

# The Greyhound Commitment – The First Year

Just over a year ago, we launched our Greyhound Commitment – an eight point manifesto setting out our expectations of how our sport and industry should be run with greyhound welfare at its heart.

12 months on, we have begun to make real progress in delivering the eight facets of the Commitment. As this document demonstrates, we have put in place a whole series of initiatives that assist everyone in our industry to deliver a sport that is safe, welfare-driven and run with outstanding integrity.

Alongside our commitment to welfare, we have also begun to deliver on our commitment to people within the sport. Initiatives such as our national training conferences, the Greyhound Ambassadors and the Animal Care and Welfare Assistant Apprenticeship are galvanising those within our sport, harnessing existing expertise, sharing and developing best practice and promoting the enthusiasm and unity of the industry.

As part of this update on the Commitment, we are publishing the 2018 injury and retirement figures which provide an honest and accurate assessment of where our sport is doing well and where it needs to do more. Overall, the data is positive, demonstrating that British greyhound racing's welfare standards are world leading.

As you will see, this year's figures are very similar to last year's, giving us further consistent evidence as to where our sport currently is. It gives us a clear picture of where we need to be doing more so that we can eradicate any avoidable injuries for our dogs and ensure that every greyhound is treated as they should be. While the key initiatives launched since last April have not yet had sufficient time to demonstrate a significant impact on the 2018 figures, we are confident that this will be evident by the time of the next data release in 2020.

We would like to thank everyone across greyhound racing and our partner welfare charities for supporting the Commitment and helping take it forward. We have set ourselves some challenging targets to achieve within the next three years but we are confident that, with the support of everyone working within the industry, as well as our partners and wider stakeholders, we can achieve these targets and continue to ensure our welfare standards are amongst the very best.

Yours sincerely,



**Jeremy Cooper**  
Chairman



**Mark Bird**  
Managing Director





# 1. Greyhound welfare and safety is at the heart of everything we do

## We do this by:

- Having a zero-tolerance policy on the mistreatment of greyhounds;
- Enforcing a rigorous, independent disciplinary process with strong sanctions for any individual who is found to be in breach of the GBGB Rules of Racing;
- Having an independent Veterinary Surgeon present at all tracks to check the health and wellbeing of every greyhound both before and after racing;
- Having a dedicated Welfare Officer at all GBGB tracks;
- Promoting best practice in animal husbandry through professional development, advice and access to innovative research;
- Providing funds for trainers to maintain and improve their facilities – in 2018 we awarded over £300,000 in Trainers' Assistance Grants;
- Publishing annual, independently verified injury and retirement data for all GBGB registered greyhounds.

## How we met this Commitment this year:

Whilst greyhound welfare has always been at the forefront of our sport, as an industry, we had never formalised and published our approach. The launch of the Greyhound Commitment was the first time we had articulated the various ways in which everyone working across the sport is whole-heartedly committed to safeguarding the welfare of greyhounds.

The Commitment is our manifesto for driving the sport forward. Over the past year it has given us the framework for introducing new initiatives, increasing our transparency and promoting the sport whilst ensuring that greyhound welfare is at the heart of everything we do.

Since its launch, we have worked hard to raise awareness of the eight areas of the Commitment so that everyone involved in the sport understands what it means for them in their everyday lives. From trainers and promoters to bookmakers and spectators, everyone knows how important this Commitment is to the future prosperity of our sport.

Stadia up and down the country have proudly put it on display whilst trainers and vets have attended conferences designed to demonstrate what the Commitment means in practice.

The Commitment exemplifies how everyone involved in greyhound racing does it for the love of their dogs, their enjoyment of seeing them do what they do best and their pride and satisfaction in seeing them lead happy and competitive sporting lives.

It is a working document which is constantly evolving as the sport moves forward and new initiatives are launched. As you will see, we have set ourselves new challenges for the year ahead in order to ensure that our welfare standards remain world leading.

## Building on this, we will:

- Publish an evidence-based GBGB Policy for Racing in Weather Extremes and encourage participation at all GBGB stadia;
- Launch a series of 'how-to' videos giving trainers and owners useful and specialist advice and guidance in specific areas of greyhound care;
- Review the role of Welfare Officers at our tracks to further safeguard welfare;
- Conduct a Trainers' Licensing Review to protect and promote our high welfare and integrity standards.



