

GREYHOUND FORUM

Wednesday 28th June 2023 at 3pm by Zoom

MEETING SUMMARY

Members in attendance: Battersea Dogs & Cats Home; DEFRA; Greyhound Board of Great Britain; Greyhound Trust; Kennel Club; Racecourse Promoters Association.

Apologies received from: Greyhounds in Need.

Guest in attendance: Premier Greyhound Racing

- The Forum noted with some regret the recent resignations of Blue Cross, Dogs Trust and RSPCA. The Forum reflected on conversations at the last meeting that had concluded with an agreed way of working that enabled the three charities to remain involved despite their change in policy position in respect of Greyhound racing. It had been agreed that this arrangement would be trialled for a 12-month period and members were therefore disappointed that the three charities had subsequently changed their minds and decided to step down. The Chair said he had met the Chief Executives of the three charities and had thanked them for their organisations' considerable contributions to the Forum over many years.
- The Chair confirmed that, as requested at the last meeting, he had written to Dogs Trust and RSPCA to ask that they share the research or evidence base that had informed their change in policy position. He had not received a reply. The Forum acknowledged that since the last meeting, Blue Cross had shared its evidence base.
- At the last meeting the Chair had completed a one-year term. No other nominations to the position had been received. The Chair confirmed his willingness to serve a second term and was duly re-appointed.
- DEFRA confirmed that it would welcome suggestions from the Forum on how the 2010 Welfare of Racing Greyhound Regulations might be improved. The Chair offered to collate comments from members.
- The Forum's Terms of Reference were reviewed. An amendment relating to the publication of Forum press statements was agreed and the Terms of Reference were otherwise approved and would be published on the website.
- The members discussed the 2022 annual injury and retirement data recently published by GBGB. Members were pleased to note the continued year-on-year reduction in the number of Greyhounds put to sleep, and the modest reduction in the injury rate. GBGB confirmed that initiatives prescribed by its Welfare Strategy and now being implemented were expected to lead to further reductions in euthanasia and injuries in future and these would continue to be closely monitored.
- GBGB provided an update on the implementation of its Welfare Strategy. All "short term" actions were reported to now be underway. These included:
 - New enhanced CPD for racecourse veterinarians.
 - An inaugural meeting of international Greyhound regulators was held in April 2023, resulting in the creation of a new knowledge sharing portal.
 - Establishment of and continued recruitment to a team of regional regulatory veterinary surgeons.
 - The newly created Animal Welfare Assessment Grid is currently being piloted.
 - Joint work with the Kennel Club to develop an assured breeders' scheme for Greyhound breeders.
- GBGB summarised the early outcomes and impacts of strategic initiatives. These included:
 - The number of Greyhounds put to sleep due to the cost of veterinary treatment had reduced from 175 in 2018 to 10 in 2022.

- Increased veterinary resource within GBGB was providing enhanced support for racecourse veterinarians as well as improved oversight of Greyhounds in the care of trainers.
 - Enhanced biosecurity due to the enforcement of an updated vaccination policy.
- GBGB invited members of the Forum to contribute to two specific strategic initiatives:
 - Review of requirements for racetrack kennels under the UKAS accreditation scheme and recommendations for updates to reflect current scientific knowledge if appropriate.
 - Update PAS 251:2017 to bring it into line with ADCH standards.
- GBGB invited member comment and feedback on two policy documents:
 - Hot weather
 - Responsible homing
- GBGB reported that bookmaker contributions via the voluntary levy scheme remained at 0.6% of betting turnover, expected to equate to approximately £8 million for the current financial year. It was agreed that this sum was wholly inadequate and would not be sufficient to enable the Welfare Strategy to be implemented in full within GBGB's five-year timeframe. GBGB remained in discussion with the betting industry to increase the level of contributions to 1% of turnover, which would provide approximately £14 million annually. It was agreed that the Chair would write on behalf of the Forum to the Secretary of State at DCMS to highlight the funding shortfall and the need for Government intervention to ensure sufficient funds were available from the betting industry to finance the Welfare Strategy.
- Clarissa Baldwin CBE, Chair of the Premier Greyhound Racing (PGR) Welfare Committee, was invited to provide an overview of her committee's work. It was explained that PGR was a media rights organisation, representing the interests of tracks owned by Entain, ARC and five other privately-owned tracks. PGR had recently donated £100K to GBGB to fund two research programmes within the Welfare Strategy. It was not yet clear whether PGR would be in a position to provide further financial contributions but PGR's commitment to welfare was reaffirmed.
- The Forum discussed the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Greyhound rehoming. It was noted that the pool of potential rehoming, both of Greyhounds and all other breeds, was reducing due to financial pressures. GBGB highlighted that an increasing number of races involved fewer than the usual six Greyhounds and this reflected the shortage of racing Greyhounds available, both on the back of reduced levels of breeding and spaces in trainers' kennels occupied by retired Greyhounds awaiting rehoming. The Forum agreed that it was important for this situation to be monitored closely to ensure Greyhound welfare was not compromised.
- It was agreed that the Forum should meet next in January 2024.