

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 18 June 2025
11th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner Kevin Craigens on behalf of The Shetland Times Ltd

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to direct more public funding, recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act, to support charities, such as Dogs Against Drugs, which are vital to their communities and play an integral part in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2107>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 9 October 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 28 August 2024.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 18 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
June 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

Kevin Craicens on behalf of The Shetland Times Ltd

Date Lodged

19 June 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to direct more public funding, recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act, to support charities, such as Dogs Against Drugs, which are vital to their communities and play an integral part in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets.

Background information

Dogs Against Drugs has played an integral part in the seizure of drugs and cash which was destined for Shetland. Other organisations like Orkney Drugs Dogs could also benefit from expanded funding which come from the proceeds of crime.

Information from the Police Scotland Divisional Commander revealed that Dogs Against Drugs had a direct involvement in the seizure of £360,414 of drugs and £14,638 of cash in 2023 across 160 operations. In the previous year, £332,391 of drugs and £28,858 in cash were seized.

As well as detecting illegal and deadly drugs, the charity's dog handlers visit schools across the isles to teach children about the dangers of drugs.

Dogs Against Drugs are now facing financial difficulty having fallen short of its annual £120,000 running costs by around a quarter. It has let go of one of its three handlers to save costs, meaning fewer opportunities to detect harmful drugs.

Distributing the proceeds of crime more fairly could help reduce these financial pressures.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2107 on 9 October 2024

The Convener: PE2107 is about using more money that is recovered from the proceeds of crime to support community-based charities that train animals to assist in the detection of drugs. The petition, which was lodged by Kevin Craighen on behalf of the Shetland Times Ltd, calls on the Scottish Government to direct more public funding that is recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to support charities such as Dogs Against Drugs, which are vital to their communities and play an integral part in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets.

The background to the petition tells us that the charity Dogs Against Drugs was directly involved in the seizure of more than £360,000-worth of drugs and more than £14,000 of cash last year. However, due to financial pressures, the charity has had to let go one of its dog handlers, and the petitioner has suggested that changes to the way in which the proceeds of crime are distributed could reduce such pressures.

The SPICe briefing notes that, although Police Scotland does not publish the number of dogs in its dog unit, a freedom of information response from April 2023 stated that the police had 144 dogs across Scotland, with that figure having been relatively stable for a number of years. In Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, local policing teams work with charities, such as those highlighted in the petition, to carry out detection activities, though they do not fund them.

Responding to the petition, the Scottish Government notes that money that is recovered through the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 is paid into the Scottish consolidated fund and is currently used to fund the cashback for communities programme. The current phase of the programme “focuses on delivering a range of trauma-informed and person-centred services and activities for young people ... who are at risk of entering the criminal justice system.”

The Government’s response highlights that a grant of £10,000 was awarded to Dogs Against Drugs through the serious organised crime community grant scheme and that, more recently, it received a one-off grant of £30,000 from money that is ring fenced for projects relating to serious organised crime. That is expected to relieve the current financial pressures while officials consider longer-term funding options.

Do members have any suggestions for action?

Maurice Golden: We should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs to seek further details on the work that is being undertaken to consider longer-term funding options for charities that play a vital role in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets.

The Convener: I should have noted that we received a late submission, which colleagues will have seen, from our colleague Beatrice Wishart on the petition.

Mr Golden has suggested that we keep the petition open and write to the cabinet secretary. Are we content to do so?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs written submission, 11 November 2024

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

Thank you for your letter dated 16 October seeking further detail on the work being undertaken to consider longer-term funding options for charities that play a vital role in the seizure of drugs and criminal assets.

As you noted at the Committee meeting on 9 October, the Scottish Government recently gave the Dogs Against Drugs charity in Shetland a one-off grant of £30,000 to support them with running costs in this financial year.

We recognise that the third sector needs clarity and stability to build resilience and to grow its capacity. We are committed to progressing a Fairer Funding approach for the sector, including exploring options for long-term funding for the sector. As I am sure the Committee will be aware, long-term funding is very challenging to deliver in the current context as any commitments will inevitably reduce flexibility in future year budgets.

The Committee should be aware that work is underway to improve the clarity and consistency of grant-making practices across government, including developing a consistent baseline for third sector funding. We continue to explore an approach to long-term funding and the extent to which it can be secured within unpredictable economic circumstances.

Understandably, there are calls being made on the Scottish Government every day for more support. We will continue to respond as positively and comprehensively as we can.

My officials will continue to work across government to identify potential long-term funding solutions for Dogs Against Drugs in Shetland and similar charities.

I trust this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

ANGELA CONSTANCE