

Retired Police Dog Finn is a highly trained and decorated former police dog. He was repeatedly stabbed in the chest and head on 5th October 2016 during an arrest. The injuries suffered by Finn were so severe that he required 4 hours of life saving surgery and 11 weeks of recovery. With the commitment and dedication of his handler PC Dave Wardell, the veterinary team and the Wardell family Finn was able to return to active duty before his planned retirement in March 2017. Had Finn not protected PC Wardell there is little doubt that PC Wardell at best would have suffered a serious injury or at worst lost his life.

You may be surprised to learn that under UK law there is no specific offence for causing injury to a service animal whilst carrying out their duties. Attacks on police animals are happening daily but very few are pursued through the Courts due to the lack of an appropriate offence. Whilst RPD Finn's case is thankfully an extreme case, it is by no means unusual.

#FinnsLaw is a campaign being run by a group of volunteers to change this. We are saying that all service animals should be recognised for the vital role they fulfil. Part of that recognition should be the creation of a specific criminal offence for causing injury to them.

As a direct result of campaigning so far, some progress towards our aim has been made. Sir Oliver Heald MP has presented a Private Members Bill called Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill (Finn's Law) to the House of Commons. This Bill will amend the Animal Welfare Act 2006 so that the statutory defence of fear it contains does not apply to any service animal that has been trained to create intimidation or fear. This includes Police Dogs and Horses, Prison Dogs and Fire and Rescue Dogs to name but a few.

We were delighted that the Bill passed the 2nd Reading unanimously and are looking forward to the Bill being discussed at Committee stage when Parliament returns after summer recess. We anticipate that the Committee stage will be dealt with quickly once a date has been set but we are hopeful this will be in Autumn of 2018.

Finn's Law is now progressing with the support of the Government, the Mayor of London, The Mayor of Greater Manchester, all Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales, the RSPCA, IFAW and many more, but we have a way to go until Finn's Law is added to the statute books.

As well as adding their support to Finn's Law, DEFRA have confirmed that they are increasing the sentences available under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 from 6 months to a maximum of 5 years. It is hoped that these increases are imminent and will be in force shortly. Mindful of these increases the need for Finn's Law takes on more significance as without it service animals will continue to have no protection whilst anyone injuring a pet could be sentenced to 5 years. This cannot possibly be correct. The fact that the investment of public funds into specific training and licensing of these animals serves to exclude them from the protection of the Animal Welfare Act is immoral.

Finn's Law is not radical. Specific criminal offences for attacking or injuring a police animal have been created and are enforced in 8 States in the USA. Texas is also in the process of considering introducing this legislation. Similar offences are also in force in Austria, Germany, Australia, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

The flaw in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 was identified and considered in Australia when they were creating their Animal Welfare legislation back in 2002. The Australians ensured that the protection Animal Welfare legislation offers must apply to their service animals. As a result they included a specific section to ensure that the defence of fear would not apply to service animals.

It is our aim to ensure that Finn's Law will apply, not only to animals in England and Wales but also, to service animals in Scotland and Northern Ireland as devolved nations, and we are working closely with Liam Kerr MSP and FinnsLawNIreland to meet this objective.

To help achieve this we need the public to add their names to the petitions relating to #FinnsLawScotland and #FinnsLawNIreland. Both can be found

online at <https://www.change.org/p/the-scottish-parliament-protect-police-dogs> and <https://www.change.org/p/protect-police-dogs>

Since Finn's attack there have been several high-profile cases of stabbings, strangulations, biting, kicking and punching of police dogs and horses. These are the ones we hear about. Many injuries are not followed through to charges. Fewer still get to Court and receive any meaningful sentence.

If you agree that the current position is unacceptable then we need your help. You can show your support by writing to your local MP to express, in your own words, why you think the current laws are inadequate and ask your MP to support Sir Oliver Heald's Bill as it progresses through the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

If you do not know who your local MP is you can confirm their details on the government website www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/ or www.writetothem.com by typing in your postcode. Their address is House of Commons, London. SW1A 0AA.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our campaign. If you would like to keep up-to-date with us then please do visit the website or follow us on twitter where we will post developments as they happen.



@finnforchange

www.finnslaw.com

As for Dave and Finn – Finn is well and now leads a very full and active retirement. Dave continues to be a serving dog handler and campaigning hard for Finns Law. If you would like to follow their exciting adventures, then please do follow them on social media for regular updates.



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