## 2. Every racing greyhound is treated with care and respect throughout its career

### We do this by:

- Conducting a minimum of two unannounced visits by GBGB officials to residential greyhound kennels every year to confirm that welfare needs are being met;
- Ensuring greyhounds are cared for by licensed and competent staff during their careers;
- Licensing and inspecting stadia through government-approved, UKAS accredited methods;
- Using an online registry system to track all greyhounds racing on GBGB tracks, from registration to retirement.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

As the regulator for licensed greyhound racing, our remit extends far wider than safeguarding dogs' welfare at the track. It is GBGB's responsibility to make sure greyhounds are properly looked after and cared for throughout their racing careers. In addition to our regular stipendiary visits to kennels, this year we launched a new Welfare Hotline so that anyone concerned about the welfare of registered racing greyhounds can report information anonymously. This confidential process means that everyone should feel able to come forward and speak up on any matter which affects the welfare of registered greyhounds or which damages the integrity of our sport. All information that is received through this new Hotline is passed onto our Investigations Team, who explore every matter thoroughly and – wherever wrongdoing is found – GBGB's independent disciplinary panel will take the strictest action.

### Building on this, we will:

- Launch a GBGB Code of Practice for all trainers and kennelhands for residential kennels;
- Publish an Owners' Charter setting out an owner's rights and responsibilities concerning the care of their greyhound;
- Introduce Owners' Contracts with trainers to safeguard the welfare of greyhounds.

## 3. Our independently verified injury rates remain the lowest in the world and will improve further still

### We do this by:

- Having an independent Veterinary Surgeon at all GBGB tracks to check the health and wellbeing of every greyhound, both before and after racing, and to provide emergency care in the event that any greyhound needs it;
- Working with stadia to provide the safest possible racing surfaces;
- Working with STRI consultants to promote best practice in track preparation across all our stadia.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

The safety of each and every racing greyhound is paramount. Every greyhound is examined by a vet both before and after every race to check that it is fit and healthy which means that any injuries can be quickly diagnosed and treated. We also ensure that our tracks are prepared in accordance with best practice.

As part of this, we have appointed the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), the world's leading sports surface consultants, to support all GBGB licensed racecourses in their track preparation and maintenance. Alongside the work of our Track Sub-Committee, this partnership allows us to combine industry knowledge with scientific expertise to ensure our canine athletes are racing on the safest possible surfaces.

Over the year, STRI have developed detailed assessments on each track's sand profile, drainage, equipment and individual track practice. No two tracks are the same but this analysis is enabling us to better identify and share areas of best practice, take advantage of the latest scientific innovations and deliver ongoing support and training for track ground staff.

To demonstrate where we are in meeting this commitment, the data for 2018 shows that out of 426,139 runs there were 4,963 injuries. This is a racing injury rate of 1.16% which is consistent with 2017. We have also seen a reduction in the number of greyhounds put to sleep on humane grounds trackside from 257 to 242.

These injury rates continue to be the lowest independently verified rates for greyhound racing in the world. The full data is available on our website: [www.gbgb.org.uk](http://www.gbgb.org.uk)

### Building on this, we will:

- Aim to reduce the number of greyhounds being put to sleep on humane grounds at the track due to injuries. We want to see this figure halved within three years;
- Organise training seminars for ground staff, provided by STRI, to extend the professional development opportunities available to them.



## 4. Wherever possible, every dog leaving racing enjoys a long and happy retirement

### We do this by:

- Working in partnership with animal welfare charities to find suitable homes for greyhounds that have raced on GBGB licensed tracks and further promote their excellence as family pets. This includes investing substantially in greyhound homing schemes;
- Giving all greyhound owners access to our national Injury Recovery Scheme which provides financial support so that career-ending injuries need not be life-ending.

### Building on this, we will:

- Continue to work towards achieving our mission of reducing the number of dogs being put to sleep on economic grounds or because no home was found to zero. We understand, however, despite everybody's best intentions, that this will not be achieved overnight. Our ambition is therefore to halve our current figure within three years with the ultimate aim of eliminating these unnecessary deaths entirely;
- Work with our welfare charity partners to establish an assessment protocol for those dogs deemed unsuitable for homing. We are embarking on a collaborative working project with Dogs Trust to explore ways of better preparing greyhounds to join their forever homes;
- Introduce a Greyhound Retirement Scheme that attaches a financial bond to each greyhound at the point of registration, paid for jointly by the owner and GBGB, in order to meet costs associated with its homing at the end of its racing career.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

After their racing careers, we strongly believe that every greyhound that can be homed, should be homed. In 2018, 7,705 GBGB registered dogs retired from the sport. Of these, 88% were successfully found new homes as pets by their owners, trainers or charities or were retained within the sport by owners, trainers and breeders. This is excellent news and what we want for every greyhound wherever possible. Of the remaining 12%, the vast majority of greyhounds either died of natural causes or were put to sleep following vets' advice for legitimate medical reasons.

