

PE2107/D: Use more money recovered from the proceeds of crime to support community-based charities that train animals to assist in the detection of drugs

Rhoda Grant MSP written submission, 13 June 2025

I write to you today in support of petition PE2107 from Kevin Craighs on behalf of The Shetland Times Ltd.

Third sector agencies within island communities are increasingly being asked to carry the burden of public service and safety as services are centralised and cut. Indeed, Police Scotland has indicated repeatedly that financial cuts to its service have dramatically reduced the services it can provide and the geographical area it can provide them across. In real terms this means that services once provided in island communities as standard are no longer done. Islands such as Shetland, Orkney and the Western isles used to have Police provided detection dogs and they no longer do so.

This leaves our island communities vulnerable to criminals and organised crime which can take advantage of them as gateways to the rest of Scotland and implement techniques such as Cuckooing, where by they take over the homes of vulnerable people and use them as to control the supply of drugs. Despite being an identified strand of the Police Strategy for the Highlands and Islands, partnership work with third sector agencies such as Drugs for Dogs is vital to the success of tackling drug movements through Scotland's islands.

I note that the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has written indicating that the Scottish Government is investigating long term solutions for Charities that play a vital role in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets, the money recovered from the proceeds of crime – often brought in by the very charities asking for financial help, would seem to me to be an obvious answer, and I am concerned that because it does not appear to be an obvious answer for the minister, that the funding will not be found anywhere. I believe until the future of these vital charities is secured, the petition should continue to have the committee's oversight.