given it, for without their efforts the situation would be intolerable. Thanks mainly to them the days of packs of dogs running through the streets are gone. For how long, however, remains to be seen. We are a civilised nation and our duty is to create a civilised animal welfare system. If there are those in society who refuse to treat animals with care, dignity and respect then they should feel the force of the law.

Addendum – Email from Petitioner of 20 March 2012

Dear Petitions Committee

I attended a meeting with Dr Beverley Williams and James Wilson at Saughton House Edinburgh on 22nd February 2012.

I found the discussions very beneficial to give me a greater understanding of the roles undertaken by Dr Williams and James Wilson. I feel there is a total lack of dialogue between all parties involved in animal welfare. I feel the time has come for everyone to pull together to put a stop to what is happening regarding Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBTs) as this is a national disgrace across the whole of the UK and no other breed wed to be totally stigmatised and ruined and to be over bred by a group of individuals in society i.e. drug culture and criminal element.

The government of today, councils and police should work more closely with all animal charities and rescues as the charities and rescues are the organisations that have a true understanding and first-hand knowledge of what is happening at the sharp end of animal welfare. The people running the animal welfare departments within government departments have to be made aware that the breeding and abandonment legislations are not being vigorously controlled at council levels. This is a very massive problem all over Scotland and must be tackled and not be allowed to continually ignored, what is happening to SBTs has totally brought lots of rescues and charities very great hardship financially and stressful situations for the people involved in running these organisations.

It was a great feeling as i watched the last petitions committee meeting. I feel that the Committee have a greater understanding regarding the situation the charities and rescues find themselves in regarding SBTs.

I can only thank the petitions committee for the understanding and help, as all charities and rescues are very much appreciated for their efforts to help find a solution. I thank you all.

Kind regards,

Ian Robb  
Chairman, Help for Abandoned Animals Arbroath