

“The Kennel Club is pleased that this important Bill – which would introduce a new and specific offence to tackle pet theft – has moved swiftly through the UK parliament and we highly commend the hard and persistent work of every organisation who has been raising awareness of this issue and calling for action for many years. We hope that a Legislative Consent Motion will be supported by the Assembly, such that this new law will apply to Northern Ireland.

Currently, the theft of a pet is treated no more seriously than the theft of a mobile phone, despite the utter heartbreak it causes. This new law is desperately needed to ensure that sentencing provisions reflect a dog’s sentience and their role within their family, as well as fully taking into account the emotional harm inflicted on the victims of this crime.

The Kennel Club has long campaigned on the issue of pet theft, lobbying for sentencing to recognise the emotional value of a dog and for better reporting and recording from officials so that underlying causes of dog theft can be tackled. Its ‘Paw and Order’ campaign, launched after lockdown to urge action, illustrated the need for reform and spurred thousands of dog lovers across the UK to write to their elected representative. Statistics gathered as part of the campaign showed the failure to tackle a crime that is devastating nearly 200 families every month, as just two per cent of dog theft cases in 2020 resulted in a criminal charge.”