324 greyhounds were unfortunately put to sleep because no home could be found for them or because there was no viable alternative – such as because of the high cost of medical treatment. We consider these to be avoidable and unnecessary deaths.

To this end, this year we introduced the Injury Recovery Scheme (IRS) which provides financial support to owners and trainers whose greyhound has sustained a career-ending orthopaedic injury at a GBGB licensed racecourse.

Funding provided by the Scheme contributes towards corrective veterinary treatment of the most serious orthopaedic injuries so that wherever possible greyhounds can go on to enjoy a full and active life in retirement. In some cases, without the IRS funding, these greyhounds may have been put to sleep and so this new Scheme is playing a vital role in reducing these numbers.

Talking about the Scheme's importance, GBGB Veterinary Director, Dr. Simon Gower, said:

***"As an industry, we must encourage responsible greyhound ownership and support our owners, trainers and racecourses to work towards the elimination of euthanasia of any greyhound on economic grounds.***

***"Importantly, the IRS funding is open to all registered greyhounds and will support GBGB's commitment to ensuring that a career-ending injury is not life-ending."***





## 5. Every race is run fairly, safely and that attending a race meeting is an enjoyable and fun experience for all involved



### We do this by:

- Using our regulatory powers to ensure that all involved in GBGB licensed stadia follow the Rules of Racing, and to enforce a rigorous, independent disciplinary process – with appropriate sanctions – where the Rules are breached;
- Having a robust anti-doping strategy – more than 15,000 samples were taken between 1st October 2017 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. These were independently tested by LGC, a world-renowned forensic laboratory, as part of our work to prevent and handle any threats to the integrity of our sport and to protect the welfare of licensed racing greyhounds. Only a tiny proportion of these (0.28%) were found to be directly related to doping;
- Working closely with the Gambling Commission to safeguard the integrity of the sport;
- Being an inclusive sport, welcoming people of all ages and backgrounds either as spectators or as industry professionals.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

The integrity of our sport is essential to its success. Our Rules of Racing articulate what is acceptable and what is not, and as regulator we have robust systems in place to ensure strict adherence from everyone.

Each fortnight, we publish the findings of our disciplinary hearings so that everyone across the sport understands the consequences of wrongdoing.

As well as safeguarding the high welfare and integrity standards of our sport, we want to see our industry thrive. As the guardian of our sport's future prosperity, we are committed to ensuring its ongoing success and continuing to grow its popularity with British and global audiences.

Working with the Racecourse Promoters' Association (RCPA) and our stadia, we are continuing to see through commercial initiatives that help our sport remain successful and sustainable, with greyhound welfare at its heart.

We also want to show that, as an open and inclusive sport, greyhound racing involves people from all walks of life. Over the past year, experts from across our sport have been sharing their stories, experiences and knowledge through regular blogs. With the launch of our new website this year, we want to continue to celebrate our history, our people and our greyhounds and share the extensive work underway across the industry to drive it forward for the future.

### Building on this, we will:

- Work with stadia to broaden their appeal to new audiences;
- Continue to be at the forefront of scientific innovations so that our anti-doping systems remain robust and effective.



## 6. Those working within the sport have access to training at the beginning of their careers, and ongoing, accredited professional development

### We do this by:

- Funding research into the health and welfare of greyhounds that further educates those working within our sport and improves standards further;
- Providing those working within our sport with access to a library of up-to-date, innovative research on best practice;
- Providing training for track preparation and grounds staff at GBGB licensed stadia.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

In September 2018, we rolled out a new Animal Care and Welfare Assistant Apprenticeship. This Level 2 Apprenticeship provides training for people entering the industry as well as upskilling those already working within the sport.

The Apprenticeship gives hands-on training in delivering world-class care to racing greyhounds. Developed in partnership with a number of prominent animal charities, including the RSPCA, Dogs Trust and Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, and delivered by Absolute Training Services, it is the first apprenticeship of its kind launched under the government's Trailblazer system.

Throughout the 13-month programme, the trainees have undertaken off-the-job training and completed modules in animal care and welfare, biology, behaviour and handling. They attended guest lectures with specialists in the field, including an animal behaviourist from the Dogs Trust. The apprentices have also learnt about track preparation, animal first aid and injury detection and gained experience in racing offices.

The Apprenticeship is an important signifier for the industry that GBGB is serious about investing in the next generation of staff and specialists across the sport. Most importantly, the apprenticeship is centred on delivering the very best standards of care to the greyhounds at the heart of our sport and will ensure that those entering the industry have the knowledge and skills to uphold our world-class welfare standards.

Apprentice Jemma Webber describes her experience of participating in the scheme:



***"I'm now halfway through my training and I've loved every single minute of it. I've learnt so much in such a short space of time and at the heart of it is how to look after and care for the greyhounds. I was a bit nervous before I enrolled in the Apprenticeship scheme as it was going to take me out of my comfort zone. But I am so glad I am doing it."***

***"My ultimate dream is to be a professional greyhound trainer. I know I've just got to keep learning all that I can and working hard and we'll see – hopefully it will happen."***

### Building on this, we will:

- Provide ongoing professional development for vets;
- Hold further training sessions for greyhound trainers on injury detection and the latest veterinary research;
- Explore the possibility of an Apprenticeship scheme for ground staff.





## 7. Funding received from the betting industry significantly contributes to greyhound welfare

### We do this by:

- Directing at least 75% of the funding received from the betting industry to animal welfare;
- Working with government to maximise income from the betting industry.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

We have continued to establish the need for secure, adequate and long-term funding for our sport in order to meet our ambitious welfare goals. This has involved continued consultation with government, wider welfare charities and the bookmaking industry.

Following lengthy discussions, chaired by DCMS, and calling for a fair return to the greyhound industry from bookmakers' profits on the sport, Minister for Sports Mims Davies MP announced in January 2019 that some of Britain's biggest bookmakers had agreed to pay a small percentage of their online betting revenues on greyhound racing on a voluntary basis. Betfred, Paddypower Betfair, Sky Betting & Gaming and William Hill agreed following Ladbrokes-Coral and Jennings Bet, who had agreed to make such contributions in 2018. Bet365 have always contributed on all of their greyhound business.

Announcing the news, Mims Davies MP said:

***"As the sixth most watched sport in Britain, it is clear that the welfare and care of all racing greyhounds, from registration to retirement, must be a fundamental part of its successful future. I strongly urge all remaining bookmakers that take bets on greyhound racing who have not signed up to this agreement to follow suit and support the sport."***

***"Unlike British horseracing, there is currently no statutory obligation for the bookmakers to contribute to the welfare of our greyhounds. A statutory levy may be the only long-term means of securing the funding the industry needs to fulfil our welfare targets. We hope that the bookmakers will act responsibly and sensibly to avoid this, because we are clear that the current situation is untenable."***

### Building on this, we will:

- Seek to secure future funding to allow a fuller and more substantial roll-out of the Injury Recovery Scheme, which has the potential to put an end to dogs being put to sleep for financial reasons. This funding would also assist the Greyhound Retirement Scheme which will attach a financial bond to each greyhound at the point of registration;
- Continue to work with the bookmaking industry so that their concern and priority for welfare translates into the funding that we all know our sport needs.





## 8. Together, we continue to promote our sport and nurture the public's love of greyhounds



### We do this by:

- Educating the public about greyhound racing and promoting greyhounds as a proud and historic breed;
- Promoting the considerable economic contribution of our sport, in employing over 7,000 people and remaining one of the most attended sports in the UK.

### How we met this Commitment this year:

In 2018, we launched a Greyhound Ambassador Scheme to actively support and promote both racing and the successful retirement of greyhounds. Our first cohort of Ambassadors is a group of greyhound lovers and racing enthusiasts from all walks of life who are dedicating their time and energy for the good of our sport.

The Ambassadors were chosen from all areas of the industry and include owners, trainers, kennelhands, bookmakers and veterinary experts. Their role is to make more of the positives that greyhound racing delivers and to be champions for the greyhounds at the heart of our sport.

As well as a sounding board for various areas of the Greyhound Commitment, they have published a Day at the Races leaflet setting out how a greyhound is treated and cared for on race day. The Ambassadors have also created and launched a Greyhound Retirement Certificate, to ensure that every owner of a retired greyhound can share our pride in its racing career and pedigree. Their work has been shared across the world and is inspiring other racing greyhound groups to adopt similar initiatives.

Greyhound Ambassador Kim Sanzone said:

***"As Ambassadors, we come from all corners of the industry and have different expertise and interests that we bring to the table. In a way, we help provide a new channel to ensure that everyone across our sport is being listened to."***

***"I'm delighted that lots of people have contacted me since becoming an Ambassador – not only have they felt able to raise their concerns but they have shared ideas on how we can work together to make things better for us all."***

### Building on this, we will:

- Expand the Greyhound Ambassadors Scheme so that they can further their work;
- Explore new partnerships to widen our audience base.